

The Verification by Demonstration of Divine Revelation

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Abstract

Christians claim that the religious propositions to which they hold are not of their own making. Rather, these propositions are alleged to be revealed by God. In this thesis, I examine three methods by which Christians seek to demonstrate, and thus verify, that propositions they allege to be revealed are revealed: observation of, and deduction and induction from, the Bible. These methods are standard within the broader *method of theology*. While affirming that observation and deduction are appropriate methods for demonstration, I nevertheless show that induction fails to demonstrate that propositions are revealed. Various attempts to rescue induction (i.e., faith, authority, tradition and theology) for the purposes of verification are explored in the thesis. However, I show that each of these attempts also fail for various reasons. In particular, the use of abduction under the auspices of theology fails to rescue induction because of particular limitations in abduction itself.

Given the failure of induction to demonstrate that propositions are revealed, and given that many of Christianity's core propositions (e.g., Jesus is God, Jesus died as a penal substitute for sins, and hell will be populated for eternity) can *only* be demonstrated to be revealed by induction, I conclude that these propositions *cannot* be verified to be revealed. Further, I argue that if these propositions cannot be verified by demonstration to be revealed, they *are not* revealed in the sense that Christians typically take divine revelation i.e., as *public* revelation. I conclude the analytical component of the thesis by suggesting that a reasonable person, open to the possibility of divine revelation, can nevertheless judge that not all propositions claimed by Christians to be divinely revealed are, in fact, divinely revealed.

Consistent with this judgement, in the final chapter of this thesis I explore some implications and applications that arise when Christians over-estimate the size and scope of

the corpus of divinely revealed propositions. In this final chapter, I indicate that Christianity may find itself considerably less burdened theologically, ecclesiastically and apologetically if it was to hold less tightly to propositions not demonstrably revealed.

Statement of Originality

This work has not previously been submitted for a degree or diploma in any university. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the thesis itself.

April 19, 2021

Martin Dowson

Date

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Finally, I would like to thank (hardly a big enough word) my family. To Lobster 1 for thirty-three extraordinary, exceptional, magical years; despite my academic and sundry other obsessions and eccentricities. To Lobster 3 for his special intellect and patience as I read my thesis to him – twice; and to Lobster 4 for her angelic presence and verdant vegetable patch, both of which steadied me on more than one occasion. Together, we are the Rock Lobsters.

Dedication

To my parents:

Who taught me many things - not least the value of words and ideas.

Chapter 1

Introduction

In his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, John Locke wrote: “Whatever God hath revealed is certainly true: no doubt can be made of it. This is the proper object of faith: but whether it be a divine revelation or no, reason must judge...” (1689/2018, Ch. 18, para. 10). Without focussing on Locke’s work *per se*, in this thesis I nevertheless pursue Locke’s contention that while reason is not needed to verify the truth of divine revelation, reason is needed to verify divine revelation itself. Verification, in this sense, is not concerned with verifying whether any alleged divinely revealed proposition is true, but rather with verifying whether it is true that any proposition alleged to be divinely revealed is divinely revealed. In pursuit of Locke’s contention, I draw on resources provided by C. S. Peirce (1877), particularly Peirce’s depictions of deduction, induction and abduction.

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce the main topic of the thesis, namely the verification by demonstration of divine revelation, and to provide a brief rationale for why this topic is philosophically and theologically important. In so doing, I explore various methods of verification applicable to divine revelation, state the assumptions of the thesis, delineate the scope of the investigation, outline the structure of the thesis, and provide the key definitions used in the thesis. This chapter provides a foundation for understanding the main argument of the thesis which is presented in Chapter 2.

Christianity as a Revealed Religion

Christians claim that Christianity is a revealed religion in the sense that Christianity’s religious beliefs, particularly its core religious beliefs, correspond to propositions revealed by God (Pratt Morris-Chapman, 2018; Swinburne, 2011; Witherup,

2006). Christianity is, thus, not of Christians' own making. The claim that Christianity is a revealed religion enables Christians to use divine revelation as a justification for the truth of their beliefs (Moller, 2013; Zeis, 2005). This justification is critical in, for example, evangelistic and apologetic settings where it provides Christians with the ultimate defeater of all other beliefs, and thus with epistemic confidence to engage with other beliefs and belief systems (Diller, 2011; Donovan, 2005). For this reason, in both evangelism and apologetics, Christians both seek, and are typically required, to make good on the claim that the propositions to which their beliefs correspond are, in fact, revealed (Anderson, 2008; Clarke, 1958; Padgett, 1994).

Demonstration of the truth of beliefs is also critical in settings involving doctrinal disputes, where the truth of one claim over another can, at least in theory, be demonstrated by reference to divine revelation (e.g., Manis, 2015; Packer, 1958; Pardue, 2012). In these situations, demonstrating that a belief corresponds to a revealed proposition, and is thus a true belief, is critical to resolving theological disputes, or at least to defending and entrenching the positions of the disputants.

Moreover, in addressing evangelistic, apologetic and doctrinal concerns, it is not uncommon for Christian believers to encounter challenges to their beliefs (Livingston, 2003), including the belief that their beliefs are based on divine revelation. In such cases, the beliefs of Christians concerning the revealed status of certain propositions may become unsettled and the discomfort of doubt (Peirce, 1877) may arise. Faced with this discomfort, Christian believers will presumably be even more highly motivated to demonstrate that the beliefs they hold correspond to revealed propositions. I do not mean to imply by this assertion that Christians will *necessarily* become unsettled in their beliefs by encountering challenges (one could say, potential *epistemic defeaters*) to their belief that certain propositions are revealed. In fact, the opposite may occur i.e., as a result of evangelistic, apologetic or doctrinal engagement a believer may become more *entrenched* in their beliefs

than would otherwise be the case. However, I cite deconversions from one branch of Christianity to another (e.g., Brierley, 2017; Day, 2021; Wooten, 2014) and even from the Christian faith altogether (e.g., Fincke, 2021; Nahigian, 2017; Wong, n.d.) *as a result of such engagements*, as evidence that the beliefs of Christians do become unsettled, doubts do arise, and so settling doubt (if possible) becomes a real issue for at least *some* believers.

In this thesis, I focus on the methods used by Christians for verifying by demonstration the revealed status of propositions, and evaluate their success. Specifically, I show that two standard methods used by Christians to demonstrate the revealed status of their core propositions fail. This failure is a critical problem for Christianity because Christianity's claim that these core propositions are *true* is, as already noted, based on the alleged fact that these propositions are divinely revealed. Within the bounds of Christianity, if a proposition is revealed it *is* true because God does not lie. Thus, if a proposition is verified as revealed its truth is also verified. However, if a putatively revealed proposition has not yet been shown to be revealed, its truth status is yet to be determined. Worse, if a proposition *cannot* be shown to be revealed, its truth status is indeterminate, at least by appeal to revelation. Further, the strongest claim in my thesis is that propositions that cannot be shown to be revealed are not revealed at all. If my strongest claim holds, then propositions not demonstrably revealed cannot be true by virtue of being revealed, contrary to the assertion of Christians.

The thrust of these introductory remarks is that I claim to show *on Christianity's own terms* that the extent of the body of revealed propositions held by Christians is smaller than Christians propose. If so, I evade the oft-cited criticism by Christians (e.g., Brown, 1984; Thomas, 1998) that critiques of Christianity make unwarranted anti-supernatural assumptions. To the contrary, I show in this thesis that even accepting the actuality of the supernatural (in this case divine revelation) as an assumption, Christians are still stuck in

terms of demonstrating, and thus publicly verifying, that the supernatural has occurred. For this reason, my critique has weight that Christians cannot easily ignore.

Methods of Verification

According to Peirce (1877), belief may be fixed by one of four methods, namely the methods of tenacity, authority, preference (what Peirce called the *a-priori* method) and science. In the religious domain, these four methods correspond to the methods of faith (where faith is defined as holding fast to what is already believed), authority (in this case, religious authority), tradition (where the believer's religious tradition represents their *a-priori* preferred set of religious beliefs), and theology (which is the equivalent of science in the religious domain). Thus, religious belief, including the belief that a given proposition is revealed, may be fixed by faith, authority, tradition or theology.

These methods of fixing belief are effective in the religious domain because they each correspond to ways of verifying the revealed status of propositions believed to be revealed. Specifically, in the religious context, the methods are taken to provide evidence that verifies the revealed status of propositions. Thus, extending Peirce's framework we can say that:

- (a) with respect to faith, persistence of belief that a proposition is revealed is taken as evidence that verifies that the proposition is revealed;
- (b) with respect to authority:
 - (i) the expert judgement of a religious authority that a proposition is revealed is taken as evidence that verifies that the proposition is revealed, and/or
 - (ii) the declaration of a religious authority (e.g., the church) that a proposition is revealed is taken as evidence that verifies that the proposition is revealed;

- (c) with respect to tradition, the correspondence or coherence of a proposition with a believer's preferred religious tradition is taken as evidence that verifies that the proposition is revealed; and
- (d) with respect to theology, demonstration that a proposition is in the content of revelation is taken as evidence that verifies that the proposition is revealed.

The extent to which faith, authority and tradition provide evidence for the revealed status of propositions is largely inscrutable from an analytic perspective. If these methods provide evidence, the extent to which they do so is as much a matter for psychology, ecclesiology, or history as it is for philosophy. In contrast, for reasons that will be given in this thesis, the success or otherwise of a logical/theological demonstration that a proposition is in the content of revelation is a matter amenable to analytical/philosophical investigation (e.g., Abraham, 2006). The reason for this amenability is that Christianity's sacred texts constitute a public body of evidence that can be analysed by believers and non-believers alike according to the ordinary rules of language and logic. One need not believe, then, that a sacred text is divinely revealed in order to determine whether a particular proposition claimed to be revealed is, in fact, demonstrably revealed with reference to that text. Thus, the assertion that a particular proposition is demonstrably in the (alleged) *content of revelation* (henceforth, CR) is open to investigation by any interested person, believer or not. In contrast, one would have to share the same commitment to faith, authority and tradition as a believer if the assertion that faith, authority or tradition provide evidence verifying that certain propositions are revealed is to be investigated. For these reasons, I focus on examining the method of theology as a means of verifying *by demonstration* the revealed status of propositions.

The Notion of Demonstration

Before going on to describe the method of theology as a means of demonstrating the revealed status of propositions, it will be helpful to clarify the notion of demonstration itself. The notion of demonstration to which I appeal is any explicit or inferentially valid use of Scripture that attempts to show that a given doctrine is recoverable from Scripture. Thus, I do not limit demonstration to anything other than correct observation of explicit texts and valid inference (not limited to deductive inference) from explicit texts. Given this allowable breadth of inference, I think many (if not all) Christians would think that many (if not all) doctrines can be demonstrated to be revealed. Put the other way, I don't think any Christian would want to argue that *inaccurate* observations and *invalid* inferences (of any sort) be included in the "notion of demonstration" before the notion is accepted.

By allowing the full range of inferences (deductive, inductive, and abductive) to count as potentially demonstrating, and thus verifying, revealed propositions; I intend to indicate that I am entering the investigation in good faith. Moreover, a strength of the arguments in the thesis is that they do not require me to rule out *a priori* any form of inference (other than logically invalid inference) that Christians might use to demonstrate the revealed status of propositions. Thus, whatever other weaknesses they may display, my arguments cannot be criticised on the basis that they rely on some artificially constrained notion of demonstration. All accurate observations and all valid inferences are on the table at the outset.

On a related issue, it might be thought that disagreement amongst Christians over the revealed status of propositions invalidates the claim that demonstration of the type I have just described can and/or has occurred. If it was the case that there was *no* agreement amongst Christians over doctrine, particularly core doctrines, the criticism would hold some weight. However, Christians do largely agree that certain core doctrines are revealed (e.g., the Trinity, the Deity of Christ, the existence of Hell, etc.), and also agree that these

doctrines are demonstrable from the Bible and are, thus, revealed. It is certainly the case, that, without abandoning the general commitment that demonstration can and has occurred with respect to core doctrines, there are other doctrines where Christians disagree not least because these doctrines are not (so it is alleged) demonstrable from the Bible. However, proponents of doctrines alleged not to be demonstrable typically argue that their doctrines are, in fact, demonstrable. These proponents may then attribute the allegation of lack of demonstrability to a deliberate bias against the doctrines in question, rather than to an actual lack of demonstrability. Thus, for example, Catholics might accuse Orthodox and Protestant Christians of (wilfully or otherwise) not attending to the clear evidence in Scripture for Christ's establishment of the Papacy. An alternative but related strategy (as indicated later in the thesis) would be to attribute the inability or unwillingness to recognise the demonstrability of a doctrine to the fact that those unable and/or unwilling are not Christians at all. Thus, while it may be that doctrinal disagreement is, in *some* cases, due to lack of demonstration; Christians themselves argue that this alleged deficit is not applicable to all cases.

My argument at this point, then, is that disagreement *could* show that there is no public demonstration with respect to doctrines over which there is disagreement. This argument is not to concede, however, that there has not been (or cannot be) in principle any public demonstration, or that there is or has been no public demonstration with respect to doctrines over which there is agreement. To the contrary, there is agreement that demonstration can occur, and that demonstration has occurred with respect to at least some doctrines, particularly core doctrines. Nevertheless, and although I argue to the contrary later in the thesis, I am happy to concede at the outset that there are *some* revealed doctrines that are not, or at least may not be, demonstrably revealed. The key reason I can comfortably make this concession is that my interest in this thesis is not so much on cases where Christians (or Christians and alleged non-Christians) disagree that demonstration has

occurred, but rather on cases where Christians agree that demonstration has occurred, but where I take the contrary position. For this reason, I am happy to let any counter-examples go for the moment, and focus instead on those examples which are agreed (by Christians) to be demonstrably revealed.

Finally, the notion of demonstration to which I appeal is, perhaps obviously, an *externalist* one. The internal-external distinction has been widely used with respect to the justification of belief (e.g., BonJour & Sosa, 2003; Feldman, 2006; Kornblith, 2001). One version of the internal-external distinction is that beliefs are justified by some mental state of the believer (internal justification), as opposed to some external (external, that is, to the believer) evidence justifying belief. The internal-external distinction can be extended to the case of verification. On this extension, internal verification refers to some mental state of the believer that verifies for the believer that (in the case of this thesis) a given proposition is revealed. For example, the ‘inner witness’ (or received *testimony*) of the Holy Spirit (cf. Romans 8:16. 1 John 5:10) could be sufficient to internally (and thus *privately*) verify for the believer that a proposition is revealed, and so be sufficient to justify the belief that the proposition is revealed. However, when it comes to public verification of divine revelation, an externalist conception is in play. For example, the miracles of Jesus (or those of the Old Testament prophets or New Testament Apostles) are said verify that their respective messages (spoken or written) are of divine origin (Pope Paul VI, 1965). However, once the canon of Scripture is settled, then demonstrated correspondence of a proposition with a proposition in CR is taken as the external test of whether a proposition is revealed or not. Thus, external reference to CR is the method by which propositions are verified. The various ways in which propositions are shown to correspond to those in CR constitutes the method of theology for verifying propositions, to which I turn next.

The Method of Theology

The nature and scope of theology as a discipline is hotly disputed in the literature (Cortez, 2005; Keogh, 2015; Towey, 2013; Williams, 1999). Typically, however, definitions of theology include methods for discerning what has been revealed in and through sacred texts. In this thesis I take a more critical approach to theology than is typical in the literature (e.g., Migliore, 2004). I do agree that theology can involve the more or less benign attempt to discern in sacred texts those propositions that have been revealed. However, much of theology, or so I will argue, involves coming to a sacred text (say the Bible) with a pre-existing commitment that given propositions are revealed. The task then is to show that the text says what the text must say in order for various propositions to be taken as revealed by that text. One key motivation for this task is to provide justification (to an external i.e., non-Christian audience) for the claim that a given proposition is true. Another motivation for the task is to enable the weight of divine authority to be assigned (by a Christian audience) to a proposition. A third motivation is to fix (in the individual believer) the belief that various propositions are revealed.

I am at pains to show throughout the thesis exactly how and why some methods Christians use to seek to demonstrate that the Bible reveals certain propositions in fact fail to show that these propositions are revealed by the Bible. In doing so, I am not seeking to undermine Christianity, even if such a thing was possible. Rather, I am seeking to show that the extent to which Christianity is a revealed religion has been (or, at least, may have been) overestimated by Christians often, as is shown in my final chapter, to Christianity's own detriment. As such, Christians would benefit from, rather than be harmed by, reducing the number of propositions they take to be revealed.

Theologically, verification of the revealed status of propositions can be achieved by demonstration from CR because this content represents information supplied by God himself, not information attributable to human imagination or some other source (Pope Paul

VI, 1965). For the purposes of verifying propositions, CR should ideally provide enough information such that a given proposition is either explicit in or can be deduced from this content. In such circumstances the *source* of the proposition is unquestionable because neither correct observation of explicit propositions nor valid deduction from explicit propositions adds any information to CR. Moreover, deduction preserves the truth of CR and does not result in any contradictory propositions being inferred from CR, assuming CR is propositionally consistent in the first place. For this reason, observation and deduction are proper *methods* for verifying revealed propositions.

In many cases, however, there is insufficient information in CR to directly observe or deduce propositions said to be revealed. To use some key examples, the propositions that *Jesus is God*, *God is a Trinity*, *Jesus died as a penal substitute for our sins* and *Hell will be populated for eternity* are neither explicit in or deducible from CR. Rather, these propositions are induced from CR. Induction proceeds by selecting, ordering and prioritising propositions explicit in and/or deduced from CR such that these propositions yield another proposition as an inductive conclusion from CR. This inductive selection, ordering and prioritising of explicit and deduced propositions is a standard operating procedure within the method of theology. Induction allows certain propositions to be recovered from CR even where information in CR is insufficient to explicitly observe or deduce these propositions. However, as it turns out, induction returns too many propositions - in the sense that induction returns from CR both propositions thought to be revealed and propositions thought not to be revealed. This returning of too many propositions is what I define as the *problem of induction* when applied to the verification by demonstration of divine revelation (cf. Boulter, 2002; Smith, 2012). In the thesis, I specifically address the possible resolution of the problem of induction, with particular reference to the use of abductive reasoning in developing doctrines that: (a) select preferred induced propositions, (b) resolve any conflicts

between preferred induced propositions and CR, and (c) amplify CR such that this amplified content deductively secures the revealed status of otherwise induced propositions.

Limitations of the Investigation

Given the preceding introduction, my target in this thesis is firmly on the use of induction to verify by demonstration the revealed status of propositions, and on the use of abduction to potentially rescue induction where induction fails to do so. However, because my target is near to several other targets addressed in the literature, this section lists and then explains targets I do *not* intend to directly address in the thesis.

Specifically, my targets in this thesis are not (either individually or in any particular combination): (a) justifying the project of verifying (or attempting to verify) the revealed status of propositions; (b) the validity or otherwise of induction and abduction *per se* as modes of inference; (c) the use *in principle* of induction and abduction in theology, apologetics or any other Christian enterprise; (d) the *historical use* of induction, abduction or any other method to *initially establish* CR; (e) the use of induction or abduction to establish or demonstrate *the truth* of propositions allegedly in CR; (f) the use of induction and abduction to *justify, or provide warrant for, the belief* that certain propositions are in CR; (g) *any means other* than observation of, and logical inference from, CR (e.g., appeals to faith, authority, and tradition) that *Christians* might use to verify the revealed status of propositions; and, finally, (h) *any means other* than observation of, and logical inference from, CR that *non-believers* might consider *or have historically considered* appropriate for the verification of either the content or the source of religious (particularly *Christian* religious) propositions. I also, for terminological clarity, comment as to why I have not used *authentication* or *confirmation* in preference to *verification* when describing the approach of the thesis.

Aiming at my target may have any number of implications for these other targets, some of which I identify in the thesis. However, hitting (or missing) these other targets is not my direct concern, as explained in what follows.

First, in conducting the investigation, I am not seeking to argue either way that Christians *should* (normatively) or should not be involved in the project of verifying, or seeking to verify the revealed status of propositions. I simply observe that Christians are (descriptively) involved in this project. As such, I set aside those positions which assert that, whether religious propositions are verifiable or not (verifiable, that is, in terms of their revealed status), such verification is unnecessary or even undesirable. These positions typically assert that even if propositions are unverifiable, this unverifiability does not threaten acceptance of various propositions as true. Religious propositions are, in this sense, said to be verification-transcendent in terms of belief. Fideism (e.g., Carroll, 2008; Penelhum, 2010) for example, implies that the truth of propositions can be accepted on faith without any particular demonstration that a given proposition is revealed. Moreover, there is a worry that any requirement for evidence to support the revealed status of propositions effectively imposes an arbitrary external standard that does not properly apply to religious propositions or religious belief. The apologetic approach *Presuppositionalism* (Bahnsen, 1998) for example, asserts that evidence is not necessary to defend a given proposition as revealed and thus as true. Not only that, but a focus on evidence may also be unhelpful because it detracts from a focus on the epistemic commitments underlying belief which, in the eyes of the presuppositionalist, is the real issue.

Contrary to these views, however, and as evidenced by the extensive theological and apologetic literature associated with any given contentious proposition, Christians do not typically seem happy to accept or assert on faith alone that various propositions are true without some evidence-based demonstration that they are revealed (e.g., Craig & Moreland, 2003). Thus, even if evidence that a proposition is revealed is not considered to be essential

to faith or apologetics, in practice it is considered desirable. Further, if Christians seek to entertain discourse with non-believers concerning propositions Christians believe to be revealed, some sort of publicly available evidence will presumably have to be brought to the table at some stage. Fideism and Presuppositionalism provide no room for such discourse. Faith is inscrutable, and Christian presuppositions do not provide *common* ground from which discourse may ensue. Second, there is much argument in the literature, both historically (see the classic treatment by Hume, 1777/2021; cf. Laplace, 1814/1995) and currently (e.g., Campbell & Franklin, 2004; Howson, 2000; Psillos, 2002) concerning the validity or otherwise of induction and abduction as modes of inference. I neither seek to attack nor defend induction or abduction *per se*. Again, I simply note that induction and abduction are used by Christians for the purposes of verification, and follow the consequences of that use. Others may wish *in principle* (i.e., normatively) to rule in, or rule out, the use of induction and abduction. In contrast, I simply accept (descriptively) what is the case, and move on from there. In other words, I allow that induction and abduction may well be appropriate methods of inference for any number of *other* purposes, including for certain religious or theological purposes. However, so I argue, they are not appropriate methods for verifying revealed propositions. As such, my case against induction and abduction is narrowly focussed on certain purposes for which I think they are not suited.

On a related point, even if some Christians accept the use of induction and abduction more generally, they may not accept the use of induction and abduction with respect to theology, apologetics, evangelism or any number of other Christian endeavours (Boulter, 2002). Again, I do not seek to argue a case either way. Christians who normatively rule out induction and abduction with respect to Christian reasoning in general (e.g., Geisler, 1968) need not be troubled by my thesis. I would say, however, that in practice I know of no Christian works in the theological or philosophical literature that do not use, at least in some limited way, induction in their reasoning – even if they may avow otherwise. Yet, I need not

press this case. If there are Christians who claim to have a blanket exclusion of induction and abduction, I do not seek to debate this claim.

I am also not directly concerned with a historical analysis of how Christians may have used induction or abduction in the past to initially arrive at their religious propositions (e.g., Guarino, 2006; Hauser & Watson, 2003; McGrath, 2001). I do use historical examples throughout the thesis, but mostly to demonstrate the processes of verification, rather than to demonstrate that or how induction and abduction may have been used to generate propositions thought in the first place to be revealed. The reason this distinction is important is because I am primarily interested in how Christians of today seek to convince themselves and others that certain propositions they *already* think to be revealed are revealed, rather than how Christians of the past came initially to think that certain propositions are revealed – even if these processes happen to be related in some way.

This study is distinguishable from previous investigations, both philosophical (e.g., Gelpi, 1999; Hanfling, 1986; King, 2012; Swinburne, 2011) and theological (Clarke, 1958; Voak, 2008), that have addressed the issue of verifying the *truth* or otherwise of religious propositions. Philosophical studies emanating from atheistic and/or naturalistic perspectives (perhaps most famously studies by Ayer e.g., Ayer, 1937; cf. Notturmo, 1997) have typically attempted to show that religious propositions are *in principle* unverifiable in terms of truth i.e., that the *truth* of religious propositions is not able to be determined. On the other hand, philosophical and theological studies emanating from theistic and supernatural perspectives have typically attempted to show that the truth of religious propositions is, at least in principle, verifiable (e.g., McGrath, 2001; Plantinga, 2000) – even if one might have to wait until after death to enact such verification e.g., Hick’s (1990) eschatological verification.

In this study, I am not attempting to show that the truth of religious propositions *per se* is verifiable or not by induction, abduction or any other means. Rather, I am assuming that in context of revealed religions (Christianity in particular) the revealed status of

religious propositions is verifiable. Further, if the revealed status of a proposition is verifiable then the truth of that proposition is verifiable because all divinely revealed propositions are true. However, I go on to show that even assuming that the revealed status of propositions is in principle verifiable, many of Christianity's religious propositions turn out not to be verified or verifiable in practice. As indicated already, the reason for this situation is that the methods purporting to demonstrate the revealed status of propositions do not actually do so in many cases. The truth, then, of these unverified propositions remains undetermined. In other words, without ruling in or out the verifiability of the truth of religious propositions at the outset, empirically the truth of many of Christianity's religious propositions ends up being unverified because the revealed status of these propositions is unverified and (as I will argue) unverifiable.

Related to the preceding observations, a key distinction in the thesis is between the justification of belief and the verification of propositions corresponding to beliefs. For the purposes of this thesis, justification means providing *reasons* for belief. Verification means providing *evidence* by some correct *method* (in this case, demonstration through observation and logical inference) that something believed to be the case is, in fact, the case. Studies in religious belief have typically concerned the justification of such beliefs (e.g., McGrath, 2009; Seymore, 2000; Plantinga, 2000). Following these studies, this study could have investigated the reasons Christians provide for their belief that certain propositions are revealed. Rather, my interest is in the success or otherwise of the methods Christians use to demonstrate that certain propositions are revealed. Evidence generated through such methods can, of course, be used as one reason to justify a belief. As such, verification can be used for the purposes of justification. However, this does not imply that justification can be used for the purposes of verification, a point to which I return later in the thesis. Thus, unlike many previous studies, my main focus remains on verification itself.

A closely related issue to the justification of belief is warrant for belief – a notion introduced by Plantinga in the context of “Reformed epistemology” (Plantinga, 2000; cf. Zagzebski, 1993). Briefly and broadly, the distinction between justification and warrant is that justification applies to people and their reasons for belief, whereas warrant applies to beliefs themselves and the methods or means used to arrive at those beliefs. Thus, we could say that Smith is justified in believing p if Smith can provide reasons for their belief in p . In contrast, Smith’s belief that p is the case is warranted if Smith arrived at that belief by some proper method or means. In Plantinga’s conceptualisation of warrant, for example, a belief is warranted if the belief is arrived at by *means* of properly functioning cognitive faculties.

One could (perhaps at a stretch, but if it was helpful) construe this thesis in terms of warrant i.e., belief that a given proposition is revealed could be deemed to be warranted if that belief was arrived at by some proper method or means. Under this construal, the thesis could be seen to provide a case against two particular methods i.e., induction and abduction, as being proper methods for providing warrant for a particular belief or set of beliefs i.e., that certain propositions are revealed. The work of the thesis, then, is to provide reasons why *methodologically* induction and abduction do not provide warrant for the belief that certain propositions are revealed.

Two key reasons I have not framed the thesis in this way are that: (a) as epistemology, Reformed epistemology has typically focussed on the *cognitive means* rather than the *logical methods* that may confer warrant on a belief and, (b) perhaps more importantly, with respect to divine revelation, Christians do not typically see themselves as providing *warrant for* (or, for that matter, *justification of*) the belief that certain propositions are revealed. Rather, they are seeking to establish that these propositions are, *in fact*, revealed as they claim them to be. If p is established in fact to be revealed, this fact of course confers warrant on the belief that p is revealed. However, belief that p is revealed may be warranted, and yet p is not, in fact, the case (e.g., Gettier, or Gettier-like, cases; see

Zagzebski, 1994). In particular, a belief may be warranted in the sense that it was formed by some proper *means*, yet be false for *methodological* reasons e.g., a lack of, or false, information available when the belief was being formed.

Christians might argue that their belief forming faculties or processes with respect to divine revelation (perhaps on a collective level, e.g., Dorman, 1998; Harkianakis, 2008) are infallible. If this was the case then any belief that a proposition is revealed would be warranted. However, in the absence of a test for infallibility, there is no way to determine whether a belief is warranted by infallibility. Hence, the appeal to infallibility for warrant does not (or, at least, may not) get the Christian where they typically want to be. It may be, of course, that some (maybe many) Christians are satisfied with untested warrant *for* the belief that certain propositions are revealed. However, for the *non*-believer, or even *other* believers in the context of theological disputes, it doesn't much matter whether Christians believe it is the case *that p* is warranted by infallibility. For these 'outsiders' what matters is whether *p* actually is warranted by infallibility. For these reasons, the focus on verification by demonstration remains the correct framing for the thesis.

Christians, of course, are not limited to observation of, and inference from, CR when seeking to verify the revealed status of propositions. As indicated earlier in this chapter, Christians might use appeals to faith (or, closely aligned, religious experience), authority, tradition, or any number of other means to verify this status (e.g., Catholic Church, 2012; Hardon, 2003). I am not seeking in this thesis to argue against these other means for verifying revealed propositions. I have noted, however, that the extent to which these means *actually* verify propositions is not amenable to philosophical investigation. Theologically, of course, Christians could argue that true faith, proper authority and authentic tradition – or more concrete means such as particular religious experiences or miracles – all verify revealed propositions. Philosophically, perhaps even psychologically, one could also argue that and how testimony (e.g., Wahlberg, 2014), authority, or tradition could be veridical for

the believer. However, neither of these approaches address the logical and methodological issues of central concern in this thesis.

Put in subjective terms, if someone claims (perhaps based on their theological, psychological or philosophical understandings) that the experience of their faith, the proclamations of their authority, or correspondence to their tradition, verifies that certain propositions are revealed; I am not in a position to make an *analytical* judgement either way. I can only accept or reject the claim based on the manifest convincingness of a person's testimony, the felt weight of the authority to which they appeal, or the apparent authenticity of their particular tradition. Again, I do not dispute that any or all of these means may be veridical for the believer. However, I do point out in Chapter 5 of the thesis that I *am* in position to judge whether these sources effectively constrain induction such that induction returns only revealed propositions. Thus, I leave it to the believer to judge whether *they* find any means *other than* observation of, and inference from, CR to provide verification. I restrict my analyses to the latter.

If they accept that the content or source of religious propositions can be verified at all, *non-believers* might demand, or have demanded in the past, that particular means or methods be used in order to achieve this task. The classic example is Verificationism (Ayer, 1937) which demanded that empirical evidence be the standard by which the truth, indeed the very meaningfulness, of propositions be judged. Of course, by "empirical evidence" verificationists meant a particular *type* of empirical evidence i.e., evidence generated through the senses. The spirit of Verificationism is carried on by the contemporary "new atheists" (Kaden & Schmidt-Lux, 2016). These atheists rule out the existence of God and, hence, the possibility of divine revelation, on the basis that there is no "scientific" evidence i.e., evidence generated by the scientific *method*, usually meaning the method of systematically testing hypotheses; either directly for God, or indirectly for things allegedly caused by God such as miracles, answered prayer or the inspiration of Scripture.

Although I use the term “verification” to describe my approach to revealed propositions, I do not do so because I am trying to resurrect or replicate the Verificationist project in any way. Nor do I do so because I am seeking to satisfy new atheists (or any contemporary non-believer) with respect to my methodology. That said, my approach is verificationist (small ‘v’) in the sense that it demands a certain sort of evidence i.e., evidence in CR, and a certain method i.e., establishing the correspondence of propositions to those either explicitly in or inferred from CR. However, my approach is *not* verificationist in the sense that it does not state or imply (as indicated already) that this evidence and method is, in principle, the *only* evidence or method that could ever count towards verifying propositions as revealed. Later in the thesis I do, however, argue that this is the *only available* evidence and method (at least this side of death, assuming God chooses to remain hidden in the meantime) that can *publicly* verify revealed propositions.

Finally, there is the issue of whether I should use terminology other than verification to describe the approach of the thesis. Specifically, the terms *authentication* (e.g., Gelpi, 1999; Swinburne, 2007) and *confirmation* (e.g., Steel, 2007; Votsis, 2014) are currently used in the literature with respect to divine revelation. So, perhaps these terms are better than *verification* which, since the demise of Verificationism, has been a term out of favour in religious epistemology and more widely in the philosophical literature. The term *authentication* has been used in the literature with respect to God’s revelation of Himself, or of information about Himself, captured in the Bible (Swinburne, 2007). Specifically, the concern with respect to authentication has been whether the Bible itself can be treated as divine revelation and/or as a vehicle for divine revelation. If so, the question then concerns the distinguishing features of the Bible that mark it out as being or conveying divine revelation. In this thesis, I am not seeking to dispute that the Bible itself either is and/or conveys divine revelation. In contrast, I assume (see the Assumptions stated later in this chapter) that this is the case. In other words, I assume that the Bible is and/or carries

authentic divine revelation. However, I don't on the basis of this assumption make the related assumption that all propositions inferred from authentic divine revelation are themselves authentic - in the sense that they represent propositions God intends to communicate in or through the Bible. Given that my focus is on these inferences from the Bible, rather than on the Bible itself, authentication is not the correct designation for the thesis.

In the literature, *confirmation* has several meanings. First, the plain language meaning is to seek to confirm that which is asserted to be true. Confirmation is distinct from *falsification* which seeks to disconfirm that which is asserted to be true. Verification, as defined in this thesis, is distinct from both confirmation and falsification in that it seeks neither to confirm nor disconfirm the truth of a proposition at the outset, but seeks evidence upon which the truth of an assertion can be evaluated. In other words, verification admits that there is some doubt over whether something is the case or not, whereas confirmation does not admit the negative option and falsification does not admit the positive option. In terms of this thesis, it is the case that Christians assume that the propositions *they* take to be revealed are revealed. However, I am most interested in cases where Christians disagree that certain propositions asserted by *others* to be revealed are revealed. Hence, verification is, again, the most appropriate designation for the thesis.

Second, *confirmation theory* (see Huber, 2008 for a review of Hempel's classic treatment) refers to the specification and exploration of plausible non-deductive (typically inductive) models for confirmation. Thus, confirmation theory assumes that there are, or at least may be, models of inductive inference suited for confirmation. I do not seek to argue that there are not an indefinite number of inductive models that might *subjectively* confirm for the believer that propositions already taken to be revealed are revealed. Indeed, Christians are very creative with respect to the ways they use induction and abduction to subjectively confirm the revealed status of propositions. However, I do seek to argue that

induction cannot be rehabilitated for the purposes of verification with respect to revealed propositions. Thus, I am not searching for appropriate models of induction for confirmation, but rather I am seeking to show there are *no* appropriate models of induction for verification (again, limited to this *particular* domain). For this reason, confirmation theory is not the appropriate theoretical framework for the thesis.

Lastly, one might think that certain probabilistic models (particularly Bayesian models, see Steel, 2007) of confirmation could be applied to the verification of revealed propositions. Again, I would say not so. Even successful Bayesian models only allow that such and such is probably the case. Yet, probability (as noted later in the thesis) does not apply to divine revelation – at least not to Christian divine revelation. No Christian says, for example, that it has *probably* been revealed that God is a Trinity, or Jesus has *most likely* revealed that He is God, or the *most probable* inference is that the Bible reveals that Jesus died as a penal substitute for sin. Christian divine revelation is binary: either something has been revealed or it has not. Hence, probabilistic models are not appropriate for confirmation or verification (or any other related evaluation) of Christian divine revelation.

Given the limitations outlined above, perhaps it is the case that very few Christians would fall within the ambit of this thesis. In the next section of this chapter, I argue to the contrary, with specific reference to the justification and warranting of religious belief as these latter epistemic activities have been the focus of recent investigations.

Verification verses Justification and Warranting

In this section I address the contention that while some, maybe many, Christians might think that their belief that certain propositions are revealed can be justified, or that the belief itself is warranted by some means or method; perhaps very few think that the revealed status of propositions can and/or need be demonstrated and thus verified.

To begin with, and having just specified what I am *not* attempting to address in the thesis, it will be helpful to specify further the epistemic approach I am targeting in the thesis. To facilitate this further specification, Table 1 shows the differences between justification, warranting and verification with respect to the *content* and *source* of propositions.

Table 1

Justifying, Warranting and Verifying

Aspect of Proposition	Justifying	Warranting	Verifying
<i>Content</i>	Justifying the belief that <i>p</i> e.g., Justifying the belief that Jesus is the Son of God	Proving warrant for the belief that <i>p</i> e.g., showing (or at least asserting) that the belief that Jesus is the Son of God was formed by some proper means or method	Verifying that <i>p</i> is the case e.g., demonstrating that Jesus is, in fact, the Son of God
<i>Source</i>	Justifying the belief that <i>S</i> is the source of <i>p</i> e.g., justifying the belief that Jesus has revealed that He is the Son of God	Proving warrant for the belief that <i>S</i> is the source of <i>p</i> e.g., showing (or at least asserting) that the belief that Jesus has revealed that He is the Son of God was formed by some proper means or method	Verifying that <i>S</i> is the source of <i>p</i> e.g., demonstrating that Jesus has, in fact, revealed that He is the Son of God

In terms of Table 1, my target in this thesis is those seeking to verify the source of propositions, represented by the bottom right cell of Table 1. One might think that this is a somewhat esoteric target. However, again I would argue that this is not the case. As already indicated, assuming God's continued hiddenness, the content of many religious propositions cannot be *directly* i.e., empirically, verified this side of death. Christians themselves agree with this assertion (O'Callaghan, 2001) and, in doing so, agree in part with the Verificationists. However, if a religious proposition is revealed it is true and, in this *indirect* sense, the content of the proposition is verified. Thus, while Christians might agree with the Verificationists that their religious propositions cannot be directly verified on earth, they

would not agree that these propositions cannot be indirectly verified. Thus, they would not agree that their religious propositions are meaningless, even if we were to impose Verificationist standards on those propositions. The main point here, however, is that by verifying the source of divinely revealed propositions, Christians also verify the content of those propositions. Hence, the project of verifying the source of propositions is by no means a side-show for Christians.

Verification of the source of propositions is also attested to historically. In the citations that follow, I identify just a small sample of material available in the Church Fathers regarding the verification of truths alleged to be revealed. I cite the Church Fathers on this matter for three reasons. The first is to establish that the verification of propositions is not just a project engaged in by contemporary Christians in response to current evidential standards. Nor, for that matter, is the verification project one that is foisted on, or attempted to be foisted on, Christians by the present author. Rather, verification is a project in which Christians have willingly engaged for nearly two millennia. Second, the term *verify*, and its attendant terms e.g., *observation*, *demonstration*, *confirmation*, and *affirmation*; are not just my terms, but were used by the Church Fathers to describe their own intent. Thus, *verify* and *verification* are terms not beholden to any twentieth century Verificationist or other perspective that might be illegitimately brought to the analyses in the thesis. Rather, they are terms authentic to the Christian tradition. Finally, contemporary Christians (at least Catholic and Orthodox Christians, who account for approximately 1.4 billion of two billion Christians (c. 70%) currently on earth) claim explicitly to follow the example and consensus of the Church Fathers with respect to faith and doctrine. Thus, if following the Church Fathers, a significant number of contemporary Christians must also be involved in the verification of revealed propositions.

With these reason in mind, and without engaging in detailed commentary, the citations demonstrate that verification and its analogues are clearly evident in the work of the Church Fathers.

A sound mind, and one which does not expose its possessor to danger, and is devoted to piety and the love of truth, will eagerly meditate upon those things which God has placed within the power of mankind, and has subjected to our knowledge, and will make advancement in [acquaintance with] them, rendering the knowledge of them easy to him by means of daily study. These things are such as fall [plainly] under our observation, and are clearly and unambiguously in express terms set forth in the Sacred Scriptures. (Irenaeus of Lyon, 1885/2020, Ch. 27, para. 1)

I will put off fuller demonstration till we meet. When we do, it will be possible for me to answer objections, to give you fuller proofs from Scripture, and to confirm all the sound rule of faith. (Basil of Caesarea, Letter CLIX, para. 2)

Therefore, let God-inspired Scripture decide between us; and on whichever side be found doctrines in harmony with the word of God, in favour of that side will be cast the vote of truth. (Basil of Caesarea, Letter CLXXIX, para. 3)

And yet among them are many (different) doctrines. For if you accept without more ado just what you are told, this is not acting like a man: but if you have judgment and sense, you shall assuredly know what is good. We affirm the Son to be God, we verify what we affirm... (John Chrysostom, Homily XXXIII, para. 4)

As then we set forth the testimonies concerning His Cross, so come let us now verify the proofs of His Resurrection also: since the Apostle before us affirms, He was buried, and has been raised on the third day according to the Scriptures. As an Apostle, therefore, has sent us back to the testimonies of the Scriptures, it is good that we should get full knowledge of the hope of our salvation... (Cyril of Alexandria, Lecture XIV, para. 3)

But this all inspired Scripture also teaches more plainly and with more authority, so that we in our turn write boldly to you as we do, and you, if you refer to them, will be able to verify what we say. For an argument when confirmed by higher authority is irresistibly proved. (Athanasius of Alexandria, Against the Heathen, Part III, para. 11)

Having specified my target in terms of the *source* verification of religious propositions, and provided an explanation for why Christians are interested in such verification, the question still remains as to how many Christians are involved in such source verification. In order to answer this question, it will be helpful to briefly outline how

Christians go about the source verification project, and then provide examples from the literature to show that this approach is common.

In Christian theology, across all branches of Christianity, the Bible is the Word of God. Designating the Bible as the Word of God means different things to different Christians. However, at the very least, this designation means that God is the ultimate origin, the *source*, of the Bible. Thus, propositions expressed in the Bible are traceable, ultimately, to God – not just to the human authors of the Bible. This traceability is, of course, the whole point of the consulting the Bible in the first place. When the Christian, acting as evangelist, apologist, pastor, theologian or just ‘ordinary’ believer; says “the Bible says...”, “the Bible commands us to...”, “the Bible reveals that...”, they mean to imply (and sometimes just explicitly state) that “God says....”, “God commands us to....”, “God reveals that....”. In other words, ultimately it is God, not any human author of a biblical text, who “speaks” to us in and through the Bible. To cite the Bible, then, is to *source* given propositions expressed in the Bible to God. Where such propositions are otherwise *unknowable* (see Chapter 3 for a fuller treatment of divine revelation) they are not only divinely *sourced* but divinely *revealed* (revelation means to make the otherwise unknowable known). Thus Stewart (2020) can say:

The foundation of the Christian faith is that the living God has spoken to humanity and His words have been recorded in the Bible. In the entire history of the church, Christian teaching and preaching has been based upon the belief that the Scriptures are of divine origin. Humans spoke, God spoke. Therefore, when we speak of the authority of the Bible, we mean that the words of Scripture are the words of God. (para. 33).

Now, imagine the situation where any Christian for any purpose claims that *p* (a given Christian religious proposition) is revealed. Note that the claim here is not: “I believe *p* is revealed”, or “the belief that *p* is revealed is warranted”, but rather “*p* is (in fact) revealed”. The claimant will then typically follow by citing one or more quotations from the Bible. The purpose of citing these quotations is to *demonstrate* the alleged fact that *p* is

revealed i.e., to demonstrate that the *source* of the otherwise unknowable proposition is God not man. Put another way, the logic behind citing the Bible is that if a proposition claimed to be revealed can be inferred from the Bible the proposition is thereby verified to be revealed. The problem with this logic, as is pointed out throughout the thesis, is that *according to Christians* not all propositions inferable from CR are revealed. Hence, while Christians might think that ‘simple’ inference from CR is sufficient to demonstrate that a proposition is revealed, an additional step is required i.e., demonstrating that the proposition is *correctly* inferred from CR. However, leaving this second step aside for the moment, the following quotes indicate that Christians see the verification of alleged revelation as central to the Christian faith.

Revelation, then, is not an interior emotional experience; it is a statement of truth made to man in a definite place, at a definite time, by a personal God who is outside and distinct from the recipient. Moreover, it is essential to the concept of revelation as understood by the Church that the statement in question be authenticated: the statement is received by the believer as made by God, and accepted because it is made by God. Infused knowledge, therefore, unless it is infused with clear notification of its divine origin, is not the revelation which faith presupposes. (Smith, 2020, para. 20)

We believe that the Word contained in these books has proceeded from God, and receives its authority from him alone, and not from men. And in as much as it is the rule of all truth, containing all that is necessary for the service of God and for our salvation, it is not lawful for men, nor even for angels, to add to it, or to take away from it, or to change it. Whence it follows that no authority, whether of antiquity, or custom, or numbers, or human wisdom, or judgments, or proclamations, or edicts, or decrees, or councils, or visions, or miracles, should be opposed to these Holy Scriptures, but on the contrary, all things should be examined, regulated, and reformed according to them. (The French Confession of Faith, 1559/2021, p. 2)

Truth is not something we invent, only something we can discover. God reveals it to us in His Word. (Alcorn, 2017, para. 8)

[Unless] we have direct access to revelation normatively presented, by which we may test and correct our own fallible notions [we are left] to drift on a sea of speculations and doubts. (Packer, 1958, pp. 96-99)

As the instrument through which divine authority is present and operative in the church, Scripture is primary in the church’s governance and fundamental to instruction in the Christian religion as well as to the church’s theological self-articulation and its processes of discernment and judgment. (Webster, 2005, p. 724)

The point of these quotations is to show that Christians are not just interested in the *justification* or *warranting* of belief with respect to an alleged divine revelation, but the *authentication, examination, discovery, testing and discernment* that something is (or, at least, corresponds to) a divine revelation. Thus, verification is not a minor concern in Christianity. It is certainly the case that justification, warranting and verification can occur closely together. However, there is a clear difference: that difference being whether the Bible is cited in support of belief (in the case of justification), or in support of a belief (in the case of warranting), or whether the Bible is cited as evidence of an alleged fact. Thus, I could use the Bible to justify *my* belief, or *the* belief, that Jesus has revealed that He is the Son of God; or to demonstrate *the fact* that Jesus has revealed that He is the Son of God. The first two uses imply justification and warranting, the third verification. Importantly, *all* these uses characterise Christian epistemology.

Having outlined the limitations, and further specified the focus, of the thesis; it makes contextual sense to now go on to state the assumptions underlying my approach to the thesis.

Assumptions

For the purposes of this thesis, I make several assumptions. The scope of these assumptions facilitates the approach I take to the thesis. Broadly, this approach is to grant Christians as many of their core assumptions as possible. Very often discussions and debates on religious topics fail to make any headway because participants refuse to concede anything of substance to their opponents. In contrast, I am willing to concede to Christians a good deal of ground in order to demonstrate that, even taken on its own terms, Christianity fails to verify many of its core propositions. Specifically, I demonstrate that even taking the actuality of divine revelation as a given, Christianity has not verified, and cannot verify, as many propositions as it claims are revealed.

Given this statement regarding my approach to the thesis, I assume the following:

- (a) The Christian God exists. By adopting this assumption, I intend to distinguish the thesis from other work that may adopt an atheistic, agnostic or deistic stance in critiquing divine revelation. The argumentative structure I use does not require me to dispose of the Christian God before proceeding.
- (b) God reveals Himself (divine *self*-revelation) and the true state of affairs past, present and future (divine *cosmic*-revelation). The assumption implies that I am not attempting to mount a critique against the actuality or the efficacy of divine revelation based on (say) arguments from the silence or hiddenness of God (e.g., Aijaz & Weidler, 2007). Rather my aim is to show that, even assuming God has revealed Himself, the methodologies Christians use to attempt to demonstrate and thus verify the propositional content of divine revelation fail. Moreover, so as not to degenerate into facile argumentation, it is both more interesting and more appropriate to explore potential difficulties in verifying putatively revealed propositions assuming that God actually has revealed Himself and the true state-of-affairs rather than to assume he has not.
- (c) God's divine self- and cosmic-revelation is propositional. Here I assume, aware of the extensive debates on the issue (e.g., Brotherton, 2016; Lewis, 2003), that divine revelation is propositional not 'just' historical, narrative, or experiential. This assumption means that I agree with those Christians (e.g., Joyce, 1912/2020; Feinberg, 2018; Piper, 2016) who assert that the content of revelation is publicly verifiable (or falsifiable) by analysis of its sacred texts. In the case of this thesis, I focus on the Protestant Bible, but my arguments apply equally as well to the Catholic Bible, the Orthodox Bible, or any other of Christianity's sacred texts.

- (d) The logical relationship of a proposition to CR may, in principle, be demonstrated by any form of logical inference, not limited to deduction. This assumption means that I do not arbitrarily constrain the modes of inference by which propositions can be shown to be revealed. However, I do point out the limitations of modes of inference other than deduction for the demonstration, and hence verification, of the revealed status of propositions.
- (e) Verifying the revealed status of a proposition is a sufficient condition for verifying the truth of that proposition. Yet, conversely, verifying the truth of a proposition is not a sufficient condition for verifying the revealed status of that proposition. This situation applies because all divinely revealed propositions are true, but not all true propositions are divinely revealed. The point of this assumption is that much philosophical and theological argumentation gets bogged down in attempting to prove the *truth* of various propositions as if that was enough to demonstrate that a proposition is revealed. In contrast, I assume that the truth, but more than the truth alone, of a proposition has to be demonstrated in order for that proposition to be taken as revealed.

Definitions

The key definitions applicable to the thesis follow. These definitions will be expanded in the thesis as appropriate. However, the definitions are provided here as an initial reference point for the reader, not least in order make the argument presented in Chapter 2 intelligible. The definitions are not intended to be taken as normative outside the scope of the thesis. Nevertheless, they are a fair representation of the way various terms are typically defined in the theological and philosophical literature.

- (a) With some caveats dealt with in Chapter 3, *Divine revelation* is some act of God (in word or deed) intended to make known something about God or the universe

that would remain unknown and unknowable if not for the revelatory action of God. Divine revelation is taken to be deliberate and effective in all cases meaning that: (i) God does not accidentally reveal anything about Himself or the universe, and (ii) whenever God chooses to make something known by divine revelation, his revelation is successful in making at least that something known and knowable to the intended recipients.¹

- (b) The words and deeds of God, and their consequences, are recorded in Christianity's sacred texts i.e., the Bibles of various Christian traditions. *The content of divine revelation* (CR) refers to the set of propositions that are explicit in, or rightly inferred from, these sacred texts.
- (c) Those propositions comprising CR are called *revealed propositions*. Revealed propositions are: (i) statements which represent the semantic content of one or more sentences in a sacred text, and/or (ii) statements which represent correct inferences from statements in (i). Revealed propositions are, by virtue of being divinely revealed, true.
- (d) *Identification* of revealed propositions refers to any method or process that is employed for the purposes of: (i) determining and specifying the semantic content of one or more sentences explicit in sacred texts, or (ii) making correct inferences from that semantic content so as to identify propositions implicit in CR.

¹ God's revelation may also (non-accidentally) make other things known by a given revelation (i.e., God can make known more than one thing at a time by a given revelation). God may also reveal things that are not known at the point the revelation is given, but (according to the work of the Holy Spirit) are made known later on as (say) the church reflects on what has been revealed (this is precisely Newman's (2014) point concerning the development of doctrine). Further, although I do not automatically concede the point, there may be some propositions that will never be known despite the fact that they are deductively (logically) entailed by CR. Logically, these propositions are still knowable, and so God is not in any sense trying to hide these propositions. However, theologically, when God reveals something, he does not just make that something knowable, but actually makes it known. Thus, theologically, revealed propositions are those propositions that are known, even if logically there is a wider set of propositions that are knowable but will never actually known.

- (e) *Verification* of revealed propositions refers to any method or process that is employed for the purposes of determining that propositions thought or asserted to be in CR are in fact present in that content. Verification can occur with respect to the explicit and/or implicit content of revelation.
- (f) *Demonstration* is one method of verification. Demonstration involves showing (as opposed to simply asserting) that a proposition is in the content of divine revelation. At minimum, demonstration involves showing that: (i) CR is the source of a proposition, and (ii) the method used to show that CR is the source of a proposition is a correct method that has been correctly applied.
- (g) *Justification of belief* refers to the provision by a believer of reasons for holding a given belief. Verification that a proposition is revealed is one reason that could be used by a believer to justify the belief that a proposition is revealed.
- (h) *Fixation of belief* refers to the eradication of doubt concerning any given belief, including doubt as to whether a proposition corresponding to a belief is revealed or not. Verification of revealed propositions typically aims to fix the belief that any given proposition is revealed.

Structure of the Thesis

The thesis is organised as follows. This first chapter provides a brief introduction to the main topic of the thesis, and details the scope, assumptions and definitions applicable to the thesis. In Chapter 2, I outline the main argument of the thesis. This argument is fleshed out in more detail throughout the thesis. The main thrust of the argument is that Christianity is unable to verify the revealed status of many propositions it says are revealed due to the failure of all methods it brings to the task. Given this failure, Christianity remains open to the charge that it is at least partly a humanly constructed rather than a divinely revealed religion. In Chapter 3, I introduce the topic of divine revelation and its relationship to

religious doctrine and religious belief. In doing so, I discuss divine revelation from both theological and philosophical perspectives, thus providing the background necessary to understand the arguments presented in the thesis. Chapter 4 specifies the problem of induction as it applies to the method of theology. In this chapter, I show that induction is not a proper mode of inference for verifying the content of revelation, centrally due to the fact that induction returns irresolvably conflicting propositions that nevertheless lay claim to being revealed.

Having specified the problem of induction in Chapter 4, and having indicated that despite the problematic nature of induction Christians nevertheless still seek to retain induction as a means of verifying propositions, in Chapter 5 and Chapter 6 I go on to investigate putative solutions the problem of induction. In Chapter 5, I show that faith, authority and tradition fail as means of solving the problem of induction. In Chapter 6, I show that abduction as a supplementary mode of inference does, in one sense, solve the problem of induction. The solution arises because abduction provides a means of constraining induction, resolving conflicts between induced propositions, and converting inductions into deductions by amplifying the content of revelation. However, for reasons detailed in Chapter 6, abduction ultimately fails to verify induced propositions. Not least among these reasons is that abduction can be used to verify not only preferred induced propositions but also an indefinite number of other induced propositions conflicting with preferred propositions. In Chapter 7, I explore two proposed theological solutions to the unresolved problems of induction and abduction, namely material sufficiency and direct revelation. Here again, however, I show that these theological solutions fail.

Despite the failures noted in Chapters 5 to 7, Christians persist in the use of induction and abduction to verify propositions. In Chapters 8 to 10, I provide three case studies regarding the Trinity, the Atonement and Hell. Throughout these case studies, I demonstrate how abduction is used to verify allegedly revealed propositions generated by

induction. Specifically, I detail the constraining, conflict resolving, and converting functions of abduction, and note specific features of these functions with respect to each case study. However, also in each case, the particular reasons for the failure of abduction, and hence induction, are also highlighted. Together, these case studies demonstrate that induction and abduction fail to verify propositions not just in theory but also in practice.

In Chapter 11, I summarise the case studies as a whole, drawing out their salient points, and review some key distinctions made in the thesis (e.g., between belief revision and belief retention; and between verification, justification and belief fixation) as they relate to the case studies. In Chapter 12, I review support for my assertion that induction and abduction do not verify revealed propositions. I then claim that, having exhausted all possibilities, induced and abduced propositions cannot be verified. On the basis of this conclusion, I present a final argument that propositions that cannot be verified as revealed are not revealed. Finally, in Chapter 13, I frame some implications of my final argument, and of the thesis as a whole, for Christianity as revealed religion. On the basis of argument and evidence presented in the thesis, I conclude that Christianity is not, even at its core, an entirely revealed religion.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I have introduced the main topic of the thesis, the verification of divine revelation. In so doing, I have identified various methods of verification, delineated the scope of the investigation, stated the assumptions and definitions applicable to the thesis, and outlined the structure of the thesis. In Chapter 2, I present the main argument of the thesis as a prelude to pursuing this argument in the rest of the thesis.

Chapter 2

Overview of Main Argument

In this chapter I outline the main argument of the thesis. Briefly, this argument is that Christians have not and cannot demonstrate that many of the propositions they take to be revealed are revealed. Further, I argue that this non-demonstrability means these propositions are not revealed. Beginning in Chapter 4, the bulk of the thesis is dedicated to fleshing this argument out and showing in detail why the argument holds. The argument is presented in outline here, however, in order to assist the reader to navigate the more detailed work that follows in subsequent chapters. The chapter concludes with a summary of the main argument, with further background to the argument presented in Chapter 3.

Central Claims

I now make three central claims. The weakest of these claims is that Christianity has not demonstrated, and has thus not verified, that certain propositions it says are divinely revealed are divinely revealed. A stronger claim is that, because Christianity has exhausted without success all available methods in the attempt to verify allegedly revealed propositions, these propositions cannot be verified. The strongest claim is that, by virtue of the fact that these propositions cannot be verified as revealed, they are not revealed. In summary: certain propositions *have not* been verified, *cannot* be verified, and so *are not* revealed. In the rest of this chapter, I provide an argument in support of these claims.

Main Argument

Christians assert that certain propositions are divinely revealed and demonstrably so (Halilović, 2015; Lewis, 2003; Swinburne, 2011). These propositions are divinely revealed because they are directly or indirectly derived from the words and actions of God as

captured in Christianity's sacred text, the Bible (Warfield, 1970). Further, these propositions are demonstrably revealed both because the sacred text which expresses these propositions is public, and because the theological methods used to determine that propositions are revealed are also public (Dulles, 2006; Vellem, 2013).

The propositional content of revelation (what I labelled in the last chapter as 'CR') refers to those propositions that: (a) explicitly correspond to the meaning of sentences in the Bible, (b) are rightly inferred from these meanings (call these direct inferences), or (c) are rightly inferred from other rightly inferred propositions (call these indirect inferences). By "rightly inferred from" I mean three things. First, the inference must be made from the proper source (the Bible), and from that source alone. Second, the inference must be made using a proper method of inference. Third, a proper method must be applied in the correct manner. Right inference, then, means right source, right method, and right application of method.

For the purposes of this thesis, the importance of making right inferences from CR is that making such inferences is critical to correctly demonstrating and so verifying that various propositions are revealed. Thus, when asked to verify that a proposition is revealed, Christians should seek to show that the proposition is explicit in CR or can be rightly inferred from CR. According to Christians themselves, however, it is possible for Christians to make wrong inferences from CR, thus leading to the erroneous verification of propositions that are not revealed, even if such propositions are thought to be revealed (Moskala, 2015; Porter & Hollerich, 2018; Seymour, 2003). Incorrect inference occurs when the wrong source and/or the wrong method and/or the wrong application of method is used to verify propositions. Intuitively, it might seem unlikely that Christians would make wrong inferences from CR. However, because source, method and application of method are involved in making correct inferences, wrong inference is more likely than it might first appear. This situation is represented in *Figure 1*.

	Wrong Method/Application	Right Method/Application
Right Source	Incorrect Inference	Correct Inference
Wrong Source	Incorrect Inference	Incorrect Inference

Figure 1: Correct and incorrect inferences.

Figure 1 implies that, in order for Christians to correctly determine by inference that a proposition is revealed, they must be able to distinguish between both right and wrong sources and between right and wrong methods and their application. As it turns out, neither of these three tasks is as easily achieved as might first be thought. The only right source for inference from CR is propositions in CR. Yet, Christians regularly accuse other Christians of making inferences from sources other than CR or, perhaps more typically, from sources including but not limited to CR (e.g., Bahnsen, 1998; Piper, 2006). Yet the accused Christians stand firmly convinced they have made no such error, and may make the counter-accusation of their accusers. The current debate between Christians concerning the role of women in ministry (complementarian versus egalitarian e.g., Piper & Grudem, 1991) is a case in point.

The only right methods for inference from CR are those methods that lead to inferences that God intends to be made from CR. At a minimum, these methods will: (a) add nothing to CR so as not to violate the theological stipulation that revelation is closed, and (b) preserve the truth of CR because truth is a necessary condition for propositions to be taken as revealed. Despite widespread, if not universal, support amongst Christians for these methodological stipulations, Christians regularly accuse other Christians of employing wrong methods or applying right methods incorrectly such that information is added to CR and/or truth is not preserved (e.g., Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, 2007; Wolffe,

2013). As a result, according to these accusations, Christians mistakenly determine that certain propositions are in CR. The point here is that Christians agree that *other* Christians make inferential mistakes even if they fail to agree that *they* also make mistakes of inference (e.g. Coulombe, 2003; Gaillardetz, 2003). This observation sets up a key issue addressed in this thesis i.e., given that Christians potentially make wrong inferences, how do Christians show that they have correctly verified those propositions which are revealed while not erroneously verifying any that are not?

Explicit and Deduced Propositions

Amongst Christians there is little debate that propositions directly corresponding to the meaning of sentences in sacred texts are revealed (Burger, Huijgen, & Peels, 2017; Fee, 2002). Such propositions are easily accepted as revealed because they are either identical with, or are isomorphic transformations of, the meaning of those sentences. Under these conditions, the source of the propositions is explicitly the sacred text. Moreover, there is little debate that the method used to derive explicit propositions (the method of observation) alters the meaning of the text in any substantive way. Due to the normal limitations of textual indeterminacy and hermeneutical diversity, there is always the potential for debate about what various sentences mean. However, once a meaning has been settled, then a proposition corresponding to that meaning is taken to be revealed. In this thesis I label the collection of propositions derived in this way the *explicit* content of revelation.

Propositions directly or indirectly deduced from the explicit content of revelation are also easily taken to be revealed (Cassidy, 2013; Jeremiah, 1646/2010; Young, 2007). The reason for this acceptance is twofold. First, from a source perspective, where deductions are based only on propositions explicit in CR, or propositions themselves deduced from CR, deductive conclusions logically add no information to CR. Thus, any proposition deduced from CR must already be in CR – albeit implicitly. Further, God knows all propositions that

are explicit or deductively implicit in CR. God also knows that all propositions deductively implicit in CR are necessary conclusions from propositions explicit in CR. Thus, God knows that if He explicitly reveals propositions p and q , and r is a deductive conclusion from these propositions, then by revealing p and q he is also necessarily revealing r . Hence, if God intentionally reveals propositions from which other propositions are deducible God intends to reveal those deductions. This intent implies that the conclusion of any sound and valid deduction from CR must be in CR.

Second, if CR is established as the source of the premises of a deduction, then the method of deduction permits a validly deduced conclusion from those premises being taken as revealed. This situation applies because premises taken from CR are necessarily true by virtue of being revealed: God does not lie. Thus, any valid deduction from premises in CR must also be true, and so must be a sound deduction as well. In other words, in the case of deduction from CR, validity and soundness are co-extensive. Any valid deduction from premises explicit in CR, or from premises validly deduced from CR, must lead to true propositions that God intends to reveal. For this reason, the conclusion of a valid deduction can be taken as revealed on methodological grounds, implying that deduction is a proper method for verifying propositions in CR.

The Problem of Induction

Things start to get tricky, however, when it comes to propositions inferred by induction. Inductive inferences are ampliative. In the current case, this amplification means that even if all propositions supporting an inductive conclusion are explicit in CR, the conclusion adds something to CR. The addition that induction makes comes about either because one or more propositions not in CR but supporting an inductive conclusion are imputed to CR, and/or because one or more propositions in CR are amplified to include additional information not originally in CR. Both types of amplification will be explored in

detail in the thesis, with more focus on the latter type. In any given case, it might be asserted that whatever induction adds to CR is consistent or coherent with CR. Nevertheless, amplification is still amplification. As such, *every* induction fails the source test of correct inference. Further, inductive inferences are not logically necessary inferences and, hence, their conclusions are logically avoidable. Thus, there is nothing in CR that logically requires Christians to draw any particular inductive conclusion. If CR does not logically require a conclusion, then it cannot be said that God *must* have intended to reveal that conclusion. The best that could be said is that God *might* have intended to reveal the conclusion. A counter argument, however, could also be entertained to the effect that God *did not* intend to reveal an induced conclusion and so *has not* revealed such a conclusion. If God does not intend to reveal a proposition, then the proposition cannot be in CR because the only propositions that are in CR are those intended by God to be there. In fact, Christians often make such arguments against the inductive conclusions of other Christians (e.g., Olsen, 2009).

Given the failure of induction to pass the source test of revelation, Christians could save themselves a lot of trouble (as it turns out) by simply not drawing inductive conclusions in the first place. However, the problem for Christians is that theologically they hold certain propositions to be revealed that methodologically can only be inferred from CR by induction. Hence, for theological reasons, Christians bind themselves to the methodological problem of induction (cf. Boulter, 2002; Fisher, 2016; Young, 2007).

The methodological problem of induction may be described as follows. First, even where induction makes inferences from true premises, its conclusions may or may not be true. This situation includes the case where true premises are those sourced from CR. These premises are indisputably true because they are revealed. Nevertheless, because induction is not truth preserving, even if the premises of an induction are true by virtue of being revealed any induced conclusion based on those premises may be false. If false, the induced

proposition cannot be in CR because CR contains only true propositions. Second, we know that induction does return at least some false conclusions because Christians use induction from CR to arrive at logically conflicting propositions. Given any set of logically conflicting propositions, at most one proposition can be true and the rest are false. For this reason, when induction returns conflicting propositions, it of necessity returns at least some conclusions that are not revealed.

Christians could assert here, however, that in the case where induction returns conflicting propositions, it is possible to inductively identify the revealed proposition from among the alternatives. In other words, Christians could say that they have inductive criteria for distinguishing between revealed and not-revealed inductive conclusions. Two inductive criteria typically put forward for making this distinction are consistency and strength. Consistency means that two or more propositions do not conflict logically. Assuming that CR is consistent, consistency between an induced proposition and CR is a necessary criterion for the induced proposition to be taken as revealed. However, consistency with CR is not a sufficient criterion for a proposition to be taken as revealed. Even if all revealed propositions are consistent, not all propositions consistent with CR are revealed. In other words, a proposition can be consistent with CR but not be part of CR. For example, take the following proposition (1) *Sydney has an opera house*. Even though (1) is not inconsistent with any proposition in CR it is still not revealed. It might appear strange that a proposition such as (1) is consistent with CR. However, given that divine revelation is the definitive source of truth, every true proposition ought to be consistent with CR.

Perhaps more pragmatically, consistency is a low bar to set for revelation. The *opera house* proposition, for example, will be consistent with presumably any text that does not explicitly state that Sydney does not have an opera house. For this reason, it is unsurprising that some revelation-consistent propositions turn out to be not revealed. A further problem with consistency with CR as a discriminating criterion is that two or more conflicting

propositions can be consistent with CR. For example, the propositions that *God is a Trinity* and *God is not a Trinity* are, according to trinitarians (e.g., Edgar, 2005; Fisher, 2016) and unitarians (e.g., Barber, 2006; Tuggy, 2011) respectively, both demonstrably consistent with CR. Yet both cannot be true and so both cannot be revealed. The same is true for any number of conflicting propositions that form the subject of theological debate. Thus, consistency with CR fails as a means of verifying induced propositions.

The strength of inductive inference to a particular proposition is also posited as a means of verifying which (if any) of a conflicting set of propositions is the revealed proposition (e.g., Beegle, 1973; Young, 2007). However, even if the inference to a particular proposition is stronger than that of its competitors, this relative strength does nothing to establish that a proposition is revealed for two reasons. First, we could concede that inductive strength is conducive to the truth of a proposition. Yet truth is only a necessary not a sufficient condition for a proposition to be revealed. Thus, even if inductive strength led us to be confident that a proposition is true, the proposition need not be revealed.

Second, we could think that inductive strength is directly conducive to a proposition being revealed. Even so, because inductive inference is probabilistic, by induction we could only conclude that a proposition is *more likely* to be revealed than one of its competitors, and thus be more confident in concluding that the given proposition is revealed. Yet, subjective confidence based on probabilistic estimations that a proposition is revealed is not a test that a proposition is revealed. Confidence, of course, can be misplaced. Moreover, theologically, as I argue later in this thesis, when God reveals something he not only wants us to know *what* He has revealed but also wants us to know with certainty *that* He has revealed it. For example, the formula “thus says the Lord” appears over 400 times in the Old Testament in order to make it clear that God himself is speaking. Similarly, the phrase “the word of the Lord came to” so-and-so appears over 90 times in the Old Testament. Hence, it

can be concluded that God does not want any uncertainty to exist with respect to divine revelation. This claim does not mean that everything that is revealed comes to pass e.g., God's threatened judgement on Nineveh revealed to Jonah (Jonah 1:1-2; cf. 3:4-10) did not come to pass. Yet, the source of the revelation is nevertheless unquestionable. In contrast, under induction, even consistent and strong induction, there is always doubt over whether a proposition is revealed or not. This doubt, in turn, raises both the logical and the theological possibility that a proposition is not revealed at all.

The problem of induction may be summarised by saying that, under induction, CR yields propositions that at best *may be* but at worst *are not* revealed. Further, consistency and inductive strength do nothing to help verify which induced propositions are revealed. Finally, there are theological reasons for suggesting that any uncertainty that remains due to lack of verification indicates that certain propositions are not revealed at all. Christians could assert at this point that the problem of induction is not with induction itself, but with the misapplication of induction by some Christians. In other words, induction correctly applied leads to only one true proposition not to multiple conflicting propositions. The ongoing problem here, however, is that even if induction returns only one proposition and even if we know that such a proposition is true, we still do not know that this proposition is revealed. Again, all revealed propositions are true, but not all true propositions are revealed. So, even under an alleged correct application of induction the problem of induction with respect to verification remains.

Resolving the Problem of Induction

In the last section of this chapter, I indicated that the problem of induction is not solved by some characteristic of induction itself e.g., by the alleged correct application of induction, or by inductive consistency or strength. For this reason, some solution other than induction itself needs to be found for the problem of induction.

To being with, let us concede that certain induced propositions are revealed and that God is well aware of the problem of induction. In these circumstances, God might provide Christians either by direct revelation from the Holy Spirit (as in Protestantism) or indirectly from the Holy Spirit through some ecclesial authority (as in Catholicism and Orthodoxy) with an interpretive key to CR that resolves the otherwise intractable problem of induction. With this key in hand, Christians could determine which proposition (again, if any) from a conflicting set of induced propositions is revealed. Now, let us assume, as Christians claim is the case (Dulles, 2006; Newman, 1845/2014), that such a provision has been made. Does this provision mean that the problem of induction has been solved? Well, no.

The continuing problem for Christians is that God appears to have provided different interpretive keys to different groups of Christians. So, for example, Catholics assert that God has guided them to interpret CR in such a way as to conclude that *Mary was immaculate (sinless) at the time of her conception*. Hence, Catholics conclude that this proposition is a revealed proposition (Hedley, 1911). Protestants, on the other hand, reach no such conclusion, and instead assert that Catholics have used an ordinary interpretive key (a hypothesis) in order to arrive at the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception. Yet Catholics are adamant that this is not the case. Conversely, Protestants claim that God has revealed to them the induced proposition *Scripture alone is sufficient for understanding salvation and the Christian life*. Yet Catholics believe that identification of this proposition as a revealed proposition results from the application of an ordinary human, rather than a divine, interpretive key. This conflict over the source of interpretive keys (human or divine) is the origin of innumerable theological conflicts concerning the revealed status of induced propositions.

Taking the Catholic perspective as an example, there are two possibilities. Catholics either have or have not been provided with a divinely provided interpretive key. If they have, then Protestants are unable to tell the difference between a revealed key and an

ordinary interpretive hypothesis. If Catholics are wrong, however, then they are unable to distinguish between a divine and a human interpretive key.² In other words, both Protestants and Catholics can agree that *someone* is confused about what is revealed. Yet, despite agreement that there is confusion, each group of Christians asserts that they are not the confused party. The ground for such a claim in all cases is the appeal to infallibility. Every branch of Christianity claims to have an authority made infallible by the Holy Spirit such that their branch should not be misled with respect to what God has revealed. For Catholics this infallible authority is the Pope acting *ex-Cathedra*, for the Orthodox it is the church at its ecumenical councils, and for Protestants it is the self-interpreting Bible. Thus, even assuming that infallibility lies somewhere, the problem still remains as to exactly where. Conflicting claims by different authorities that they are infallible means that appeals to infallibility underdetermine our choice of whether any given interpretation verifies its associated induced propositions. Infallibility, then, does not solve the problem of induction, even if it does justify the belief held by each branch that they are not among the confused.

What of cases, however, where all Christians (more or less) agree on a given interpretation. Surely in such cases Christians are in a position to assert that this interpretation correctly verifies whatever propositions are taken to be verified by the interpretation. Well, again, no. First, I know of no instance where all Christians agree on a given interpretation, except perhaps in cases where recalcitrants are defined as being not Christians i.e., apostates and heretics. For example, it might be that all Christians agree that the proposition that *God is a Trinity* is a divinely revealed interpretive key. However, if so, there are good historical reasons for suggesting that this agreement is not so much due to an underlying consensus but rather is due to the fact that unitarians (those who deny that God is a Trinity) were and continue to be defined as being not Christians (e.g., Wiles, 1996).

² Of course, it is possible that Catholics can distinguish between such interpretations and they are deliberately misrepresenting their situation. I assume, however, that Catholics are not involved in such deliberate misrepresentation.

Second, it might be asserted that even though Christians can and do confuse the source (divine or human) of interpretative keys at some level of disaggregation, they do not do so at the highest level of aggregation. This assertion is effectively an appeal to consensus as vehicle for infallibility. Yet, the history of Christianity demonstrates that Christian consensus is fallible. For example, it was once universally agreed amongst Christians that the Bible reveals that Hell is a place of eternal torment, that slavery is permitted, that women should not serve in the ministry, that the earth is centre of the solar system, and so on for many other positions now abandoned or disputed by Christians. Thus, even if there is consensus that a particular interpretive key is provided by God, this consensus tells us nothing about whether any resultant interpretation actually yields revealed propositions. Hence, consensus is not an infallible guide to the correct interpretation of CR.

At this point Christians could claim that any given interpretive key can be demonstrated to be revealed by checking for its explanatory coherence with CR. However, explanatory coherence does not distinguish between revealed and not-revealed interpretive keys for the same reasons that consistency does not distinguish between revealed and not-revealed induced propositions i.e., (a) conflicting interpretations cohere with CR, and (b) coherence is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for revelation. All revealed interpretations are coherent with CR, but not all coherent interpretations are revealed. For example, as indicated in Chapter 10, traditional, conditional and universal views of Hell all provide explanations coherent with CR, yet all are mutually exclusive. Thus, only one at most of these interpretations can be true and so only one at most can be a candidate for being revealed. Hence, explanatory coherence with CR does not guarantee the revealed status of interpretations. Further, even if Christians, say by the general providence of God as Peirce (1908) might have it, arrive at a coherent interpretation that happens to be true, the truth of this interpretation does not mean either that the interpretation, nor any proposition

that the interpretation saves from the problem of induction, is revealed. Only a revealed interpretive key would make saved propositions revealed.

The upshot of these analyses is that interpretation of CR, even interpretation allegedly guided by God, does not solve the problem of induction. Interpretation just kicks the problem of plurality one step down the road: the plurality of induction is simply replaced by the plurality of abduction (the logic underpinning interpretation). By this line of argumentation, I arrive at the conclusion that only propositions explicit in, or deduced from, CR are demonstrably revealed and so verified. Propositions said to be revealed by virtue of the fact that they are induced from CR have not been shown either by induction, or by induction aided by abduction, to be revealed. Further, on the basis that deduction, induction and abduction exhaust all inferential possibilities for demonstrating that a proposition is revealed, I make the claim that induced propositions and their supporting hypotheses cannot be demonstrated to be revealed. The problems of induction and abduction are not only unsolved, but are unsolvable. Hence, propositions relying on induction and abduction for verification remain unverified.

Final Argument

Establishing that certain propositions are unverifiable provides scope to argue that these propositions are not revealed. An argument to this effect, which I present in more detail in Chapter 11, goes as follows.

1. p is divinely revealed, iff God reveals p .

Rationale: God is the only source of divine revelation. Any alleged revelation not from God may be a revelation, but it cannot be a divine revelation.

2. If God reveals p , then God wants us to know p .

Rationale: The purpose of divine revelation is to make known things that are otherwise unknowable. Further, unlike ordinary (human) revelation, God does

not accidentally or incidentally reveal that which He does not want us to know. In other words, God reveals what he wants us to know and only that which he wants us to know. Thus, if God reveals p , we can be sure that He intends for us to know p .

3. If God want us to know p , then God wants us to be certain that p is true.

Rationale: God wants us to be epistemically certain of the truth of p , because uncertainty threatens belief in, and thus knowledge of, p . Various passages in the Bible (e.g., Luke 1:4; Acts 12:11; Ephesians 5:5; 1 Thessalonians 1:5) indicate that God is interested in securing epistemic certainty for believers with respect to what has been revealed.

4. If God wants us to be certain that p is true, then God makes the revealed status of p demonstrable.

Rationale: Iff God makes the revealed status of p demonstrable can we be epistemically certain that God is the source of p , and thus certain that p is revealed, and thus certain that p is true. God's regular self-identification of his revelation (e.g., "thus says the Lord") is one way that God indicates that he is interested in the demonstrability of his revelation.

5. If God reveals p , then God makes the revealed status of p demonstrable (from 2 - 4).
6. If God has not made the revealed status of p demonstrable, then God has not revealed p (from 5).
7. If God has not revealed p , *then* p is not divinely revealed (from 1).
8. If God has not made the revealed status of p demonstrable, p is not divinely revealed (from 6 and 7).

The effect of this argument is to show that *only* those propositions demonstrably revealed are revealed. If this argument holds then Christianity, as a religion with an

expansive revelatory base, is in trouble precisely because it asserts that propositions other than those demonstrably revealed are revealed. Thus, Christians are open to the accusation that they claim revealed status for propositions not revealed by God i.e., propositions of Christians' own making. Importantly, I do not reach this conclusion by starting in a manner hostile to Christianity. As I indicate in the thesis, Christians often accuse non-Christians of returning adverse findings against Christianity because they take an anti-supernatural, anti-theist, anti-religion, or specifically anti-Christian stance at the outset. Rather, I take Christianity on its own terms and explicitly allow for God, for divine revelation and for its verification. Yet even under these conditions, Christianity turns out to be a less extensively revealed religion than Christians assert or assume. As a result, the findings of the thesis carry real weight for Christianity, especially given that it is often Christianity's core propositions that are unverifiable. Thus, on the basis of my approach and argument, even a Christian believer could conclude that Christianity is guilty of over-reach with respect to its claims to being in possession of divine revelation.

Chapter Summary

I have shown in this chapter, and will show in more detail in the main body of the thesis: (a) by analysis that induced propositions have not been shown to be revealed, (b) by the method of exhaustion that induced propositions cannot be shown to be revealed, and (c) by deductive logic that propositions not demonstrably revealed are not revealed. Thus, many of Christianity's core propositions, which can only be arrived at by induction, are not and cannot be demonstrably verified. It is open, then, for a reasonable person, Christian or not, to conclude that these propositions are not revealed. In the remainder of the thesis I flesh out in detail the argument presented in this chapter, and explore some of its most salient implications. In the next chapter, however, I provide further background to the topic of divine revelation and specify the location of the thesis in the wider literature on this topic.

Chapter 3

Divine Revelation: Theological and Philosophical Perspectives

The purpose of this chapter is to provide necessary theological background to the topic of divine revelation, and to locate the thesis in the philosophical literature concerning divine revelation. The chapter begins with a theological orientation to divine revelation. I then provide two competing models describing how the content of revelation relates to doctrine and belief, showing how the competing models apply to a canonical example of divine revelation. Finally, I briefly overview various philosophical approaches to divine revelation, showing how this thesis relates to but extends these previous approaches.

Divine Revelation

The Christian doctrine of divine revelation is predicated on the understanding that, because God is hidden, knowledge about God and knowledge of God are not directly accessible by human beings (Abraham, 2006; Dumsday, 2015). As such, the only means by which humans can come to know anything about God is if God reveals himself either generally or specially (see the discussion later in this chapter). Divine revelation, then, is a necessary condition for knowledge of and knowledge about God. In the Christian faith, divine revelation refers to the supernatural unveiling by God of otherwise unknowable and unknown truth (Jeremiah, 1646/2010; Towey, 2013). The Greek word translated as revelation in the New Testament is *apokolypto* which means “to take away a veil”. The foundational idea underpinning divine revelation, then, is the intentional disclosure of something that is otherwise hidden.

In the case of Christian divine revelation, God discloses both himself and his plans for humankind (Daniel 2:47; Matthew 11:27; Philippians 3:15; Romans 16:25; 1 Corinthians 14:6, 26; Galatians 1:12; 2:2; Ephesians 1:17; 3:3; Revelation 1:1). God is said

to reveal Himself and his plans through His words and His works (Baker, 2000; Catholic Church, 2012; Lewis, 2003). God's words and works are mutually supportive such that the works of God confirm His words, while the words of God explain the purpose and intent of His works. Moreover, God knows exactly what it takes to communicate that which He wishes to reveal. Thus, God ensures that His words and His works, and the interaction of the two, are sufficient to reveal precisely that which God intends to reveal. In this sense, divine revelation is not only necessary but is also sufficient for imparting the knowledge that God intends humans to acquire (Voak, 2008).

In addition to being necessary and sufficient, divine revelation is intentional (Abraham, 2017). As noted in Chapter 2, unlike ordinary human revelation, where humans can unintentionally reveal their character, thoughts, and intended actions; God does not accidentally or incidentally reveal anything. Divine revelation is always intentional because God's hiddenness ensures that God can only reveal himself and his plans should he deliberately decide to do so. Thus, God reveals that which He intends to reveal and only that which he intends to reveal. Conversely, the necessity and sufficiency of divine revelation imply that, if the words and works of God are unnecessary and/or insufficient to arrive at an alleged revelation, then God did not intend to communicate the alleged revelation. Hence, there is no scope under divine revelation for humans to stumble upon some truth that God did not intend to be known. Divine revelation is strictly limited to that which God wishes to be made knowable and known. If unintended, any alleged divine revelation is not a divine revelation at all.

Frequent use in the New Testament of words such as understanding (*synesis*), knowledge (*gnosis*), to make known (*gnorizo*) and to perceive thoroughly (*katanoeo*); make it clear that knowledge is the intended outcome of revelation. With respect to a specific passage, for example, in chapter one of Paul's letter to the Ephesians, Paul prays for the "spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him (Christ)" to be upon the

Ephesian believers. This spirit is contrasted with the “darkened understanding”, “futile minds” and “ignorance” of the as yet unenlightened Gentiles (Ephesians 4:17-19). Pinnock (1996, p. 587) affirms that through special revelation in Scripture: “God stoops to make himself known in ways we can grasp and understand. He comes to us in categories of thought and action which make sense to us”. Further, God’s intent in his self-disclosure is that humans should not only come to know *about* God, but to know God himself (Ephesians 2:18; 2 Peter 1:4).

CR makes it clear that God not only intends to impart revealed knowledge, but also that such knowledge should be held with certainty. Luke, for example, wants his correspondent Theophilus to know the “certainty” (*asphaleia*) of the things he has been taught (Luke 1:4), and the “proofs” (*tekmerion*) by which Jesus showed himself alive after his death (Acts 1:3). In Colossians 2:2, Paul’s hope is that believers may not just have “knowledge of God’s mystery” but “full assurance of understanding”. Paul also exhorts that Christians should be “fully convinced” in their minds (Romans 14:5) with respect to that which has been revealed. The Catholic church affirms that truths not unattainable by the “natural light of the human reason have, by divine mercy, been revealed in order that they may be known by all easily, and *with certainty* and without any admixture of error” (cited in Ryan, 1908/2020). In other words, divinely revealed truths are recoverable from CR by natural reason (Locke, 1689/2018), and this recoverability provides the believer with certainty of revealed truth. Conversely, if recoverability is disputed, then certainty regarding the revealed status of a proposition is compromised.

Revealed knowledge can also be held with certainty because divine revelation involves the self-identified speech of God to humans. Thus, when God says something, He identifies that he is saying that something. For example, the formula: “Thus says the Lord” appears more than five-hundred times in the Pentateuch and twelve-hundred times in the prophets. As such, it is clear that God has spoken when he has spoken. God’s speech,

however, may be mediated by others. When mediation occurs, the prophet (or whomever is mediating the message) typically makes it clear that they are speaking God's words. For example, "The Word of the Lord came to me, saying, ..." (Jeremiah 1:4) and "The Spirit of the Lord speaks through me, his Word is upon my tongue" (2 Samuel 23:2). Similarly, Jesus says: "My teaching is not mine but his who sent me" (John 7:16); "the Word that you hear is not mine, but is from the Father who sent me" (John 14:24), and "The words that you gave to me I have given to them" (John 17:8). These verses effectively indicate the enhancement of recoverability such that when God provides information through an intermediary, God nevertheless indicates that He is the one making the provision. The point here again is that God makes certain both revealed knowledge and knowledge that revealed knowledge is revealed.

Given that revealed knowledge can be held with certainty, the correct response to divine revelation is *faith* (in the sense of *belief*) in the truths revealed. Abraham, for example, is a primary model of such belief in the New Testament (Romans 4:1-25; cf. John 8:56; Galatians 3:6-29; Hebrews 6:13-20; 11:8-22; James 2:21-23). "He believed the Lord, and (God) counted it to him as righteousness" (Genesis 15:6) is quoted three times in the NT (Romans 4:3; Galatians 3:6; James 2:23). Further, the example of Abraham demonstrates that revelation is propositional. God gave Abraham commands, and an intelligible promise on which Abraham acted and in which Abraham believed. Revealed propositions, then, are not just to be received but believed.

Divine revelation comes in two forms: general and special revelation (Clarke, 1958). General revelation refers to knowledge of God imparted in and/or through nature. Calvin, for example, describes the created world as the *theatre of God's glory* (see Taylor, 2017), and asserts that evidence of God is everywhere in universe. In contrast to general revelation, special revelation refers to God's specific unveiling of himself to particular persons in particular places at particular times. Special revelation occurs through various means

including audible voices (Genesis 2:16; 9:1; 32:26; Exodus 19:9), dreams (Genesis 20:3-7; Numbers 12:6), visions (Numbers 12:6; Isaiah 21:6-7; Daniel 1:17; Obadiah 1:1; Acts 11:5), angelic appearances (Daniel 8:16-17; Matthew 1:20), prophetic utterances (2 Peter 1:21; Amos 7:14-15) and, ultimately, through the person and work of God's Son (Hebrews 1:2; 2:3; cf. 1 Peter 1:11). In this thesis, I restrict my analyses to special revelation.

The Content of Revelation

Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the words and works of God, and their consequences, are recorded by the authors of the Bible (Moller, 2013; Williams, 2005). In this sense, the Bible is said to be special revelation itself i.e., because the Bible records God's special revelation under God's guidance the recording itself can be treated as revelation. For the purposes of this thesis, I define the content of revelation (CR, as indicated previously) to refer to the propositional content of the Bible. This content is either explicit in, or may be rightly inferred from, the Bible. I frame this definition knowing that there is much debate amongst Christians as to: (a) whether CR is exclusively or even partly propositional (e.g., Lewis, 2003; Wellington, 2019), (b) whether the Bible alone and, if so, which Bible (Protestant, Catholic or Orthodox) expresses such propositions, and (c) what constitutes right inference from whatever Bible is preferred. I nevertheless focus on revelation as propositional because the methods Christians use to verify CR in public discourse (i.e., various inferences from the Bible) imply that Christians view divine revelation as being propositional. Further, Christians propose a specific mechanism by which divine revelation is captured propositionally in the Bible, namely divine inspiration.

Divine inspiration refers to the supernatural influence of the Holy Spirit on the writers of the Bible which renders their writings an accurate expression of historical special revelation (Wellington, 2019). Thus, inspiration preserves and communicates special revelation. Moreover, inspiration ensures the inerrancy of the Bible, meaning that the Bible

communicates revealed content without error. For some Christians, inerrancy also implies that when the Bible presents historical and/or scientific information it does so in a way that is factually accurate by contemporary standards (e.g., Geisler & Roach, 2012). For other Christians, inerrancy means that even if biblical statements or expressions may be historically or scientifically inaccurate to some extent, this inaccuracy does not interfere with the communication of revealed truth (e.g., Russell, 2006). For example, on the basis that Genesis Chapter 1 is factually accurate, some Christians believe that the earth was created in six literal days. Other Christians are happy to concede that the earth was not created in six literal days, but nevertheless assert that the Bible correctly communicates the revealed truth that God created the earth (Lennox, 2011). In either case, inspiration ensures that revelation itself is not compromised. Thus, even if the Bible is errant in some way, it is nevertheless infallible.

Infallibility means that the Bible does not fail to achieve its intended purpose i.e., to preserve and communicate revealed truth. For Protestants, infallibility is a characteristic of the Bible itself (Bacote, Miguélez, & Okholm, 2009; Burger, Huijgen, & Peels, 2017). From a Catholic perspective, infallibility is not a property of the Bible *per se* but is a property of the church's Magisterium (teaching authority) which interprets and safeguards truth revealed in the Bible, and truth revealed through Sacred Tradition (Catholic Church, 2012; Pope Paul VI, 1965). The infallibility of the Magisterium is divinely guaranteed by Christ's promise to lead His church into truth and to preserve the church from failure due to doctrinal error (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, 2007).³ In Orthodoxy, infallibility is a function of apostolic succession expressed by the church at its ecumenical councils (Harkianakis, 2008).

³ In this case, doctrinal error means saying something is revealed when it is not, or saying something is not revealed when it is.

Whether one adopts the Protestant, Catholic or Orthodox view of infallibility, the point is that Christian believers can be assured that CR is preserved from corruption because the Bible itself, or the Bible in the hands of the church, is infallible. For the purposes of this thesis, I will just agree with Christians that the Bible infallibly preserves CR. Having agreed that the Bible preserves CR, I am interested in how Christians recover propositions from CR for the purposes of verifying that those propositions are revealed. In general terms, for Catholicism and Orthodoxy, revealed propositions are recovered from the Bible by the teaching authority of the Church. Thus, in the words of one Papal encyclical:

All those things are to be believed (...) which are contained in the written or unwritten word of God, and which are proposed by the Church as divinely revealed... (Pope Leo XIII, 1896, Section 9, para. 6).

For Protestantism, revealed propositions are directly recoverable from the Bible by the reader. Thus, from the Westminster Confession:

...those things which are necessary to be known, believed, and observed for salvation are so clearly propounded, and opened in some place of Scripture or other, that not only the learned, but the unlearned, in a due use of the ordinary means, may attain unto a sufficient understanding of them. (Jeremiah, 1646/2010, Ch. 1, para. 6)

The quotes above demonstrate that, whether from a Protestant or a Catholic/Orthodox perspective, an unbroken truth-chain from God's initiation to the human reception of revealed propositions is proposed. Thus, for Christians, what is labelled divine revelation really *is* from God, although I spend much of the remainder of this thesis demonstrating that such labelling is not necessarily correct. Despite this comment, Christians might think that there is an agreed core of propositions deemed to be revealed across the various branches of Christianity, and that agreement over this core indicates that this core is, more or less, above reproach concerning its revealed status. I show in chapter 5 why a consensus model does not demonstrate that propositions are revealed. Perhaps more importantly, agreement amongst Christians may be more restricted than it first appears. For

example, Christians remain divided over various models of the Trinity, theories of the Atonement, views on the nature of Heaven and Hell, understandings of the Sacraments, and any number of other issues. Moreover, in the context of theological disputes and debates Christians are very happy to label various models, theories, views and understandings as “unbiblical” – meaning *not* revealed. Hence, a superficial consensus over any alleged ‘core’ of Christian doctrine doesn’t necessarily represent an authentic underlying agreement between Christians concerning this core. On a related matter, Christians often claim that they have access to “special resources” (e.g., the Magisterium for Catholics, the consensus of the church and the Fathers for the Orthodox, and the direct working of the Holy Spirit in the individual believer for Protestants) that allow them to determine what is revealed and what is not. The thesis addresses at length (in Chapters 5 and 7 in particular) why these special resources are not sufficient to determine which propositions are revealed. Thus, Christians are not in an epistemically privileged position to determine CR, even they claim special resources to that effect.

What is Not in CR

Given the treatment above, and various comments in preceding chapters, it will be helpful at this point to define what I am not, *for the purposes of this thesis*, including in CR. First, I am excluding from CR the content of any religious tradition. I do understand that both Catholic and Orthodox churches count the content of their traditions as part of CR. In fact, the Orthodox church counts Scripture as part of their Tradition whereas Catholics view Scripture as distinct from yet mutually supportive of Tradition. Whatever view of Tradition is taken, and for reasons outlined later in this chapter concerning the inscrutability of Tradition with respect to revelation, I exclude tradition from CR.

I also exclude from CR the propositional content of the Deuterocanonical books of the Catholic and Orthodox Bibles – except where such content is identical to that in the

Protestant Bible. I do not exclude the Deuterocanonicals because of any bias against these books. Rather, it just simplifies the analyses in the thesis to focus on those books of Scripture which are shared across all branches of Christianity.

Third, I exclude from CR any revelation that led to certain books (including the Deuterocanonicals) being included in any given Bible. Catholics and the Orthodox believe that God has guided the church to select those books which should be included in the canon. Protestants believe that the Bible is self-authenticating. Either way, God is involved in assisting Christians to select those books He intends to be deemed canonical. Without disputing any claims to that effect, I exclude from CR any revelation that may or may not have been involved in assisting the church to make correct choices regarding the canon.

I also exclude from CR any propositions explicit in or inferable from the Bible that are not concerned with God and the things of God i.e., that which has classically formed the content of Christian doctrine. Thus, for example, one could observe in, or infer from, Scripture the existence of various nations, cities, rulers, geographical features, and historical events. Knowledge of these entities may provide useful background knowledge, but has little or nothing to do with the content of *theological* doctrine itself. Relatedly, I also exclude from CR that which may currently not be known (perhaps some complex law of logic that may be inferable from CR) but which again has no direct relevance to Christian doctrine.

Finally, while I do not exclude from the content of special revelation propositions about God and the things of God that could *also* be known from general revelation, the focus of the study is on those propositions in CR that could *not* be known from general revelation e.g., that Jesus is the Son of God, or that Hell exists, or that God forgives sins (under certain conditions). Thus, I do not deny that God can be known through both general and special revelation, but focus on those propositions about God that are exclusive to special revelation.

Revelation, Doctrine and Belief

From what they take to be revealed propositions, Christians develop both doctrine and belief. Regardless of the branch of Christianity concerned, an orthodox (small ‘o’) model of the relationship between revelation and doctrine can be built on the previous discussion. God reveals truth and this truth is captured propositionally in the Bible. When Christians give assent to various propositions comprising the content of revelation, these propositions become matters of Christian belief. In addition, over time, propositions comprising CR are organised and systematised⁴ and ultimately presented as authorised formulations of what is to be believed. These authorised formulations are called Doctrines. A model of these relationships is represented in *Figure 2*.

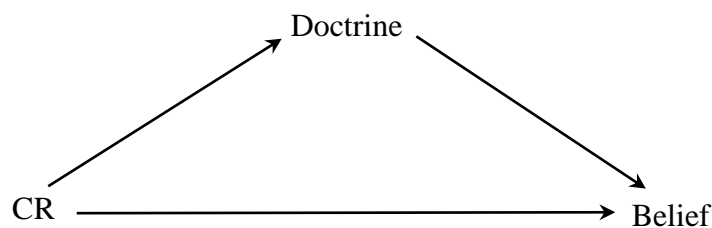


Figure 2: Orthodox relationship of doctrine and belief to CR.

In the orthodox model, CR is exogenous to (independent of) doctrine and belief. Conversely, doctrine and belief are endogenous to (dependent on) CR. Thus, the orthodox model can be described as an *explicative* and/or *exegetical* model with respect to CR in that doctrine only organises that which is in CR, and believers only believe that which is in CR. The orthodox model is claimed by Christians to apply to all doctrines and beliefs in Christianity. I happily concede that some, maybe many, Christian doctrines conform to this model. For example, the doctrine of Creation and the associated belief that God is Creator

⁴ Some, for example Newman (1920), say “developed”, although any such development is contested.

both arise from propositions explicit in CR (see, for example, Nehemiah 9:6; Isaiah 66:2; Revelation 4:11).⁵ However, I also contend that some of Christianity's most important doctrines and beliefs do not conform to this model. Rather, they conform to an alternative model where CR is endogenous to belief and doctrine. The relationships between belief, doctrine and CR in this model are represented in *Figure 3*.

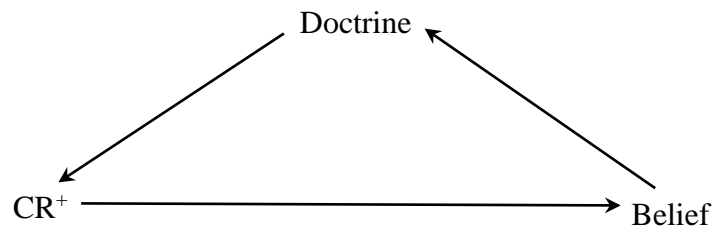


Figure 3: Relationship of exogenous doctrine to CR.

In contrast to the orthodox model represented in *Figure 2*, the alternative model asserts the following. First, belief rather than CR is the exogenous variable in the model. Thus, rather than belief and doctrine arising from revelation, doctrine and CR arise from belief. This causal ordering might seem counter-intuitive. However, as I outline shortly and throughout the thesis, there are strong historical and methodological reasons for asserting that, with respect to some Christian beliefs, belief itself takes priority in determining the development of doctrine. Doctrine in turn is used to amplify CR such that CR-amplified (denoted by CR⁺ in *Figure 3*) deductively yields propositions corresponding to belief. The effect of this amplification, or so I argue in the thesis, is to license the claim by Christians that propositions of their own making are, in fact, divinely revealed. In turn, this claim enables Christians to claim that their beliefs arise from revelation not from some other source. The alternative model can be described as an *amplificatory* and/or *eisegetical* model

⁵ Furthermore, assuming that God created the world (including human beings) and, thus, that no human beings were around to witness the creation, the only way that God could be known to be Creator is if he revealed Himself generally and/or specially to be so.

because CR is modelled as being malleable under belief and doctrine, rather than belief and doctrine being malleable under CR as is the case with the orthodox model. In order to explore both models further, I next provide a canonical example to which I return in detail in Chapter 8.

Canonical Example: The Deity of Christ

The Council of Nicaea (C.E. 325) was the first ecumenical council of the early Christian church, and is remembered not least for its initial work towards establishing (or confirming, depending on the historical/theological account concerned, see Hanson, 2005) the doctrine of the Trinity (Edgar, 2005; Hardon, 2003). The Council addressed a controversy initiated by Arius, an Alexandrian priest, who against orthodox belief questioned the full divinity of Christ (e.g., Ayers, 2006; Tanner, 2001). In doing so, Arius asserted that Christ was a creation of God, not an uncreated divine being (Williams, 2002). Arius' assertion had spread widely to Christian congregations throughout the Roman Empire, threatening the unity of the early Christian church. Emperor Constantine I, himself a converted Christian, convened the Council to resolve the Arian Christological controversy.

Arius' assertion was plausible because it did not conflict with propositions explicit in CR that *the Father is God*, *God is One*, and *Jesus is not the Father*. On the other hand, the claim that *Jesus is God* was problematic in terms of CR precisely because it appeared to conflict with these propositions. The claim that Jesus is God was also complicated by the fact that the proposition *Jesus is God* (henceforth JiG) is not explicit in or deduced from CR. The lack of explicit or deductive support in CR for JiG meant that the revealed status of the proposition was (as it still is today) contested amongst Christians (Dunn, 2003; O'Collins, 2009).

In order to demonstrate, against Arius, that JiG was revealed, the Council had to solve three interrelated problems, namely: (a) establishing or, at least, confirming

definitively that JiG is in CR; (b) resolving the conflict between JiG and the propositions *God is the Father*, *God is One*, and *Jesus is not the Father*; and (c) eliminating the competing Arian proposition that *Jesus is not God*. The purpose of the Council of Nicaea can be defined as the search for a solution to these three problems. In order to achieve its purpose, the Council utilised a philosophical construct (*ousios* meaning *substance*) under which Jesus was deemed to be of the same substance (*homoousios*) as God (the Father). Later, the First Council of Constantinople (C.E. 381), building on the work of the Cappadocian Fathers (Zizioulas, 1995), clarified the position of the Holy Spirit, and God thus came to be formally conceived of as three persons sharing one substance. This formalisation established the doctrine of the Holy Trinity (henceforth *Trinity*). *Trinity* asserts that God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit share the same divine substance while remaining three distinct persons (Beatrice, 2002). By distinguishing the concepts of substance and person with respect to God, *Trinity* enabled God to be identified as a substance-unitary yet multi-person being.

Trinity, even in its rudimentary form as developed (or confirmed) at Nicaea, provided a solution to the problems faced by the Council, by enabling CR to be amplified such that JiG was made explicit in CR. *Trinity* further explained how Jesus is God and yet God is One, thus creating theological conditions under which Arius' proposition that *Jesus is not God* could be refuted as revealed. Without going into detail, which I reserve for Chapter 8, I deal with each of these aspects of *Trinity* in order. First, *Trinity* facilitates, for example, the following amplifications of CR (in italics): "In the beginning was the Word (...) and the Word was God, *and the Word was Jesus*" (John 1:1); Before Abraham was I *am God*" (John 8:58); and "Thomas answered and said to Him, *you are* my Lord and *you are* my God!" (John 20:28). These amplifications make JiG explicit in or deducible from CR where it would otherwise not be so. For example, JiG can be deduced from an amplification of John 1:1 and John 1:14 as follows:

1. The Word was God (John 1:1).
2. The Word was Jesus (amplification of John 1:1).
3. The Word became flesh (John 1:14).
4. Becoming flesh does not entail a change in divine status (amplification of John 1:14).
5. In becoming flesh the Word remained God (from 1, 3 and 4).
6. Jesus became flesh and remained God (from 2 and 5).
7. Jesus is God (from 6).

Thus, while JiG is not deducible from CR unamplified, it is deducible from CR amplified by *Trinity*. Specifically, in this case, amplification by Trinity licences the pre-existence of Jesus (Point 2), and the doctrine of the Incarnation (Points 4 & 5).

Second, *Trinity* can be used to explain how JiG is reconcilable with *God is the Father*, *God is One*, and *Jesus is not the Father*. Briefly, the explanation offered is that CR refers to “God” in two different senses. Licensed by *homoousios*, passages referring to God being One were taken to refer to God in substantive terms, whereas passages referring to Jesus and God as being distinct entities were taken to refer to God in personal terms i.e., God the Father and Jesus are two distinct persons despite sharing one substance. For example, under a homoousian rendering of CR: “The Father and I are one” (John 10:30) meant Jesus is one *in substance* with the Father not one *in person* with the Father. Conversely, when Jesus was referred to as the Son of God it meant Jesus is a different person to, but not substantially different from or less than, God the Father. By explaining how Jesus could be God whilst God remained One, *homoousios* made JiG consistent with the propositions that *God is the Father*, *God is One*, and *Jesus is not the Father*.

Third, under *homoousios* Jesus is not a created being. Thus, under *homoousios*, Arius’ claim that Jesus was a created being was explicitly eliminated as a revealed

proposition. By eliminating Arius' claim as a revealed proposition, *homoousios* ensured that Jesus' deity could be indisputably taken as revealed because it was the *only* proposition concerning Christ's deity that was taken to be rightly inferred from CR.

Modelling Trinity. Despite the apparent success of *Trinity*, its formulation and application are not well accounted for by the orthodox model. Instead, the means by which Christians arrive at and utilise *Trinity* are much better represented by the alternative model for the following reasons. First, the orthodox model would have it that JiG and *Trinity* are in CR, and so CR is sufficient to cause belief that Jesus is God and God is a Trinity. However, neither JiG nor *Trinity* are explicit in or deduced from CR. Hence, there is an immediate question as to whether JiG and Trinity really are in CR, and consequently an immediate question as to whether the orthodox model applies to JiG and *Trinity*.

It is true to say that not everything that Jesus revealed about himself was recorded by the writers of the New Testament (John 21:25). However, whatever Jesus did reveal about God and himself it was insufficient to prompt any New Testament writer to explicitly state JiG, or to provide information from which JiG could be deduced. Assuming the New Testament writers would have declared Jesus to be God if a proposition to that effect had been revealed to them, this insufficiency suggests that Jesus did not reveal that he was God: (a) to the New Testament writers either by observation on earth, or on reflection, or by experience, between the time of Jesus' ascension and the writing of the first New Testament manuscripts, or (b) by inspiration at any time before the close of the New Testament.

If JiG and *Trinity* are not discoverable in the New Testament, these propositions fail the source test of revelation, and so the orthodox model cannot apply to these propositions. If instead, belief in Jesus' deity was a post-biblical development, this development is consistent with the biblical data, and is also consistent with the alternative model.

Second, *Trinity* is based on the ad-hoc hypothetical construct *homoousios*. I call *homoousios* a *hypothetical* construct because it cannot be verified in any way. God is not

accessible to empirical investigation and nothing in CR explains God in terms of the substance-person distinction. Hence, even if God is unitary in substance while being plural in person, this fact cannot be established. For this reason, homoousios must in principle be hypothetical, at least this side of death. Further, homoousios is *ad-hoc* because it was developed after the belief that JiG arose in order to save JiG from falsification by CR. Thus, homoousios did not arise from an a-priori assessment of CR, but was imposed on CR in order that CR would not disqualify JiG. I call homoousios a *construct* because it describes what is thought to be the case about God rather than describing what God has explicitly revealed is the case about himself.

Of course, under the orthodox model, both homoousios and *Trinity* should be based on revelation not on hypothetical construction. Yet, under the alternative model, the hypothetical construction of doctrine is exactly what would be expected in the case where a belief (in this case the belief that Jesus is God) was threatened. With respect to Nicaea, and given the Arian threat to JiG, the Council established through homoousios hypothetical circumstances under which JiG could be taken as a revealed proposition, but did not establish that those circumstances actually apply. Moreover, the controversy concerning *Trinity* that remained after the Council (and that remains to the present day e.g., Barber, 2006) provides further reason to assert, consistent with the alternative model, that the Council did not establish that homoousios is revealed. What the Council did was to mandate homoousios as an interpretive principle, thus enabling JiG to be taken as revealed.

Finally, CR unamplified supported Arius' conflicting claim. Yet this is not what the orthodox model implies should be the case. The orthodox model only allows that consistent propositions emerge from CR. Yet, Arius' proposition conflicted with JiG. The alternative model, in contrast, assumes that various beliefs developed independent of CR will arise, and that different non-revealed doctrines will be developed in order to preserve these different beliefs. These doctrines will then be used to amplify CR in different ways, thus entrenching

beliefs exogenous to CR. Consistent with the alternative model this process is, I suggest, precisely what happened at Nicaea and in the following period leading up to, and including, the Council of Constantinople.

For these reasons, the alternative model is a better representation of the processes followed at Nicaea and afterwards. Historically, doctrine is not developed only as a response to CR, but also as a way of amplifying CR such that the revealed status of propositions corresponding to preferred beliefs is affirmed and the status of competing propositions is denied.

Philosophical Treatments of Divine Revelation

In this thesis, I treat the problem of verifying revealed propositions as a philosophical problem. In adopting this stance, I am not seeking to demonstrate that any particular propositions alleged to be revealed are true. Rather, following Locke (1689/2018), I am seeking to determine whether or not any given propositions alleged to be revealed are demonstrably revealed. In particular, I am interested in whether the *inferential methods* used by Christians to demonstrate that certain propositions are revealed actually demonstrate, and thus verify, those propositions or not. This approach distinguishes the present thesis from both philosophical and theological investigations of divine revelation common in the literature.

The topic of divine revelation has been addressed widely by philosophers (e.g., Blaauw, 2009; King, 2012; Locke, 1689/2018; Mavrodes, 1988; Menssen & Sullivan, 2007; Swinburne, 2011; Wahlberg, 2014; Wellington, 2019). Historically, philosophical treatments of divine revelation have typically focused on two issues, namely the ontology of divine revelation and the epistemology of divine revelation. The ontology of divine revelation refers to the nature of divine revelation itself. The epistemology of divine revelation refers both to how it can be known that something (let us say a proposition) is

revealed, and how the content of any something alleged to be revealed can be known. (For a slightly different conceptualisation, see Blaauw, 2009.) Ontologically, the contemporary literature has focused on whether divine revelation is propositional, historical, or experiential (e.g., Lewis, 2003); and the extent to which divine revelation is analogous or not to ordinary human revelation (e.g., Blaauw, 2009). Epistemologically, the contemporary literature has focused on the latter epistemological issue i.e., how one can know the content of a divine revelation assuming that such revelation has occurred (e.g., Abraham, 2006; cf. Clark, 1958; King, 2012). In this thesis, however, I wish to resurrect the treatment of how one can know that something is revealed in the first place.

In order to make this move, I first address the issues of ontology and knowledge of the content of divine revelation by definition. Then, using the definitions provided, I move on to the epistemological issue of concern in this thesis i.e., knowledge *that* an alleged divine revelation is a divine revelation. In doing so, I outline the novel approach taken to this issue in the thesis.

Ontologically, I define divine revelation as the disclosure by God to one or more human agents of propositional truth that would otherwise remain unknowable and unknown had the disclosure not occurred. This definition, of course, does nothing to settle debates over whether divine revelation *is* propositional or not (e.g., Lewis, 2003). However, I do note that the propositional view of divine revelation is by no means dead as has been claimed by some (Wellington, 2019). I also note that treating divine revelation as if it is propositional opens the fruitful line of enquiry pursued in this thesis. Based on this definition of divine revelation, I assert with respect to epistemology that the content of divine revelation can be known when one or more sacred texts express otherwise unknowable propositions. I also assert that the content of divine revelation can be known precisely because it can be recovered in propositional form. Again, these assertions do not

resolve debates over the epistemology of divine revelation, but they do allow me to get past these debates to the epistemological issue of importance in this thesis.

In general terms, I have said that we can know a proposition is revealed if we have a sacred text from which we can recover this otherwise unknowable proposition. However, I am particularly interested in cases where it is *disputed* whether a sacred text yields a given proposition, especially cases where one or more conflicting propositions claimed to be otherwise unknowable are recovered from a sacred text. In other words, given that CR can be both correctly explicated or erroneously amplified, how can we distinguish between propositions that are actually in the content of revelation i.e., explicated, and thus revealed, propositions; from those that are additions to CR i.e., amplified, and thus not revealed, propositions?

The question of what propositions are or are not revealed has been typically treated as a theological question to date. Thus, theologians have typically argued over the revealed status of propositions, whereas philosophers have tended to evaluate the logical coherence of propositions said to be revealed. So, for example, philosophers have examined the logic of the doctrine of the Trinity (e.g., Bohn, 2011), various means by which the Atonement could deal with sin (e.g., Davis, 2014), and the justice or otherwise of Hell (e.g., Henry, 2015). However, these philosophical examinations have not typically dealt with the theological issue of *whether* various propositions concerning the Trinity, the Atonement or Hell (for example) are actually revealed (for one exception see Tuggy, 2003). In contrast, rather than evaluating supposedly revealed propositions themselves, in this thesis I evaluate the methods by which such propositions are determined to be revealed.

Another way of looking at my core epistemological issue is to observe that Christians claim to know *non-accidentally* that certain propositions are revealed (Catholic Church, 2012; Lamont, 2004). A believer may have any number of reasons for believing that a proposition is revealed. If so, the believer has justification for their belief that the

proposition in question is revealed. Moreover, if the proposition happens to be revealed then it is true that the proposition is revealed. Assuming the Justified True Belief (JTB) model of knowledge applies, the believer could in this case have *accidental* knowledge that the proposition is revealed. However, when Christians say that they know a proposition is revealed they do not mean that they have accidentally arrived at this knowledge i.e., that they *only* have reasons for believing that an actually revealed proposition is revealed. They mean that they have *non-accidental* knowledge that the proposition is revealed because they can *show*, not just provide reasons for believing, that the proposition is revealed (e.g. Helm, 1973/2013; Sproul, 1992). The question then becomes: “How do Christians attempt to show that propositions are revealed (and, thus, show that their alleged knowledge that certain propositions are revealed is not accidental)?”

If Christians have a public method for showing that propositions are revealed, the method correctly applied will demonstrate that Christians have knowledge that certain propositions are revealed. If, on the other hand, Christians cannot demonstrate by some public method that a given proposition is revealed, then neither they nor we can verify that they know non-accidentally that the proposition is revealed. By addressing these methodological matters, I extend the literature on the epistemology of divine revelation beyond the general sense of knowing the content of a divine revelation to the specific case of knowing non-accidentally that particular propositions are revealed.

Revelation and Content Knowledge

Despite the comments above, it might be argued that a believer’s knowledge (or not) that a proposition is revealed is not of much consequence. Specifically, perhaps a believer’s knowledge that *p* is revealed is irrelevant to the believer’s knowledge of *p* itself. Two points can be made here. The first is that a believer’s knowledge that *p* is revealed is, perhaps obviously, relevant to their claim that *p* is revealed. Again, Christians do not just claim

knowledge of the content of their beliefs, but also of the source of these beliefs. Second, the argument made consistently in the thesis is that if Christians do not know that *p* is revealed there is at least a reasonable question as to whether *p* has actually been revealed. Moreover, if there is a question that *p* is revealed there is a question as to whether *p* is true and so, on the JTB model of knowledge, there is a question as to whether the content of *p* is known. Thus, granting certain assumptions about revelation and knowledge, knowledge that *p* is revealed *is* relevant to content knowledge of *p*. For this reason, although the thesis focusses on knowledge of the source of *p*, source knowledge is not and should not be separated from content knowledge.

Sources of Divine Special Revelation

Previously, I distinguished between general and special revelation, and noted various ways that special revelation may be communicated. We can conveniently divide the sources of divine special revelation into public and private sources. Private sources are those sources which can be broadly categorised under the banner of *religious experiences*. These experiences cannot be investigated by an outsider but can only be attested to by the insider i.e., the believer can testify that they have had a religious experience e.g., a dream, a vision, or an angelic visitation; but this experience cannot be accessed except through testimony by the outsider. Public sources of revelation can be divided into oral tradition and written Scripture. Oral tradition is inaccessible in much the same way as private religious experience. Thus, for example, any branch of Christianity can testify that some belief or another was in their oral tradition. However, unless and until an oral tradition is captured in writing, we can only accept testimony concerning the content of that oral tradition.

Despite these comments, I do not, as indicated previously, seek to argue that private religious experience or oral tradition are not sources of special revelation. I simply note that only written sources are publicly available for analysis, and so confine myself to these

sources – specifically, as indicated previously, to the Protestant Bible. I also don't disagree that private revelation and/or oral tradition can confer certainty regarding the content of revelation. I do, however, explore whether the recipient of a private revelation or oral tradition should be certain that they are in possession of a revelation in the first place. I may well be certain of p given that I accept that God has privately or traditionally revealed p to me, but I should not (so I argue) be certain that God has revealed p to me on the basis that I have had an alleged private or traditional revelation of p . This assertion leads nicely to a consideration of certainty regarding the *source* of divine revelation.

Certainty of the Source of Divine Revelation. I indicated when discussing the theology of divine revelation that God not only makes the content of divine revelation certain, but also makes the source (i.e., Himself) of divine revelation certain. Typically, when God reveals a proposition, He not only reveals the proposition itself but He also reveals that He is the source of that proposition. As it turns out, much in this thesis hangs on (particularly) the *source* of divinely revealed propositions being made certain. In order to augment the theological observations made earlier, a brief philosophical treatment of the issue of source certainty with respect to divine revelation follows.

First a point about certainty itself. The *type* of certainty to which I appeal in this thesis is epistemic (or objective) rather than psychological (or subjective) certainty. For the purposes of this thesis, epistemic certainty refers (generally) to the inability to be mistaken, and (specifically) to the inability to be mistaken about the source of certain (i.e., revealed) propositions. Admittedly, this is a high bar for certainty as opposed to psychological certainty which refers 'merely' to a high (or even the highest) degree of confidence that a believer may have that something is the case. However, epistemic certainty is entirely warranted in terms of this thesis because Christians claim *infallibility* when determining those propositions that are revealed. Under infallibility, there can be no mistake concerning that which is revealed either in terms of content or source. Thus, infallibility provides both

the justification and the explanation for why we should expect Christian believers to be, and to claim to be, epistemically certain about the content and source of revealed propositions.

On a related point, throughout the thesis I indicate that, unlike induction and abduction, deduction is epistemically certain with respect to determining CR. However, advocates of non-classical approaches to deductive inference (e.g., Basin, Matthews & Vigano, 1998; Sieg & Cittadini, 2005; Politzer, 2016) argue that deduction may not yield epistemic certainty. If so, then perhaps I should not claim that every proposition logically deduced from CR is revealed. In response I would say that, even if it is the case that deduction may not be epistemically certain in all cases, deductive inference is taken to confer epistemic certainty in the case of demonstrating that propositions deduced from CR are revealed (e.g., Bluedorn, n.d.; Jeremiah, 1646/2010). However, even if we were to admit that some deductions do not yield revealed propositions, the effect of this admission would be to restrict the corpus of revealed propositions even further than is argued in the thesis. Thus, allowing that all propositions deduced from CR are revealed is the most generous interpretation of deduction with respect to CR. Perhaps more importantly, whether being generous or not, this generosity (or lack thereof) does not affect my analysis of induction and abduction in any way. In order, then, not to restrict the corpus of revealed propositions based on speculation about deduction, and in order to focus the discussion on induction and abduction which are the primary targets of the thesis, I have adopted the most generous interpretation of deduction i.e., that deduction yields epistemic certainty in all cases concerning revealed propositions.

The notion of epistemic certainty is supported by philosophical arguments concerning why we should expect the source of divinely revealed propositions to be identifiable without error. I turn to these arguments next.

Further Arguments for Source Certainty. In Chapter 2, I presented the main argument I will prosecute in this thesis concerning why we should not consider

propositions, other than those explicit in or deduced from CR, to be revealed. This argument concerns the epistemic threat to revealed knowledge posed by induced and abduced propositions. In this section I provide two supporting arguments for why God would not use propositions that can only be induced or abduced from CR to communicate His self-revelation. These arguments are the argument from religious disagreement and the argument from non-resistant non-belief. Both of these arguments are adaptations of extant arguments against the *existence* of God. I have adapted these arguments for the purposes of arguing against the existence of divinely revealed propositions whose *source* is not CR and CR alone and, thus, unequivocally God.

First, let me clear what my overarching argument (containing the two sub-arguments) is at this point. It is helpful to put this overarching argument in formal terms.

1. God does not desire there to be disagreement, and thus division, amongst Christians with respect to either the content or the source of propositions divinely revealed.
2. God also does not desire that any individual Christian (or group of Christians) be ‘forced’ into a position where they cannot rationally decide whether a proposition is revealed or not i.e., God would not put a believer in the position where they may be or become a *non-resistant non-believer* with respect to any given proposition that is, in fact, revealed.
3. God does not act against his desires. [I take this premise to be self-evident.]
4. Religious disagreement and non-resistant non-belief both potentially and actually arise when there is doubt over the content and source of propositions alleged to be revealed.
5. Doubt over the content and source of propositions alleged to be revealed potentially and actually arises when propositions alleged to be revealed are demonstrable only by induction or abduction from CR.

6. God does not make revealed propositions demonstrable only by induction or abduction from CR.

The rest of this section fleshes this argument (containing the two sub-arguments) out in detail.

A common argument against the existence of God is the argument from religious disagreement (King, 2008; Pittard, 2014). Essentially this argument is that God, if He exists, would not allow there to be disagreement not only over His *existence*, but also concerning His *identity*. There is disagreement over God's existence *and* over his identity, the latter as evidenced by different views concerning God's identity across different religions. Hence, the argument concludes that God does not exist. Adapting this argument, a similar argument can be made against any putative revelation where there is religious disagreement with respect to that revelation. The argument begins with the assertion that God wants to reveal Himself, but also wants to preserve unity amongst believers (in the present case, Christian believers). There is solid theological evidence that God desires to promote and preserve Christian unity (e.g., John 17:23; Romans 6:5; 1 Corinthians 1:10, 1 Corinthians 6:17; Colossians 2:2). As such, if God reveals Himself, and if God acts according to His desire for unity, He will reveal Himself in a way that does not threaten Christian unity i.e., in a way that does not facilitate or promote disagreement amongst Christians. Propositions demonstrable only by induction and abduction from CR facilitate and promote disagreement amongst believers concerning their revealed status. Hence, the argument concludes, these propositions are not revealed.

Another argument against the existence of God is the argument from non-resistant non-belief (NRNB – Schellenberg, 2007, 2005). The argument from NRNB is that God, if He exists, would want all to know of His existence. At the very least, God would arrange evidential circumstances in the world such that non-resistant non-believers would come to a knowledge of God. Under this scheme, the only non-believers would be *resistant* non-

believers i.e., those who wilfully ignore the God-given evidence for God. Christians by the way, based on Romans 1:18-22, concur with this analysis. However, as Schellenberg (2005) points out, there is evidently non-resistant non-believers in the world i.e., those who are open to belief but who disbelieve, not because they wilfully ignore the evidence for God, but because they honestly find such evidence to be less than compelling. Under the hypothesis that God exists, NRNB should not exist. Given that it does, the conclusion is that God does not exist.

The argument from NRNB can be extended to the case of divine revelation. This extended argument parallels the main argument in the thesis, but is framed here in terms of NRNB. The argument is as follows. God wants all Christians to believe and act upon that which He has revealed i.e., God does not want it to be the case that any Christian be either a resistant or a non-resistant non-believer with respect to any proposition He chooses to reveal. Resistant non-belief might arise for any number of reasons where the Christian is at fault through their sinfulness. NRNB can arise, however, if Christians are simply unsure as to the content and/or the source of a putatively revealed proposition i.e., the fault here, if any, is epistemic not moral in nature. God might have reason to allow a resistant Christian non-believer to continue in their sin. However, a just and loving God would presumably have no reason to allow a non-resistant Christian believer to continue in their simple human ignorance. For this reason, God will ensure that non-resistant Christians are not unsure about the content and source of any divinely revealed proposition. However, there *is* lack of assurance amongst non-resistant Christians concerning some putatively revealed propositions, namely induced and abducted propositions. Therefore, the conclusion is that these propositions are not revealed.

The reason that propositions recoverable only by induction and/or abduction facilitate and promote disagreement and NRNB is that these modes of interference are underdetermined by CR. By underdetermined, I mean that not all the information required

to arrive at a proposition induced or abducted from CR is explicit in, or deduced from, CR. Thus, it is open to any believer or group of believers to question whether an induced or abducted proposition actually has its source in CR. Further, the long and bitter history of Christian theological and ecclesiastical dispute makes it absolutely clear that Christians regularly divide over propositions induced and abducted from CR. In contrast, there is little or no division over propositions explicit in, or deduced from, CR. For example, no Christian (I will be so bold as to assert) disputes that God is Creator, Lord, Redeemer, or that God possesses any attribute (e.g., holiness, wisdom, grace, or compassion) that is explicit in CR. There is no disagreement over these propositions being revealed because there is no *scope* for disagreement over the source of these propositions. There may of course be dispute over exactly what God's explicit titles and attributes *mean*, and how they apply in any given context. However, the base propositions themselves are not disputed.

One could easily list the induced and abducted propositions, the content and source of which have formed the basis of both major and minor disagreements amongst Christians. Of the major disagreements: (a) disputation over the two natures of Christ was the presenting cause of the division between the Oriental and Eastern Orthodox churches in 451 CE; (b) division over the primacy of the Papacy and the manner of procession of the Holy Spirit (encapsulated in the so called Filioque clause) were the matters of dispute in the Great Schism of 1054 CE between the Catholic and Orthodox churches; and (c) propositions concerning Papal infallibility and the relationship between faith and works were central issues in the Protestant Reformation. Of more minor divisions, Protestants have regularly divided (e.g., into Lutherans, Calvinists (Reformed), Anglicans (Episcopalian), Baptists, and Pentecostals), over propositions concerning grace, the Atonement, church governance, baptism, the Second Coming, and many others.

The point here, again, is that induction and abduction, unlike observation and deduction, provide scope for such disagreements and for NRNB. Once it is allowed that CR

can underdetermine propositions said to be revealed, there is no particular limit to this underdetermination. Thus, some propositions said to be revealed are very much underdetermined by CR. Moreover, this is not just my assertion. It is not uncommon, for example, for one branch of Christianity to accuse the doctrines of another as being ‘un-Biblical’ or ‘having no basis in Scripture’ or ‘exhibiting no Scriptural support’ or something of the like (e.g., Geisler, 2008; Piper, 2006). By these phrases it is meant that CR radically underdetermines these doctrines to the extent that these doctrines cannot claim to be in CR. In one sense, the history of Christian disagreement over doctrine can be construed as one group of Christians finding the inductions and abductions of the other to be too expansive while, of course, wishing to retain induction and abduction for their own purposes. My primary point here, however, is that if it is the case that God is disappointed with disagreement and division over CR, and if God does not wish to facilitate NRNB, then it would not be the case that God would choose to reveal Himself such that His self-revelation could only be demonstrated through induction and abduction.

In response, it might be argued that observation and deduction are insufficient to reveal everything God intends to reveal. Thus, for example, it might be argued that certain “mysteries” of the faith (Weinandy, 2002) are not communicable explicitly or deductively, but are only communicable partially, obliquely or metaphorically and, thus, are only recoverable by induction or abduction. Let’s assume that human language is insufficient to communicate explicitly or deductively the mysteries that God wants to reveal. In this case, God would be better remaining silent about such mysteries for two reasons. The first reason is that opening up the tin-can of induction and abduction leads to all the problems already outlined. The second reason is that opening the ‘mystery can’ also leads to division. For example, some Christians (i.e., Unitarians) see the alleged mystery of the Trinity to be just plain obfuscation of the true relationship between the Father, Son and Spirit. The alleged mystery of the Incarnation (implicating the two natures of Christ) is also seen by Unitarians

as a distraction from revealed truth rather than an inductive or abductive representation of that truth. The same pattern goes for all other alleged mysteries e.g., the alleged mysteries of the Eucharist (how the bread and the wine can actually be or become the body and blood of Christ), Baptism (how one actually dies and rises with Christ in Baptism), and the church (how the church can actually be the body of Christ on earth). The problem here is not that these mysteries could not be *real* mysteries, but rather that Christians disagree and divide over what is a mystery and what is ‘just’ a metaphor, or indeed, a falsehood. Further, the believer sensitive to these divisions may not be able to decide which, if any, of the disputed mystery propositions are actually revealed. Again, a God who is interested in Christian unity and belief commitment would presumably have reason to stay silent on the issue.

A final consideration is that God might allow, with respect to mysteries or otherwise, that certain propositions be underdetermined by CR. Nevertheless, these propositions may be determined, or even over-determined, by CR in conjunction with individual faith, church authority, church tradition or any number of other means. I won’t over-burden the reader here. Suffice to say that I devote two chapters in this thesis (Chapters 5 and 7) to arguing exactly why these extra-CR sources do not help determine that a given proposition is revealed and, in fact, only highlight and perhaps entrench further division amongst Christians. Given this failure, it is again hard to see how a God interested in unity and commitment would allow CR itself to underdetermine revealed propositions.

Epistemic Optimisation

The preceding arguments, and the final argument presented first in Chapter 2, and in more detail in Chapter 12, effectively represent reasons why we should expect God to be an *epistemic optimiser* with respect to the source of divine revelation. This expectation is consistent with Christian claims to be able to infallibly determine CR, and with the

understanding that epistemic certainty is the sort of certainty we are dealing with in relation to divine revelation.

Nevertheless, a critic might argue that religious disagreement and NRNB are not to be traced to induction and abduction as such, but rather to their inconsistent usage. I deal with this issue in the next chapter (Chapter 4). However, there is an immediate distinction to be made here regarding soundness and validity. Let's assume that, whatever mode of reasoning is involved, Christians have not made mistakes of inference that might threaten validity. My point is that, even in such cases, induction and abduction allow for objections on the basis of soundness. As already indicated, Catholics and Protestants (for example) could not reasonably disagree over the soundness of the premises of a deduction from CR i.e., a deduction involving only premises explicit in CR. However, they could well disagree over the soundness of premises involved in induction and abduction because these modes of inference involve at least some premises not explicit in CR. Thus, the problem is with induction and abduction to the extent that each allows disputable premises, even if induction and abduction are accepted as *valid* modes of verifying propositions and even if they are consistently applied by any given believer or group of believers.

Finally, none of the considerations in this section are meant to assign blame to God or to Christians with respect to divine revelation. Thus, I neither seek to argue, even if I could, that God is at fault for constructing CR in the way that He has, or even that Christians are at fault for applying induction and abduction to CR. I simply contend that there are good theological and philosophical reasons for suspecting God has not revealed, and indeed would not reveal, any propositions that are recoverable only by induction or abduction, and spend the rest of this thesis exploring and defending this contention.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I provided necessary theological and philosophical background concerning divine revelation. In doing so, I described two competing models of the relationship between divine revelation, doctrine and belief; grounding these models in a canonical example of alleged divine revelation. The purpose of the modelling was to show that not all propositions putatively revealed are revealed. The modelling raises the problem of how Christians distinguish between revealed and non-revealed propositions, and thus arrive non-accidentally at knowledge that a proposition is revealed. This problem represents a useful extension of studies in the epistemology of divine revelation, building on previous work that addresses how the content of divine revelation can be known by extending this work to how the *source* of divine revelation can be known. Moreover, as I have indicated in the final section of this chapter, there are good reasons for expecting that the source of revelation should be made certain by a God who is explicitly interested in preserving Christian unity and in avoiding NRNB. With this background in mind, I next go on to describe the usage and limitations of induction as they apply to the problem of identifying and verifying allegedly revealed propositions.

Chapter 4

The Problem of Induction

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss various methods by which propositions are identified in and verified by the content of revelation with particular reference to the failure of induction to identify and verify revealed propositions. In Chapter 2, I indicated that induction poses a critical problem for Christianity with respect to the identification and verification of propositions. Essentially, the problem is that induction returns both revealed and non-revealed propositions and, when it does, induction provides no additional means of discriminating between these two types of propositions. In this chapter I show in detail how and why this problem of induction arises. In doing so, I contrast induction with observation and deduction which I show are proper means of identifying and verifying propositions.

I first distinguish between the identification of propositions and the verification of propositions. I then show how, with some caveats, observation and deduction correctly identify and verify propositions. I then move to investigate induction as a means of identifying and verifying propositions, showing how and why induction fails to accomplish either task. Some preliminary implications of this failure are also outlined, with further implications dealt with in greater depth later in the thesis (particularly in Chapter 13). I conclude with a summary and introduction to the next chapter dealing with putative solutions to the problem of induction.

Identification and Verification of Propositions

I start by drawing a distinction between the identification and verification of revealed propositions. Henceforth, I will use the term *proposition* to mean *revealed proposition* unless the context demands otherwise. A proposition is identified simpliciter by starting with CR and either observing a proposition in that content, or inferring a proposition

from that content by deduction or induction. Thus, a proposition is verified if a believer starts with a proposition and then seeks either to find an equivalent expression of that proposition in CR, or seeks to find premises in CR from which the proposition can be deduced or induced. In order for a proposition to be correctly identified or verified, CR must be demonstrated to be the *source* of the proposition, and the *method* of observation of, or inference from, CR must be a correct method correctly applied. Thus, the source and method considerations referred to in Chapters 1 and 2 apply in all cases, and in all cases must be passed in order for a proposition to be properly deemed to be revealed.

Observation

As indicated in Chapter 2, propositions may be identified in, or verified by, CR using three methods: observation, deduction, or induction (Boulter, 2002; Cassidy, 2013; Geisler, 1968; Smith, 2012). Propositions are identified/verified by observation when a given proposition corresponds to an explicit statement or statements in the Bible. Henceforth, I will use I/V to mean *identify/verify*; I/Ved to mean *identified/verified*; and I/Ving to mean *identifying/verifying* depending on the context. Identifying a proposition by observation requires establishing the underlying meaning of some text(s) in the Bible. For example, the proposition that “God alone is holy” corresponds to the underlying meaning of the Biblical statement “for you alone are holy” (referring to God in Revelation 15:4). Verifying a proposition by observation means to start with, using the present example, the proposition that “God alone is holy” and then observing that this proposition expresses the underlying meaning of the text “for you alone are holy”. Propositions concerning the holiness of God, the sinfulness of humanity, the virgin birth, the resurrection of Christ, the existence of heaven and hell are all examples of propositions I/Ved by observation of CR.

With respect to I/Ving propositions by observation, textual indeterminacy and hermeneutical diversity imply that the meaning of sentences in CR can be disputed on

linguistic grounds (see Isaak, 1999). For example, the text “while we wait for the blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ” (Titus 2:13) could mean that *Jesus is our great God and Saviour* or could mean that *Jesus is the glory of our great God and Saviour*. The reading favoured determines what proposition is observed. However, matters of textual interpretation are properly reserved for theological and linguistic analysis. As such, I will not deal in any depth with these issues in this thesis. Instead, I assume in my argument and examples that there is some level of agreement over the linguistic meaning of texts. Under such circumstances, it can be agreed that observation is a proper method for I/Ving propositions because under observation the source of propositions is demonstrably CR, and correct observation preserves the truth of CR. For these reasons, correct observation passes the source and method tests for revealed propositions. Thus, while the meaning of observed texts in the Bible *is* disputed, no one disputes that texts should be observed in CR in order to determine the revealed status of propositions. In other words, with respect to any given proposition the accuracy of observation may be in dispute, but the method of observation itself is not.

Deduction

Observation is sufficient to I/V propositions explicit in CR. Logical inference, in contrast, is required in order to I/V propositions implicit in CR. Two forms of inference are used to I/V propositions implicit in CR: deduction and induction.⁶ In this section I deal with identification and verification by deduction. When identifying propositions, deduction takes propositions explicit in CR as premises and derives implicit propositions from those explicit propositions. For example, the proposition that *God is not self-seeking* is not a proposition explicit in the Bible. However, it can be deduced from two explicit propositions as follows:

⁶ Later I deal with the role of abduction in I/Ving propositions. However, for the sake of simplicity I limit the present discussion to deduction and induction.

1. God is love (1 John 4:8).
2. Love is not self-seeking (1 Corinthians 13:5).
3. God is not self-seeking (implicit proposition).

As another example, the proposition that God is Creator can be deduced from the Bible in the following way:

1. God asserts that He is the Creator (Isaiah 45:12).
2. God cannot lie (Titus 1:2) (Equivalently, all God's assertions are true).
3. Therefore, God is the Creator.

Deduction may also take *direct* deductions and make further *indirect* deductions from those direct deductions. A direct deduction takes as its premises two or more explicit propositions from CR and deduces a conclusion. An indirect deduction takes the conclusion of a previous deduction from CR as one of its premises. For example:

1. The Creator does not tire (proposition explicit in Isaiah 40:28).
2. God is the Creator (*direct* deduction from the previous example).
3. God does not tire (*indirect* deduction).

When verifying propositions by deduction the process is reversed. For example, one seeks to verify the proposition that God is the Creator by sourcing propositions in CR (such as those provided above) that require the deductive conclusion that God is the Creator. This process works for both direct and indirect deductions. So, for example, the proposition that *God does not tire* can be verified by using the deductive conclusion *God is the Creator* as one premise in a deduction leading to the proposition that *God does not tire*.

Deduction passes the source test of revelation because under deduction CR alone entails deduced conclusions. Equivalently, no information other than that in CR is required

for deduced conclusions to be drawn. Deduction also passes the method test of revelation because propositions I/Ved by deduction do not add to the total information in CR.

Deduction simply makes explicit implicit information in CR. Not adding to CR (Deuteronomy 4:2; 12:32; Revelation 22:18) is a theological stipulation agreed to by all branches of Christianity (Binns, 2002; Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, 2007; Jeremiah, 1646/2010; cf. Long, 2017). This stipulation ensures that CR is not amplified but is only explicated, thus preserving the integrity of CR and protecting the church from error (Newman, 1845/2014). Further, assuming any given deduction is valid, deduction preserves the truth of CR with such truth preservation being a necessary condition for a proposition to be revealed. Finally, if CR is taken to be consistent, deduction from CR will not yield any inconsistent propositions. Consistency with CR is another necessary but not sufficient condition for a proposition to be revealed.

Conditional Limitations on Deduction

For all these reasons (explication, truth and consistency), propositions deduced from CR can be taken as revealed (Clark 1993). It should be noted, however, that deduction only passes the source test where the premises of a deduction are explicit in CR or deduced from that content. Where one or more of the premises in a deduction are not explicit in or deduced from CR, deduction does not I/V revealed propositions. In such cases, information not in CR is contained in the premises, and that added information will compromise the explication, and may compromise the truth and consistency, of CR. Returning to the example used in the last chapter, it is sometimes argued that the proposition that Jesus is God (JiG) is deducible from CR. If so, JiG a revealed proposition. A typical deductive form is:

- (a) God alone possesses attribute x, and/or performs action y, and/or is addressed by title z.

(b) Jesus possesses attribute x, and/or performs action y, and/or is addressed by title z.

(c) Therefore, Jesus is God.

This deduction is logically valid, but is theologically invalid for the following reasons. First, if “God” in the first premise is “the Trinity”, then the conclusion that Jesus is God cannot be theologically correct because Jesus is not the Trinity. Second, for the same reason, if “God” in the first premise means God the Father (or God the Holy Spirit), then the conclusion cannot be theologically correct because Jesus is not God the Father (or God the Holy Spirit). Furthermore, if “God” in the first premise means God the Father (or the Holy Spirit), the second premise invalidates the first. God the Father cannot *uniquely* possess any attribute, perform any action or be addressed by any title if another person (i.e. Jesus) also possesses that attribute, performs that action, and is addressed by that title. Third, if “God” in the first premise means “any divine person”, then the proper conclusion is that Jesus is a divine person – or just *Jesus is divine* for short. On the face of it, this conclusion makes much more sense than Jesus is the Trinity, or Jesus is the Father or the Holy Spirit. However, this is not the conclusion that Christians want. Christians want the conclusion that Jesus is a specific divine person i.e., the Christian God, not just ‘any old’ divine person. Christians want Jesus to be not just divine, but *the* Divine. So, the third option does not go far enough.

An attempt has also been made to establish by deduction that propositions relating to the dual nature of Christ are revealed. The orthodox doctrine of the two natures of Christ may be summarised by the following three propositions:

1. Jesus Christ has a divine nature
2. Jesus Christ has a human nature

3. The divine and human natures of Christ are distinct, but completely and harmoniously united or integrated in the one person, Jesus Christ

Under the doctrine of the Incarnation, it is said that Jesus, who was and is God, took on a human body and nature and so became both God and man (Macquarrie, 1993). One key feature of the doctrine of the Incarnation is that Christ gains human attributes in the Incarnation without losing or compromising any of his divine attributes. Nevertheless, it is said that Jesus' divinity is hidden to some extent by his humanity such that Jesus' divinity is not explicit in the Bible, but may be inferred from certain attributes possessed by, and/or actions performed by, and/or titles applied to, Jesus. A typical deduction employed to show that Jesus is both God and man is as follows:

1. The attribute x, or action y, or title z necessarily entails the ontological status G.
2. Only God has the ontological status G.
3. Jesus is a man (Acts 2:22).
4. Jesus has the attribute x, performs the action y, or has the title z.
5. Jesus has the ontological status G (from 1 and 4).
6. Jesus is God (from 2 and 5) and Jesus is a man (from 3).

This structure suffers from the same theological problems as the previous structure: does *God* mean the Trinity, one person of the Trinity, or 'just' a generic divine person. Moreover, the crucial premise: "The attribute x, or action y, or title z necessarily entails the ontological status G" is not present explicitly in CR, nor is this premise a deductive conclusion of other premises explicit in CR. As such, regardless of any equivocation on the word "God", there is reason to doubt the source of the deduction. For example, persons other than God can be called god (Psalm 82:6), meaning that the title "god" does not necessarily entail the ontological status of God. Similarly, humans can share attributes of

God. King David, for example is described as a man after God's own heart (1 Samuel 13:14; Acts 13:22), meaning that David shared at least some of God's affections, motivations and intentions. Moses is made by God to be like God to Pharaoh, including by assigning Aaron (Moses' brother) to be *Moses'* prophet (Exodus 7:1). Humans, more generally, are also made in the image of God (Genesis 1:27), meaning that they share some of the attributes of God. Finally, humans often perform actions characteristic of God, including:

- (a) performing miracles e.g., in the Old Testament Moses and Aaron (Exodus 7-9), Elijah (1 Kings 17-18), and Elisha (2 Kings 2-6); and in the New Testament Jesus' disciples (Mark 6; Matthew 10; Luke 9), and also Paul (Acts 9, 13, 14, 20, 28), Stephen (Acts 6:8) and Phillip (Acts 8);
- (b) delivering judgment e.g., many Old Testament prophets (not least Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Amos, and Micah); and in the New Testament Peter (Acts 4, 5) and Paul (Acts 13); and
- (c) forgiving sins e.g., the Old Testament priests (Leviticus 5:4-6; 19:21-22); and in the New Testament the disciples (John 20:23), and church elders (James 5:13-15).

Thus, it is not necessary to be God in order to perform actions characteristic of God specifically when acting under God's delegated authority.

The point of the discussion is that neither of the preceding deductions allow the conclusion that *Jesus is God* to be a revealed proposition. This situation arises because even if the deductions are valid, and even if *Jesus is God* is a true proposition, certain base propositions of the deductions do not pass the source test of revealed propositions. Specifically, the propositions that "God uniquely possesses attribute x, and/or performs action y, and/or is addressed by title z" and "the attribute x, or action y, or title z necessarily

entails the ontological status G” are not in CR explicitly or by deduction. Moreover, as just shown, these propositions conflict with CR. Hence, the revealed status of these base propositions has not been established, and so the revealed status of any deduced conclusion resting on these base propositions has also not been established. It may be claimed, of course, that there are other means by which JiG can be deduced from CR. However, as I indicated in this chapter and in Chapter 2, the problem in deducing JiG is fundamentally not due to the lack of an appropriate deductive structure, but is rather due to a lack of information in CR to this effect. Thus, I need not exhaust all structural possibilities to be confident in asserting that JiG is not deducible from CR.⁷

In response to the observations above, one could argue for a softening of the arguable base propositions such that they align with CR e.g., “God possesses (but not uniquely) attribute x, and/or performs (but not uniquely) action y, and/or is addressed (but not uniquely) by title z”. However, softening a base proposition in this way leads to deductive conclusions in addition to those preferred. For example, using the preceding base proposition:

1. God possesses (but not uniquely) attribute x, and/or performs (but not uniquely) action y, and/or is addressed (but not uniquely) by title z.
2. Jesus possess attribute x, and performs action y, and is addressed by title z.
3. Jesus either is God or is not God.

This deduction is valid and sound with respect to CR, but is clearly unsatisfactory if the purpose of the deduction is to demonstrate that CR necessitates the conclusion that Jesus is God, and thus that JiG is a revealed proposition.

⁶ Moreover, it is generally agreed, even amongst supporters of the proposition that Jesus is God, that an explicit statement to the effect that *Jesus is God* is not extant in CR, even if it is also asserted that the Deity of Christ is somehow necessarily implied from CR. See, for example, Komoszewski, Sawyer, and Wallace (2006) and Hurtado (2005).

Deduction, then, only I/Vs propositions if the base propositions of a deduction are in CR. Only under this condition does deduction lead to revealed propositions, thus genuinely explicating CR and not amplifying it. In contrast, deductions that use premises not in CR do not I/V their deductive conclusions because these deductions contain information not in CR. These latter deductions make explicit propositions *not* implicit in CR. Moreover, softening base propositions not in CR does not help I/V propositions because softened propositions lead to undesirable (from the point of view of some Christians) deductive conclusions. Thus, whether hard or soft, base propositions not in CR do not I/V revealed propositions.

Verification by Induction

In the first part of this chapter, I indicated that, issues of textual interpretation and disputable base propositions aside, propositions derived by observation and deduction demonstrably pass the source and method tests of divine revelation. Thus, observation and deduction correctly I/V propositions. If Christian beliefs always corresponded to propositions observed in or deduced from CR, then the claim that Christianity is a revealed religion would be easily defended. However, Christians also take as divinely revealed propositions that are not observed in or deduced from CR, namely propositions inferred by induction. These propositions include those corresponding to many of Christianity's core beliefs, such as the belief that Jesus is God and the belief that God is a Trinity (Claunch, 2013; Young, 2004). These propositions are taken to be revealed even though, unlike explicit or deduced propositions, they are not demonstrably sourced from CR. Moreover, as I will show momentarily, the method of induction itself is questionable as a method of I/Ving propositions. For these reasons, the extension of CR by induction opens the possibility that Christianity is not a revealed religion with respect to induced propositions.

Induced propositions are most commonly inferred from CR by enumerative induction in two specific forms. The first form of enumerative induction reasons from

particular instances to all instances. In the Christian theological setting, such reasoning is said to proceed from *example* (a specific case) to *principle* (a general case). For example, the New Testament church is used as the base-case from which to inductively establish principles for ongoing church practice as follows:

1. The New Testament church “devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer” (Acts 2:42) (example).
2. The example of the New Testament church applies to the church throughout time (inductive enumeration).
3. The church throughout time should devote itself to apostolic teaching, fellowship, the breaking of bread (communion) and prayer (principle).

Although this methodology is not undisputed (e.g., Fee, 2002), nevertheless propositions concerning conversion, baptism, confession, church governance and worship are typically derived in this way. Induction of this type amplifies CR by extending the range of cases to which the content originally applied. This extension, thus, generalises the application of the Biblical text from its initial recipients to potentially any and all recipients of the text. In doing so, induction of this type extends the authority of CR across time and across contexts.

The second form of enumerative induction arises when textual content from the Bible is selected, ordered and prioritised so as to provide support for a given proposition (Boulter, 2002; Smith, 2012). For shorthand, I use the term *ordering* to refer to this process. On the basis of any given ordering, inductive reasoning is used to conclude that CR contains the proposition in question. For example, with respect to the proposition that Jesus is God, the believer may reason inductively as follows:

1. Texts x, y and z (taken from the Bible) can, when ordered, be used to inductively infer the proposition that Jesus is God.

2. Therefore, inductively, the content of revelation contains the proposition that Jesus is God.

And then by definition:

3. All propositions contained in the content of revelation are revealed propositions.

And then by deduction:

4. Therefore, 'Jesus is God' is a divinely revealed proposition (from 2 and 3).

This second form of enumerative induction can be distinguished from the first in that the first form typically takes a single verse from the Bible and extends the application of this verse to times and contexts other than the original time and context in which the verse was located. The second form takes multiple verses and arranges these verses in order to support a proposition. Both forms of enumerative induction lead to controversy amongst Christians over what is and what is not revealed. For example, with respect to the first form, there is much conflict amongst Christians over whether or not the proposition that women should not teach men or have authority over them (from 1 Timothy 2:12) is a revealed proposition that applies to the church throughout history or only a specific instruction given by the Apostle Paul in one context. However, for the most part, in this thesis I am concerned with the second form of enumerative induction because this form makes CR particularly amenable to the verification of preferred induced propositions.

Under the second form of induction, an indefinite number of propositions can be I/Ved. This situation arises because, for any given proposition with some minimal level of textual support, CR can be ordered in such a way that the proposition can be made an inductive conclusion from CR. For example, the proposition *God's favourite colour is green* can be supported by any number of inductive orderings of the 41 verses in the bible referring to *green*. Of course, the proposition *God's favourite colour is red* (53 verses in the bible) can be supported in exactly the same way. Christians would presumably say that

neither of these propositions are revealed. Yet, the methodology used to I/V these propositions is *exactly the same* as that used to I/V any number of propositions Christians do say are revealed. Hence, if Christians are to be methodologically consistent, they should either admit that the bar for I/Ving propositions under the second form of induction is too low, or they should accept as revealed that God's favourite colour is green (or red, or blue, or possibly any other colour mentioned in the Bible). Nevertheless, the fact that I am challenging this form of inductive reasoning would seem strange to many Christians precisely because this mode of reasoning is the standard method by which Christians I/V many of the propositions they take to be revealed (Geisler, 1968; cf. Egan, 2009; Helm, 2014). I dedicate the rest of this thesis to showing why acceptance of this standard method is misplaced.

The Problem of Induction for Verification

Consistent with my approach to observation and deduction, the problem of induction as a means of I/Ving propositions can be usefully examined in terms of the *source* and *method* aspects of the problem. In order for a proposition to be I/Ved, the proposition itself or its premises should be explicit in or deduced from CR. Thus, CR should be the sole and sufficient source of any proposition deemed to be revealed. Induced propositions, however, *always* smuggle in premises that are not explicit in or deduced from CR. As such, induced propositions are always underdetermined by CR instead of being determined by CR as should be the case for revealed propositions. This underdetermination means that induced propositions rely on some combination of evidence from CR and evidence from other sources. To the extent that CR is not the sole and sufficient source of any proposition or its premises the proposition fails the *source test* of revealed propositions.

A failure of the source test is illustrated in the first example of enumerative induction. In that example, the proposition: "The example of the New Testament church

applies to the church throughout time” is not a proposition derived from the content of revelation. Thus, CR is not the sole and sufficient source of the induced proposition that: “The church throughout time should devote itself to apostolic teaching, fellowship, the breaking of bread and prayer.” To take this proposition as revealed is effectively to assume facts not in God-given evidence i.e., not in CR.

It might be argued, however, that the second form of induction does not fail the source test. Strictly, the second form of induction should use only texts explicit in the Bible to derive putatively revealed propositions – in the preceding example, the proposition that Jesus is God. However, there is a hidden general premise in the induction. That premise is “texts that can be used to inductively infer a proposition are intended by God to be used to that effect”. As divine revelation is intentional, CR can only contain intentionally revealed propositions. It is not good enough, however, only to assume such intentionality. In order to I/V a proposition by induction divine intentionality with respect to texts supporting the proposition has to be demonstrated. In the case of deduction, I argued that if God provides texts from which a proposition can be deduced God must have intended to convey that proposition because such propositions are logically necessary conclusions from base propositions contained in those texts. However, induced propositions are not logically necessary conclusions from base propositions contained in given texts. Hence, under induction there is immediately the possibility that God did not intend to convey some proposition even if that proposition can be induced from CR. If so, the proposition in question cannot be in CR and so fails the source test. The effect of the general hidden premise, then, is to assign divine intentionality to any given induced proposition, even if God may not have intended to communicate that proposition.

Note that, at this point, I have not ruled out the possibility that God could have intended to convey propositions implicit in CR other than those that are deducible from CR. Thus, I am not arbitrarily restricting the implicit content of CR only to those propositions

that are deduced from CR. In Chapter 12, I make an explicit argument that CR should be restricted to explicit and deduced propositions. However, for the sake of progressing the argument at this point, I will concede that CR contains implicit propositions other than those inferable by deduction in order to demonstrate where that concession leads. Further, for the sake of simplicity, let's assume that all propositions implicit in CR other than those inferable by deduction are inferable by induction.⁸ Even given this concession and simplification, I now show that induction is methodologically ill-equipped to determine that propositions are revealed. If so, induction fails the *method* test of revelation even if we allow by concession that it passes the *source* test of revelation.

I noted in Chapter 2 that induction is an inappropriate method for I/Ving propositions because it is not truth preserving and is probabilistic i.e., induction returns that a proposition is probably revealed not that a proposition is certainly revealed. However, I also showed in Chapters 2 and 3 that divine revelation must be true and that divine revelation is certain. Thus, any method that is used to I/V propositions must *at least* return propositions that are true and propositions that are certainly revealed (given that the base propositions of any given proposition are in CR). Induction does not meet these criteria, and so induction is not methodologically appropriate for I/Ving propositions. I return to these two problems shortly, but immediately deal with a third problem related to induction i.e., that induction returns both revealed and non-revealed propositions.

Methodologically, again as indicated in Chapter 2, induction returns conflicting propositions. When induction returns conflicting propositions at most one of these propositions can be revealed, yet induction provides no means of determining which one. Thus, in any given case, at best induction returns both revealed and non-revealed propositions but, at worst, returns no revealed propositions at all. In both situations,

⁸ Later, I add abduced propositions to the list of propositions possibly implicit in CR.

induction provides no means of distinguishing between revealed and not-revealed propositions. The reason induction returns conflicting propositions is because, as indicated previously in this chapter, induction can I/V *any* proposition for which there is at least some supporting evidence in CR, including conflicting propositions. Moreover, induction places no limit on the ways CR can be ordered so as to support various propositions. Thus, multiple combinations and permutations of explicit or deduced propositions taken from CR can be used to support an indefinite number of conflicting induced propositions with respect to any given topic or issue. To make matters worse, if induced propositions are taken to be revealed, then induced propositions can be used to deduce or induce further propositions, and so on. For this reason, opening CR to induction licenses a snowballing amplification of CR, as evidenced by the wide range of conflicting propositions said to be in CR across (and sometimes within) the various branches of Christianity. Some examples of conflicting propositions on various topics based on alternative inductive orderings of CR are given in Table 2.

Table 2

Conflicting Inductive Orderings

Topic/Issue	Conflicting Inductive Orderings		
Hell	Traditionalism – the reprobate suffer for eternity in Hell	Conditionalism – the reprobate die	Universalism – the reprobate are eventually saved
Salvation	Calvinism – God wants to save some and some are saved	Arminianism – God wants to save all but only some are saved	Universalism – God wants to save all and all are saved
Person of Jesus	Trinitarianism – Jesus is the Son of God and God the Son	Unitarianism – Jesus is the Son of God but not God the Son	Modalism – Jesus is one mode of God i.e., God the Son
Second Coming	Premillennialism – Christ comes before the Millennium	Postmillennialism – Christ comes after the Millennium	Amillennialism – There is no literal Millennium

Topic/Issue	Conflicting Inductive Orderings		
Mary	Catholic – immaculately conceived and assumed (into Heaven)	Orthodox – not immaculately conceived but assumed	Protestantism – neither immaculately conceived nor assumed
Eucharist / Communion	Transubstantiation – the elements become the body and blood of Christ	Consubstantiation – the elements coexist with the body and blood of Christ	Symbolism – the elements only represent the body and blood of Christ
Teaching Authority	Catholicism – teaching authority ultimately rests with the Pope	Orthodoxy – teaching authority ultimately rests with the church councils	Protestantism – teaching authority ultimately rests with the individual believer
Baptism	Baptist, Pentecostal – adult baptism	Catholic, Anglican – infant baptism	Quakers, Salvation Army – no baptism
Church governance	Catholic, Orthodox, Anglican – episcopal	Reformed – presbyterian	Pentecostal, Baptist – congregational

Table 2 indicates that, for each of the topics/issues identified, at least three conflicting propositions are inducible from CR. I briefly flesh out the example of the Eucharist to provide a sense of how induction leads to conflicting propositions on this issue.

Example of the Eucharist

In the *Apology of the Church of England*, Jewel (1563/2019) summarises theological differences over the Eucharist. These differences are represented by the following questions:

- (a) Is the body and blood of Christ present naturally, supernaturally, neither or both in the Eucharist?
- (b) Is the body and blood of Christ consumed physically, spiritually, neither or both?
- (c) Does the blessing of Christ, of a priest, both or neither affect the transformation of the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ (assuming such transformation occurs)?

- (d) Do the bread and wine remain bread and wine even if they also become the body and blood of Christ?

The point of these questions is that *every* proposed answer to these questions can be supported by CR if CR is treated inductively. For example, a key verse relating to the Eucharist is: *Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life (...) For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. (...) Just as (...) I have life because of the Father, so also the one who feeds on me will have life because of me* (John 6:54-57). This verse can be interpreted literally, and a literal interpretation may be warranted by the verse: *I am the bread of life. Your ancestors ate the manna in the desert, but they died; this is the bread that comes down from heaven so that one may eat it and not die* (John 6:48-50) where Jesus compares himself to manna actually consumed. If John 6:54-57 is read literally, it can be used to support the proposition that Christ's actual body and blood are physically consumed in the Eucharist, thus meaning that bread and wine are transformed into the body and blood of Christ, with such transformation ordained by Christ. In contrast, a non-literal reading of John 6:54-57 based perhaps on a symbolic rendering of *I am the bread of life* will obviously return a different (i.e., supernatural/spiritual) understanding of the Eucharist. The point here is that induction over just two verses can lead to conflicting propositions both of which have a putative claim to be in CR.

Application of Induction

Revealed propositions cannot be contradictory assuming (as Christians would assert) that CR is consistent. God does not contradict himself (Numbers 23:19; Proverbs 30:5; Malachi 3:6).⁹ The fact, then, that induction I/Vs conflicting propositions means that for theological as well as logical reasons induction fails as a method of I/Ving revealed

⁹ This problem of multiple inductive orderings being used to verify that alternative propositions are revealed corresponds, but is not identical to, the problem of Pervasive Interpretive Pluralism (PIP) recently identified by Smith (2012).

propositions. As noted in Chapter 2, however, some might say that the problem with induction lies not in the method of induction itself but in the application of that method. Thus, if induction is applied correctly, it I/Vs only preferred propositions i.e., those propositions thought to be revealed, and not also propositions conflicting with preferred propositions. The problem with this assertion is that conflicting propositions are I/Ved using exactly the same inductive methodology applied in exactly the same way as for preferred propositions. All theological induction assembles a given selection of evidence and interprets that evidence according to its own rules. Further, these rules are established not by CR but by the protagonists for each proposition. Under each protagonist's evidence and self-selected rules of evidence, preferred propositions will always be supported and alternative propositions will always be rejected. Put another way, there is no agreed set of rules, or at least no agreed application of any given set of rules, that guarantees some sort of objectivity when inductively I/Ving propositions. For this reason, any protagonist has reason to think that their selection of evidence and their application of the rules is correct and everybody else's selection and application is wrong. In reality, *all* protagonists are using arbitrary evidential selections and arbitrary rules of evidence to I/V their preferred propositions. There is, thus, no objectively established correct or, crucially, incorrect application of induction. For these reasons, no inductivist can legitimately argue that their opponent's application of inductive methodology is faulty.

However, for the sake of continuing the analysis, let us assume that it is the case that God intends to reveal some proposition only inducible from CR, and that a believer or group of believers happens to have arrived inductively at this proposition by correct application of the method of induction. Even in this case, and as noted previously, induction still presents two particular difficulties from the point of view of verifying the proposition concerned.

First, induction is not truth preserving. This lack of preservation does not mean that induced propositions cannot be true. However, it does mean that any given induced

proposition may not be true. If not true, a proposition cannot be revealed because all divinely revealed propositions are true. In response to this observation, a believer could cite some test of truth that supposedly establishes the truth of an induced proposition. Two such tests are consistency and coherence.¹⁰ For present purposes, consistency with CR means that a proposition does not conflict with CR. Coherence means that a proposition is inductively entailed by CR. The strength of this entailment is taken to be a measure of the truth of the proposition in question.

The problem with these tests is that false propositions can pass, and demonstrably do pass, both tests. For example, with respect to consistency, the proposition *Mary was assumed into Heaven* is considered even by some Protestants not to conflict with CR (see Greenacre & Corbishley, 1982), but is nevertheless considered to be a false proposition by many Protestant Christians (e.g., Williams, 2007). Thus, false propositions can pass the test of consistency with CR. With respect to coherence, several predicted dates for Christ's return were alleged to be inductively entailed by CR. For example, the year 500 was predicted based on the dimensions of Noah's Ark. John Wesley inferred the year 1836 on the basis of his reading of Revelation Chapter 12. Herbert W. Armstrong predicted (variously) that Christ would return in 1935, 1943, 1972 and 1975 (updating his predictions as each previous prediction failed). The point here is that *demonstrably* false propositions (Christ has not yet returned unless we have missed something) are inductively coherent with (entailed from) CR.

I am not seeking to argue here that consistency and coherence cannot be conducive to truth. Rather I am arguing that, at least with respect to CR, these indicators may not be conducive to truth and so cannot be used to verify the truth or otherwise of propositions.

¹⁰ Here I distinguish between consistency and coherence with CR as tests of truth, as distinct from consistency and coherence with CR as indicators of divine revelation. I return to the latter issue in Chapter 5. Note also that correspondence is not a viable test of truth for induced propositions. If an induced proposition corresponds with a proposition in CR, it is either explicit in or deducible from CR.

Neither consistency nor coherence establish conclusively the truth or otherwise of a proposition. As such, the believer cannot use these tests to establish that any induced proposition *is* true and so is eligible as a revealed proposition. Of course, if a proposition is shown not to be revealed, that does not mean the proposition is *not* true. It does mean, however, that if the proposition is true, it is not true by virtue of being revealed. Thus, a believer could still have confidence that a proposition shown not to be revealed is true, but this confidence would have to derive from some other source than the proposition's revealed status. Moreover, confidence (as indicated in Chapter 3) relates to *psychological* certainty. So, even if we were to accept that a believer is confident that a proposition is true, this confidence is still not indicative of the *type* of certainty referred to in this thesis.

Second, even assuming that a given induced proposition is true, induction still only returns that the proposition is *probably* revealed. Yet, I have already argued that divine revelation is intentional not accidental. If intentional, then presumably God wishes to establish conclusively that whatever is revealed is revealed. Moreover, theologically, because God is not deceptive (Numbers 23:19; Hebrews 6:18), God would not intentionally reveal something but then leave in doubt the matter of whether that something has been divinely revealed (1 Corinthians 14:33; 2 Timothy 3:16). Logically, of course, it is possible that God could make something known but not make it known that he has revealed that something. However, to do so would defeat the purpose of the revelation in the first place. Theologically, God reveals things not just in order that we should know certain things, but that we should believe and act on those things (Davies, 2010; see also Chapters 2 and 12). Belief and action, however, are compromised if there is a question as to whether a given proposition is divinely revealed or not. Propositions not revealed by God are not binding in any way on the believer.

For these reasons, if God wants us to believe and act on a proposition, God should let us know that he is the one doing the revealing; not least so that we can assign the weight

of divine authority to the revelation for the purposes of belief and action. Further, the nature of divine revelation is such that if God does not tell us (or indicate in some other way) that he is doing the revealing, we may well not know that he is doing the revealing at all.

Without God self-identifying his revelations, we can erroneously attribute God's revelations to some source other than God, again compromising belief and action. For these reasons, the revealed status of propositions should not be a matter of probability but rather a matter of certainty. The counter-argument could again be that some method enables the conclusive identification or verification of induced propositions otherwise only probably revealed. However, I examine three such methods in the next chapter, showing that these methods in fact fail to conclusively I/V induced propositions.

Nothing I have said to this point precludes a believer believing that a proposition is revealed and thus true, or true and thus possibly revealed. Moreover, induction can be (and is) used to justify this belief. However, such justification does nothing to establish that the proposition is *actually* true or revealed. In Chapter 11 of the thesis, I comment further on the difference between the justification of belief that a proposition is revealed and the actual verification of propositions. In both the case of justification and verification the believer decides on the inductive ordering used to justify or verify. Believers typically claim that such ordering is directed by God i.e., that the Holy Spirit guides individual believers or the church as a whole to correctly order their Bibles inductively. However, I show in Chapter 7 why this alleged divine guidance fails.

Finally, I make a brief observation on, what might be called, *indirect* induction. Perhaps it might be argued that while induction from the Bible is problematic (call this *direct* induction), that induction from propositions already taken to be revealed is not problematic. For example, if one took the Deity of Christ to be revealed, regardless of how one arrived at that proposition in the first place, then one could by induction (and/or abduction) arrive at one understanding or another concerning (say) the relationship between

the two natures of Christ. These understandings might then be taken to be revealed even if they could not be induced directly from CR.

The problem with this line of reasoning is twofold. First, even if we were to accept that a base proposition (in the example above, the Deity of Christ) is revealed, induction is still not truth preserving, and still admits multiple conflicting propositions. For example, at least two conflicting understandings of the two natures of Christ are evident in Christianity: the Chalcedonian understanding “Christ *in* two natures” and the Oriental Orthodox understanding “Christ *of* two natures” (Trostyanskiy, 2015). An often bitter 1500-year dispute, which still continues in some quarters, has arisen over these different understandings. So, even if a base proposition is taken as revealed (both Chalcedonians and non-Chalcedonians agree that Christ is God) the revealed status of propositions induced from this base proposition can still be hotly disputed.

Second, what could be called the ‘chain of custody’ with respect to revealed propositions is critical. So, even if (again, for example) there was no dispute over the two natures of Christ, and we were to grant that the consensus inductive inference to the agreed two natures of Christ was truth preserving in this instance, it still could not be established that the agreed understanding was *revealed*. This situation arises because the parent proposition (the Deity of Christ) has yet to be tied to CR. Simply taking a proposition to be revealed does not, of course, mean that it is revealed. The best one could say, then, is that *if* the base proposition is revealed, and *if* induction from the base proposition is truth preserving, then the derivative proposition is revealed. However, there are clearly too many *ifs* here for a proposition to be considered to be unconditionally verified as revealed. Yet, unconditional (i.e., epistemically certain) verification is the sort of verification we are dealing with in this thesis. Thus, indirect induction fails in exactly the same way as does direct induction.

Implications of the Problem of Induction

Given the difficulties pertaining to induction, a reasonable course of action would be to abandon induction as a means of I/Ving propositions. However, to do so would mean that Christians would have to abandon the only means of I/Ving many propositions held to be revealed. So, even if reasonable, abandoning induction is by no means desirable from the viewpoint of Christians. Thus, despite the difficulties outlined, induction is retained by Christians as a key method for I/Ving propositions. The cost of doing so, however, is that induction is too permissive. Induction not only I/Vs preferred propositions, but potentially I/Vs any given proposition, including those that may be untrue or otherwise not revealed. To use a previous example, God may or may not have a favourite colour and, if so, that colour may or may not be green. Moreover, as I show later in the thesis, all attempts to constrain this permissiveness such that induction only returns one set of preferred propositions fail. Once the induction genie is out of the bottle it cannot be re-bottled.

Put somewhat differently, the inductivist believer is faced with a dilemma: either (a) abandon the use of induction to I/V propositions and, hence, potentially leave unverified one or more of their preferred propositions; or (b) continue with induction but, in doing so, concede that competing propositions can legitimately claim revealed status. The non-combative believer may be willing to concede that competing, maybe even conflicting, positions can claim revealed status if this is the price of verifying their own propositions. However, many believers are not of this type. These latter believers want to verify their beliefs at the *expense of* competing, and especially conflicting, beliefs. So, for example, many trinitarians are not happy to let unitarians claim that their beliefs are revealed. Similarly, believers in the traditional view of hell are not usually happy to let universalists roam free. Believers in substitutionary atonement seek to annul other atonement beliefs, and so on.

Faced with this dilemma, combative inductivists are typically reduced to arguing that their inductive orderings and conclusions are superior to those of their competitors for some reason other than the methodology of induction itself or its application. However, these arguments can only rely on subjective evaluations of likeliness, loveliness (to borrow from Lipton, 2004) or some other confirmatory virtues as markers of superiority. These subjective arguments typically fail to convince competitors who perceive their own orderings and conclusions to be at least as virtuous as those of their opponents. It is true that sometimes competitors are convinced by their opponent's virtue-based arguments to change their mind e.g., sometimes Protestants become Catholics, and vice versa. However, such conversions are not regular and, hence, theological and epistemic stalemates typically ensue (see, for example, Rowell, 2011).

Under induction, then, Christianity is at least in part a self-defeating religion. By allowing CR to underdetermine propositions, induction solves the problem of how propositions that are not explicit in or deduced from CR can be taken as revealed. However, induction does so at the expense of licensing any number of conflicting propositions that are also inducible from CR. Further, as noted, of a conflicting set of propositions only one (if any) can be revealed, but induction is not able to identify which one. As such, induction leaves unresolved the conflicts of its own making. These unresolved conflicts threaten fixation of the belief that preferred propositions are revealed. Yet, this belief is the very belief Christians seek to fix by induction. For these reasons, induction fails from both a verification perspective and from the perspective of the fixation of Christian belief.¹¹

¹¹ I say more about the fixation of belief in Chapter 11.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter I have outlined the methods by which Christianity seeks to I/V propositions. Observation is used to I/V explicit propositions. Implicit propositions are I/Ved by deduction and induction. Yet, for more than one reason, induction does not pass the method test of revelation even where we might concede that it passes the source test. Modes of inference that do not pass the source and/or method tests cannot be said to rightly I/V propositions. Nevertheless, because use and acceptance of induction for I/Ving propositions is widespread, I outlined some implications of using and accepting induction towards the end of the chapter. These implications are serious enough to require a solution. Several solutions, and their limitations, are explored in the next chapter.

Chapter 5

Theological Solutions to the Methodological Problem of Induction

Chapter 4 established that even if CR contains implicit propositions not inferable by deduction, induction fails to I/V these propositions not least because it is methodologically too permissive. Given the need within Christianity to retain induction, however, Christians need a solution to the methodological problem of induction. Two broad approaches are offered by Christianity to resolve this problem. One approach is to constrain the results of induction *post-hoc* such that only certain induced propositions are taken to be revealed. The other approach is to constrain induction pre-conditionally such that induction only returns preferred propositions in the first place. Christianity uses four types of post-hoc and pre-conditional constraints on induction: faith, authority, tradition and theology. Faith, authority and tradition constrain the results of induction post-hoc and so represent the first approach. Theology constrains induction pre-conditionally, and so represents the second approach. In this chapter I deal with the first approach before moving to the second approach in Chapter 6.

I show in this chapter that each of the post-hoc constraints fail due to plurality i.e., different Christian faiths, authorities and traditions constrain the results of induction differently. Thus, depending on what faith, authority or tradition is chosen, different sets of induced propositions will be taken as revealed. Moreover, attempts to constrain the plurality of faith, authority and tradition also fail for reasons explored in this chapter. This second-order failure to constrain faith, authority and tradition means that faith, authority and tradition are not effective first-order constraints on induction. In making a case to this effect, I am not saying that Christians cannot or should not have religious faith, or respect religious authority, or follow a given religious tradition. I am saying, however, that in the long run

faith, authority and tradition do not help the Christian solve the methodological problem of induction.

Faith

In Chapter 1, I indicated that persistent belief that a proposition is revealed can be taken as evidence that verifies that the proposition is revealed. Under this definition, faith is *evidence* that a proposition is revealed. In this chapter, however, I define faith in a different way. Faith under this second definition is a *faculty* that allows the believer to distinguish between revealed and non-revealed propositions. Under this definition of faith, faith acts like a sixth-sense (a *sensus divinitatis*) that allows the believer to distinguish revealed and non-revealed propositions in a candidate set of induced propositions (Calvin, 1536/1960; Helm, 1998; Plantinga, 2000). Thus, faith can be used to constrain the results of induction post-hoc such that non-revealed propositions are identified and eliminated and revealed propositions are selected and retained.¹²

The problem with faith as a post-hoc means of constraining induction, however, is pluralism. Put simply, on the basis of faith, believers believe that different things are revealed. Thus, faith returns different sets of induced propositions as revealed. The plurality of faith explains the emergence of any number of theological disputes concerning what is and is not revealed. It also explains the heated nature of such disputes because all sides of a dispute can genuinely believe that their faith-driven judgement is correct and that of their opponents is not. Finally, the plurality of faith explains the inscrutability of debates where faith is supposedly the arbiter. If faith selects conflicting induced propositions as revealed, only one of these sets at most can be the truly revealed set. Conversely, faith must be wrong with respect to at least one of a conflicting set of propositions. Yet faith provides no means

¹² For the moment, I am ignoring the case where faith allegedly allows a believer not to make an inductive mistake in the first place. It might be that there is a species of induction, *divinely guided* induction, that returns only revealed propositions. I return to this possibility in Chapter 7 with a focus, nevertheless, on abduction.

of demonstrating which faith-selection is right and which is wrong. In the absence of such demonstration, even other Christians are left in the dark with respect to whether or not a proposition has been verified by faith. In other words, appeals to faith devolve to mysticism which is inherently unverifiable. The mystic may or may not be right in terms of the set of induced propositions included or excluded from revealed status, but it is not possible even for the unenlightened *believer* to determine whether this inclusion or exclusion is valid. For this reason, faith as a pathway to knowledge concerning what is revealed is inscrutable to the outsider and possibly to the insider as well.

In order to resolve the problem of the plurality of faith and resultant theological disputes, the application of faith to constraining induction often involves some sort of appeal to consensus. Consensus supposedly rescues the judgement of individuals from the idiosyncrasies of individual faith (Bettenson & Maunder, 2011; Dorman, 1998). As such, the judgement of the community of God (Grenz, 1994) is said to be more reliable than the judgment of the individual believer. Faith works *en masse* even if it does not work individually. Plurality, however, plagues the consensus of the faithful in the same way that it plagues the faith of individuals. Within Christianity there is more than one consensus concerning what is revealed, including with respect to conflicting sets of propositions. For example, the Protestant consensus rules out as revealed the induced proposition that the Bible requires interpretation by the church, and that the Pope is infallible when providing such interpretation *ex-cathedra*. In contrast, Catholic consensus rules out the induced proposition that the Bible is self-interpreting. As a result, the Catholic consensus constrains induction to a different set of propositions than the Protestant consensus on the same matter. Hence, while consensus may succeed in eliminating inductive discrepancies between-believers *within* a given consensus, it fails as a constraint on induction between consensuses. So, even if a particular faithful consensus can and does correctly constrain induction, in the case of conflict on the matter the outsider has no way of knowing which consensus is

correct. At best, a given consensus can indicate to the outsider that a set of induced propositions is popularly believed to be revealed, but that is not the same as verifying that those propositions are in fact revealed.

It could be asserted, however, that if there is a universal consensus that a particular induced proposition is revealed then surely that means that the proposition is revealed. Two points can be made in response to this assertion. First, I am not aware of any *induced* proposition which all people claiming to be Christians agree is revealed. Where something approximating a universal consensus is achieved, however, this achievement typically results from defining as heretical (and, thus, non-Christian) any position that disagrees with the majority position. Notably, for example, propositions espoused by unitarians and universalists have been declared heretical by the Catholic, Orthodox and most Protestant churches. If, however, a gerrymandered consensus is accepted as legitimate, then any induced proposition can be verified by manipulating a consensus on the matter. Making an induced proposition revealed by this means is, however, self-evidently not the same as deciding the fate of a proposition by the emergence of a genuine consensus. Hence, even if there is such a thing as a ‘naturally’ emerging universal consensus that verifies induced propositions, a gerrymandered consensus does not qualify as one of those.

Second, and perhaps more importantly, consensus on any terms fails as a test of revelation because CR does not indicate that propositions *thought* (universally or otherwise) to be revealed are revealed. Thus, even if it is universally agreed that a proposition is revealed, and even if such agreement emerges without manipulation, such agreement is not *according to CR* an indicator or determinant of the revealed status of that proposition. I am not saying here that, in general terms, CR does not support a consensus model for constraining the judgements of individual faith (e.g., Grenz, 1994). However, I am saying that even if CR does so in general terms, CR does not support a consensus model for I/Ving

what is revealed. Agreement, then, that a proposition is revealed indicates agreement but does not confer verification.

For both these reasons, consensus ultimately does not work as a limitation on the plurality of individual faith. This failure means that faith itself fails as constraint on induction or, alternatively, that verification by faith alone will terminate in a stalemate with respect to what is or is not revealed. Some other solution other than faith, even consensual faith, is then required to constrain induction.

Authority

Authority may be construed as the next step beyond a consensus of the faithful in terms of constraining induction post-hoc. Authority as a constraint involves the church or some other appointed religious authority in determining what induced propositions are or are not revealed. In Catholicism, the church based on its Magisterium (its teaching authority conferred by God) identifies those induced propositions that are revealed and those that are not. Protestant authority is based on the proposition that the Bible alone is sufficient for determining what propositions are revealed.¹³ As such, the Bible, read under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, is said to lead believers to only those propositions revealed by God and away from those propositions not revealed. Orthodox authority is based on the ecumenical councils of the church that rule in or out propositions revealed or not revealed.

The problem with authority, however, is the same as that for faith – pluralism. Different authorities differ about what is revealed, with each authority ruling in or out different induced propositions, including each other's induced propositions concerning what is the 'true' authority. In order, then, to resolve by appeal to authority debates over what induced propositions are revealed, competing authority claims need to be invalidated such

¹³ I return to this claim in detail in Chapter 7.

that only a preferred authority, whatever authority that is, remains as the only ‘true’ authority. The true authority can then rule on what is revealed or not.

Different branches of Christianity attempt to establish their authority by different doctrines of authority developed abductively. In the next chapter (Chapter 6), I explain in more detail why doctrines developed by abduction do not work to save induced propositions. However, here let me assume for the sake of argument that various abducted theories of authority could support specific claims to authority. The Catholic church’s claims to authority, for example, are based on the abducted doctrine of Apostolic Succession. This doctrine licenses an amplification of Matthew 16:18: “You are Peter, and on *this rock* I will build my church, and the gates of hell will not prevail against it” to read “You are Peter and upon *you and your apostolic successors* I will build my church...”. From this amplification it is further abducted and then deduced that Christ has granted authority to Peter and his successors i.e.,

1. If Christ intends to build his church on Peter and his successors, Christ grants authority to Peter and his successors (abductive hypothesis).
2. Christ intends to build his church on Peter and his successors (abductive amplification of CR).
3. Christ grants authority to Peter and his successors (deductive conclusion).

As will be shown in Chapter 6, however, precisely because abduction amplifies CR (in this case, in Premise 2) abduction does not confer the authority of CR on any proposition, including the proposition that Christ has granted authority to Peter and his successors. Furthermore, the abductive hypothesis in Premise 1 is also obviously not explicitly or deductively in CR. On both counts, then, the deduction is unsound. For this reason, apostolic succession is not verified as being in CR. However, in order not to get bogged down in an argument over apostolic succession, let’s concede that apostolic

succession is in CR and so Catholic authority could be established as the true authority that constrains induction. I show in a moment why this concession does not help the Catholic position.

A key problem remaining for the doctrine of Catholic authority is that Protestant authority can also be established by abduction. Thus, if abduction is allowed to support Catholic authority it should also be allowed to support Protestant authority. The Protestant doctrine of authority is that the Bible is inerrant and infallible and, as such, is sufficient to determine what is revealed. In short, the Bible alone (*sola scriptura*) is sufficient to establish any and all revealed propositions. Catholics are deeply critical of this Protestant account of authority. One common criticism is that, despite their shared adherence to *sola scriptura*, different Protestant groups believe different sets of propositions are revealed. Hence, even if *sola scriptura* is permitted theologically, it nevertheless fails practically to verify induced propositions. Nevertheless, the doctrine of Protestant authority is derived in exactly the same way as the Catholic doctrine i.e., by abduction. Hence, Catholics acting with any consistency cannot rule out Protestant authority on methodological grounds without also ruling out their own doctrine of authority on those same methodological grounds. In other words, despite any practical problems with the application of Protestant authority, the Protestant doctrine has an equal claim to legitimacy as the Catholic doctrine based on its methodology.

These observations also apply to Orthodox authority. The Orthodox doctrine of authority is that the councils of the church are the true authority and these councils correctly identify which induced propositions are revealed. This doctrine of conciliar (council) authority is also based on an abductive reading of CR, including Acts 15 which describes what is deemed to be the first ecumenical council at Jerusalem. Thus, conciliar authority is established by exactly the same methodology as papal or biblical authority. The problem

with abduction is now obvious. Abduction supports *everybody's* claims to authority and so does not help to establish one authority over another.

In defence of their use of abduction, each authority might claim, in the same way as was discussed for induction, that it is the *application* of abduction that is the problem not abduction itself. In Chapter 7, I deal with ways that problems with the application of abduction are supposedly resolved. Suffice it to say here, however, that these methods do not work to constrain the plurality of abduction. Moreover, if induction is used to support a given abduction in favour of one authority or another, then in a transitive sense authority relies upon induction to constrain induction. Thus, there is a vicious circularity underpinning authority as a means of constraining induction. Induction, which is known to be too permissive, including in the case of authority, cannot be used to constrain the permissiveness of induction. Under such conditions, authority only constrains induction at the expense of relying upon induction itself, thus preserving the permissiveness of induction.¹⁴

Each of the observations in this section militate against accepting authority as a valid or effective post-hoc constraint on induction. Given this conclusion, in the next section of the chapter I examine whether tradition fares any better in constraining induction post-hoc.

Tradition

Given the failures of faith and authority to constrain induction post-hoc, perhaps tradition fares better. Tradition refers to a body of beliefs and practices developed over time amongst any group of Christians. These beliefs and practices can be expressed as

¹⁴As one final fall back, an authority might claim that theirs is the authoritative abduction. However, here more circularity arises because the claim to authoritative abduction rests on the assumption that the authority is the true authority in the first place. Obviously, reliance on a claim to authority to support authority fails. In conclusion, then, neither abduction, induction or a direct claim to authority solves the problem of the plurality of authorities, and so the problem of induction remains unsolved by an appeal to authority. The stalemate over who possesses the true authority, means that authority fails to break the stalemate over what is revealed.

propositions. Any new or emerging proposition can be tested against the existing body of propositions in order to determine whether the new/emerging proposition is consistent with the existing body of propositions. By “consistent” in this context I do not mean deductively consistent, but rather that a proposition is either coherent with or corresponds to a proposition in tradition. The consistency of induced propositions with tradition can be used as a means of constraining the results of induction post-hoc. In the work that follows I specifically examine the possibility that coherence with tradition and/or correspondence to tradition effectively constrains induction.

Coherence and Correspondence with Tradition

I begin with coherence. The coherence test of a proposition indicates that if a proposition coheres with a given tradition the proposition is revealed. If not, the proposition is not revealed. Coherence with tradition is a widely accepted indicator that certain propositions are revealed (Begzos, 2014; Cunningham & Theokritoff, 2008; Smit, 2015). However, as will be explained shortly, coherence fails as means of constraining induction because, as with faith and authority, between-traditions tradition succumbs to pluralism.

The principle of coherence with tradition can be helpfully explored with reference to the development of doctrine. Doctrinal development refers to how Christian teaching has changed or developed over time. The concept of doctrinal development is perhaps most famously elaborated by John Henry Newman (1845/2014) in his *Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*, but is also evident in the work of others including, historically, Vincent of Lerins (Guarino, 2006). In terms of constraining induction, the problem of the development of doctrine is: (a) how do Christians reconcile apparently ampliative doctrinal developments, such as those developments that arise from both induction and abduction, with the theological stipulation that CR is the only source of doctrine, and (b) if

amplifications are allowed, how can Christians distinguish between revealed and non-revealed propositions arising from those amplifications.

Prima facie, doctrinal development represents a problem for Christians because Christians hold that authoritative public revelation ceased with the death of the last apostle. Yet, at the same time, Christians claim that doctrine legitimately develops long after this death. Newman's solution to this problem is that doctrines develop from an increased understanding of the explicit and implicit content of revelation not from addition to that content. Thus, developed doctrines only explicate but do not amplify CR. However, given that induction is ampliative in nature, it is not clear how *any* induced proposition qualifies as an explication of CR. However, let's assume for the sake of argument that there are such things as induced propositions that are 'only' explications and not amplifications of CR. The problem then is how to distinguish between induced propositions that are explications and induced propositions that are amplifications of CR.

Here Newman's *tests of* (what he called *notes on*) the development of doctrine come to the fore. Newman designed seven tests that supposedly distinguish between explications that might look like amplifications (what Newman called authentic or genuine developments) and actual amplifications (what Newman called deviations or corruptions). Although Newman did not describe his tests precisely in this way, the tests are predicated on the assumption that coherence with Catholic tradition is the underlying test of true developments (Michaud, 2002). Table 3 provides an outline of two sets of doctrinal tests. The first set (the coherence set) is based on Newman's (1845/2014) original "notes". The second set (the correspondence set, to which I return shortly) is a parallel set of tests framed in correspondence terms. This table is used as a basis for the examples and discussion that follow.

Table 3

Illustrative Examples of Doctrinal Tests

Coherence Test		Correspondence Test	
Preservation of Type	Authentic doctrines preserve the essential characteristics of their antecedent doctrines	Preservation of Truth	Authentic doctrines preserve the logical truth of their antecedent doctrines
Continuity of Principles	Authentic doctrines are based on principles consistent with the principles of their antecedent doctrines	Replication of Principles	Authentic doctrines are based on principles identical to their antecedent doctrines
Power of Assimilation	Authentic doctrines incorporate and unify external ideas consistent with each doctrine	Power of Exclusion	Authentic doctrines exclude external ideas not consistent with each doctrine
Early Anticipation	The antecedents of authentic doctrines appear in early evidence	Early Identification	Authentic doctrines themselves appear in early evidence
Logical Sequence	Authentic doctrines develop in an expected ('natural') sequence	Logical Entailment	The premises of authentic doctrines are recoverable from antecedent doctrines
Conservation of Past	Authentic doctrines conserve past doctrinal developments	Conservation of Inference	Authentic doctrines conserve only those doctrinal developments logically entailed by antecedent doctrines
Chronic Continuance	Authentic doctrines survive the "test of time"	Definitive Acceptance	Authentic doctrines survive current tests of their premises

Newman's tests are framed in order to be able to rule 'in' certain induced propositions that look like amplifications but are claimed by Catholicism to be explications. However, because (as indicated in Chapter 3) coherence is a low bar, it is possible for propositions not revealed to be consistent with Catholic tradition. For example, the doctrine of the Trinity (which is thought to be revealed but may not be so – see Chapter 8) is coherent with Catholic tradition because it: (a) preserves characteristics of previous

doctrines (such as the baptismal formulation denoting that baptism is: “in the name of the Father, the Son and Holy Spirit”); (b) preserves the principle that God is One; (c) incorporates external ideas (such as *homousios* and *hypostasis*) as explanatory principles; (d) was (allegedly, see Tuggy, 2013) anticipated early in the church’s practice and the work of the church Fathers; (e) was developed after belief in the deity of Christ was established (Hurtado, 2005); (f) conserves the deity of Christ and the personhood of the Holy Spirit; and (g) has continued, despite debate, since its initial adoption during the fourth century.

However, one would also have to accept Arianism on coherence terms because Arianism: (a) is consistent with the understandings that Jesus is moral exemplar and mediator between God and man, (b) preserves the principle that God is One (in a much more straightforward way than does the Trinity); (c) incorporates external ideas (such as that Jesus is a created being) as explanatory principles; (d) was anticipated in the work of the church fathers (Barnard, 1970); (e) was developed after doctrines concerning the Logos and the Son, and their identification with each other, were established; (f) conserves the authority and transcendence of God the Father; and (g) has continued in one form or another to the present day, albeit not in orthodox Catholicism (Williams, 2001). The point here is that Trinitarianism and Arianism are mutually exclusive, so one has (or both have) to be not-revealed. Yet, both are coherent with Catholicism. Hence, coherence with tradition does not constrain induction such that only revealed propositions are chosen by coherence.

An obvious response to the preceding observations is that it is not up to me to determine what is or what is not coherent with Catholic tradition. It is the prerogative of the Catholic Church and the Catholic Church alone to make this determination. Furthermore, if I think that Arianism is coherent with Catholic tradition then that only shows my incompetence in the matter. In response I assert that if a doctrine really is coherent with a tradition, then it ought to be possible for any reasonable person to determine that this is, or is not, the case. Moreover, if a reasonable person can establish that a proposition is coherent

with Catholic tradition, yet the church disagrees, this disagreement may have as much to do with the malleability of coherence itself as with the competence of the person assessing coherence.¹⁵ However, in order to avoid an unnecessary dispute over demarcation and/or competence, let me concede that I am wrong about the specific issue of the coherence of Arianism with Catholicism. Nevertheless, coherence with tradition as a general category remains problematic for the reason that follows.

The more general problem with coherence is that, if coherence with any given tradition is allowed to constrain induction, one would, if acting consistently, have to grant coherence with any and every tradition is a legitimate means of constraining induction. The problem with this concession is that any given induced proposition that can be ruled-out as revealed because it does not cohere with one tradition can be ruled-in if it coheres with another tradition. This situation arises because the results returned by coherence-with-tradition depend entirely on the tradition to which a proposition coheres. Between traditions, then, coherence is pluralistic and thus does not constrain induction in any consistent manner.

An example of how the suite of coherentist (Newman-type) tests returns different results depending on the reference-tradition follows. The Catholic doctrine of the Immaculate Conception states that:

Our Lady (Mary) in the first instant of her conception was, by a unique singular grace and privilege of Almighty God in view of the merits of Jesus Christ the Saviour of the human race, preserved exempt from all stain of original sin (Attwater, 1961, p. 246).

Thus, Mary was “preserved from sin” from the time of her conception. From a Catholic perspective, the proposition that Mary was immaculate at the time of her conception is ruled-in as an explication of CR because it: (a) is consistent with the Catholic church’s other doctrines regarding Mary, (b) preserves the ‘principle’ of Mary’s

¹⁵ Hence why some Catholics (e.g., Brownson, 1847) rejected Newman out of hand.

gracefulness, (c) assimilated emerging ideas concerning Mary's sinlessness, (d) is implicit in the work of the Church Fathers, (e) was promulgated as the 'natural' third of a sequence of four key doctrines regarding Mary (with Divine Motherhood, Perpetual Virginity, and The Assumption being the others), (f) is consistent with ideas expressed in these antecedent doctrines, and (g) has continued (despite debate) since its declaration. From a Protestant perspective, however, the proposition is ruled-out as an explication because it: (a) is inconsistent with the Protestant typology of Mary, (b) does not preserve the principle that Jesus alone is the only sinless human, (c) does not account for the Reformation distinction between admiration and veneration of Mary, (d) is not implicit in the Protestant canon, (e) is not sequentially linked to Reformation views of Mary, (f) is not consistent with post-Reformation ideas concerning Mary, and (g) has not been accepted by Protestants despite, for example, Luther's argument that Mary was not effected by sin in the same way as the rest of humanity (Anderson, Stafford, & Burgess, 1992).

The point here is not to argue one way or the other for the proposition that Mary was immaculate at the time of Jesus' conception. Rather, it is to demonstrate by example that coherence between traditions fails to constrain induction in any consistent manner because different constraints apply depending on the tradition referenced. In more general terms, coherence tests only establish whether or not particular propositions cohere with a wider suite of what are *taken to be* revealed propositions. Thus, if the wider suite of propositions changes then so does the eligibility of the target proposition. This change means that, between traditions, coherence fails to consistently constrain induction.

Responding to the Limitations of Coherence

At least two responses are possible to the limitations of coherence between traditions when attempting to constrain induced propositions. One response is that a given Christian tradition is the correct tradition and all other traditions are not. Thus, it is not coherence with

any tradition that properly constrains induction, but only coherence with the *right* tradition. The second response is that if a proposition universally coheres with all candidate traditions, then the proposition is correctly induced from CR. These responses are explored below.

The problem with the first response is that every tradition claims to be the right tradition. Moreover, as with authority, adherents to every tradition order CR in such a way as to support their claim that theirs is the right tradition. So, inductively, CR does not return that any one tradition is *the* correct tradition. Adherents to each tradition could further argue, however, that any given inductive ordering affirming their tradition is *the best* ordering amongst competitors and/or that competing orderings are illegitimate for some reason. However, what constitutes ‘best’ or ‘illegitimate’ is disputed between traditions because different traditions evaluate each other’s inductive orderings according to their own rules. Thus, even if there is a right tradition, Christians do not agree what tradition that is, and do not even agree on the rules for determining what that tradition that might be. So, even if coherence with the right tradition could theoretically correctly constrain induction, in practice it does not. Hence, coherence with right tradition fails as a means of dealing with the plurality of coherence between traditions.

Nevertheless, where a proposition coheres with all (or more or less all) traditions then surely Christians could argue that this universal coherence eliminates the problem of the plurality of coherence between traditions. Any number of universally recognised heresies would fail to cohere with Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant traditions taken together. Yet here the problem with coherence itself becomes clear. Even if there is no conflict between traditions with respect to a given proposition, coherence might still allow some non-revealed propositions to stand as revealed. The reason this is the case is because non-revealed propositions can cohere with revealed propositions. For example, the proposition that *Jesus had a beard* is coherent with the universal tradition that Jesus was a man. However, this coherence does nothing to establish that *Jesus had a beard* is a divinely

revealed proposition, even if this proposition is true. Thus, even universal coherence is not a sufficient condition for a proposition to be revealed. As a more serious example, even if *Trinity* coheres with the universally recognised propositions that *God is One* and *Jesus is God* this coherence does not demonstrate that God is triune (again, even if this proposition is true). Thus, neither coherence with the right tradition or universal coherence with all traditions provides a means of distinguishing explication from amplification thus allowing induction to be properly constrained.

Correspondence to Tradition

In response to the problems with coherence, the coherence tests can be tightened (Newman did not propose such a tightening) such that they effectively become tests of correspondence to a tradition. By correspondence with tradition, I mean that a proposition bears a much closer logical, theological and historical relationship to its alleged doctrinal antecedents than is the case with coherence. Without proposing a formal definition of correspondence and coherence with tradition, operationally the differences between correspondence and coherence with tradition are indicated by reading across the rows of Table 3.

On face value, correspondence to tradition should do better than coherence with tradition because correspondence is a more restrictive category than coherence and so has the capacity to rule out propositions thought not to be revealed but which nevertheless cohere with any given tradition. The problem with this move, however, is that correspondence turns out to be *too* restrictive. Correspondence rules out as revealed certain induced propositions considered to be legitimate explications of CR. For example, the Doctrine of the Trinity should be rejected on correspondence terms (as outlined in Table 3) with Catholicism, Orthodoxy, and Protestantism because it:

(a) uses principles (e.g. substance-Person duality) not evident in antecedent doctrines. Even Trinitarians agree that the Doctrine of the Trinity is a conceptually creative rather than a strictly conservative doctrine (Emery, 2011).

(b) does not utilise premises given by antecedent doctrines. As a creative doctrine, the Trinity uses new (and disputed) premises e.g. that the Holy Spirit is a person and the Holy Spirit is God, that are not included in antecedent doctrines.

(c) does not exclude ideas not contained in its antecedent doctrines. The doctrine of the Trinity relies on ideas (such as homoousios and hypostasis) that are not in its antecedent doctrines.

(d) was not identified early in the Church's life. Even if some proto-trinitarian formulae were evident in the New Testament or the work of the early Church Fathers, these formulae are not equivalent to the doctrine of the Trinity (Tuggy, 2013).

(e) does not have premises recoverable from antecedent doctrines. Even if the Trinity is a true conclusion, it is not a deductively necessary conclusion from antecedent doctrines.

(f) does not exclude previous doctrinal developments not logically entailed by earlier doctrines. The Trinity utilises concepts e.g., homoousios and hypostasis, not deductively entailed by other doctrines.

(g) is not definitively accepted by all Christians. The doctrine was and is heavily contested amongst Christians to this day (Barber, 2006, Tuggy, 2013).

For these reasons, the doctrine cannot be accepted as revealed on correspondence terms even if the doctrine happens to be true. Moreover, as with coherence, even if it was agreed that a proposition I say does not correspond to tradition in fact does, correspondence does not solve the problem of plurality between traditions when this plurality occurs. As with coherence, conflicting induced propositions can and do correspond to different traditions. As a simple example, any and every doctrine regarding the Pope corresponds to

Catholic tradition because the position and authority of the Pope is central to Catholic tradition. Conversely, any and every doctrine regarding the Pope does not correspond with all other traditions because these traditions do not recognise the position or authority of the Pope. For these reasons, correspondence to tradition fares no better than coherence with tradition in terms of constraining induction.

Final Observation

One final observation can be made concerning coherence or correspondence as constraints on induction. Regardless of whether coherence with or correspondence to tradition is chosen, both approaches assume that the grounds for constraining induction can be derived by internal means e.g., by reflection on the relationship of a proposition to a given tradition. However, such derivation rests on the assumption that the reference tradition itself is comprised of revealed propositions. Thus, even if coherence with and/or correspondence to tradition are taken to be valid means of constraining induction, the revealed status of any tradition itself still needs to be determined before coherence or correspondence work as constraints. At best, then, the constraints offered by coherence and correspondence are *conditional upon* the reference-tradition being revealed. Until this condition is demonstrably met, however, coherence and correspondence cannot be assumed to properly constrain induction even if theoretically they might.

At some point then, a reference tradition has to be tested against CR as an external source, not just assumed to be revealed. Given this requirement, coherence and correspondence with tradition do not replace but only displace the need for testing against CR. Yet tradition, like faith and authority, can only be supported by CR inductively. As such, tradition faces the same difficulties as faith and authority. Inductively CR can be used to support *every* tradition just as it can support every authority and every means by which faith is said to constrain induction.

For the sake of exploring the issues, I have allowed that faith, authority or tradition might theoretically and/or theologically constrain induction *within* any given faith, authority or tradition. However, here I assert that the plurality of induction with respect to verifying faith, authority and tradition themselves, does nothing to help solve the plurality of induction with respect to verifying the initial propositions in question. Faith, authority and tradition only kick the inductive ‘can’ one step down the road. Thus, even if I am wrong about propositions that cohere with or correspond to a particular tradition, between traditions the same underlying problem faces tradition as faces faith and authority: the problem of pluralism. Different faiths, authorities and traditions rule in or out different sets of induced propositions. Hence, even if it is conceded theoretically or theologically that faith, authority and tradition *could* resolve disputes and uncertainties about what is revealed, in practice faith, authority and tradition provide no consistent means of separating induced propositions that may be revealed from those that are not revealed.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter I argued that faith, authority and tradition are insufficient to constrain induction to one set of revealed propositions. All three methods fail because, ultimately, they fail to resolve the problem of pluralism between faiths, authorities and traditions. Further, all attempts to eliminate this pluralism fail. Consensus fails to eliminate the plurality of faith because Christianity contains different faith-consensuses. Various theories supporting the precedence of one authority over another fail because CR fails to indicate what doctrine of authority, if any, is correct. Different coherences and correspondences between traditions lead to different sets of induced propositions being taken as revealed. Given these failures, in the next chapter I explore the possibility that theology might *pre-conditionally* I/V induced propositions, thus avoiding post-hoc constraints altogether.

Chapter 6

Abduction as a Solution to the Problem of Induction

The purpose of this chapter is to explore the possibility that, operating under the auspices of theology as a method of verification, abduction as a mode of reasoning is able to constrain induction pre-conditionally such that induction yields only revealed propositions. In order to orient the reader to this chapter, I begin by recapitulating the problem of induction. I then review the nature of abduction as a mode of reasoning, specifically as it applies to the verification of induced propositions. I then show, however, why the results of abduction, particularly in the form of hypotheses, should not be accepted as elements of CR. Later in the chapter I explain why attempts to rehabilitate hypotheses as elements of CR fail to do so. I also demonstrate that even if hypotheses were accepted theoretically as means of verifying induced propositions, in practice they fail to do so due to the plurality of abduction when applied to CR. For these reasons, I conclude that abduction cannot be validly used to constrain and thus verify propositions induced from CR.

Recapitulation

The story of the thesis thus far is as follows. Christians claim that their religious beliefs are based on revealed propositions. If so, Christianity is a divinely revealed and not a humanly constructed religion. Further, Christians have in their sacred text, the Bible, a public body of evidence yielding those propositions said to be revealed. Thus, when called upon to demonstrate the revealed status of propositions upon which their beliefs are based, Christians can identify those propositions explicitly in the Bible, or show that any propositions alleged to be implicit in the Bible have been properly inferred from the Bible (Allen, 2012; Hauser & Watson, 2003). Demonstrating that certain propositions are implicit in CR is readily achieved in cases where the alleged implicit propositions are deduced from

the Bible. In such cases, the Bible explicitly provides information sufficient to directly (from explicit propositions) or indirectly (from other deduced propositions) infer deduced propositions. Further, the method by which deduced propositions are inferred is both truth-preserving and non-ampliative. Thus, deduction passes the source and method tests for I/Ving propositions and, so, there is no dispute that deduction does in fact I/V propositions.

Induction, however, is another matter. Revealed propositions should be determined by the Bible and thus bear some explicative relation to biblical data. Induced propositions, however, are underdetermined by the Bible. As such, induced propositions bear an ampliative relation to the Bible, meaning that induction introduces information not explicit or implicit in CR. Propositions induced from information not in CR do not pass the source test for revealed propositions. However, even if we were to accept that induction passes the source test of revelation, as Christians defending induced propositions would want, induction nevertheless fails the method test of revelation. Induction fails this test not least because induction returns from CR conflicting propositions. At most, only one of a set of conflicting propositions can be true and, thus, revealed because divinely revealed propositions are always true. So, when induction returns conflicting propositions it must, by definition, have returned at least one proposition not revealed. Moreover, even if induction returns only one proposition with respect to a given issue or topic, because induction is not truth preserving this proposition may not be true and so may not be revealed. Again, then, induction fails to definitely I/V propositions.

Finally, theologically God is not the author of confusion (1 Corinthians 14:33). Yet, induction typically leads to confusion over the revealed status propositions, as indicated by any number of theological disputes over the revealed status of these propositions (for examples, see Hill, 2003; and Janz, 2008). Thus, theologically as well as logically induction is methodologically inappropriate for I/Ving propositions. For these reasons, the inclusion of any and every induced proposition in CR can be disputed. Nevertheless, Christians

maintain that *some* induced propositions are revealed. Accepting for the moment that some induced propositions are revealed, the problem then becomes how to choose between revealed and non-revealed induced propositions.

In Chapter 4, I showed that the strength of inductive inferences from CR and/or the alleged consistency of induced propositions with CR does nothing to I/V induced propositions. Thus, induction itself does not provide a means of distinguishing between revealed and not-revealed propositions. Given this failure, in Chapter 5, I reviewed three commonly applied means of constraining the results of induction post-hoc such that, allegedly, only those propositions that are revealed are I/Ved. Specifically, Chapter 5 dealt with faith, authority and tradition as means of constraining the results of induction. These means correspond to the first three of Peirce's (1877) methods of belief fixation: tenacity, authority and preference. That chapter showed that faith, authority and tradition all fail in the task of constraining the results of induction because different faiths, authorities and traditions yield different sets of induced propositions as revealed. Moreover, attempts to eliminate this plurality by appeals to a consensus of the faithful, true authority or right tradition also fail due to plurality. Given these failures, some other method of constraining induction is obviously required.

The methods reviewed in Chapter 5 all represent post-hoc, or symptomatic, solutions to the problem of induction in that they attempt to select between conflicting induced propositions once these propositions have been inferred by induction from CR. The method investigated in this chapter, the method of theology, works differently. The method of theology treats both the cause and the symptoms of induction. Unlike faith, authority and tradition, through the use of hypotheses, theology provides a pre-conditional constraint on induction such that induction only returns preferred propositions. Further, again through the use of hypotheses, theology also transforms induced propositions into deduced propositions by amplifying the explicit content of CR. Finally, where induced propositions selected and

transformed under a hypothesis conflict with propositions explicit in and/or deduced from CR, hypotheses also resolve these conflicts, thus saving induced propositions from falsification by explicit and/or deduced propositions. In this way, theology treats both the cause of the plurality of induction, namely underdetermination of propositions by CR, and the symptoms of that cause, namely conflicting proposition returned by induction.

Before going on to explain in detail how the method of theology constrains, resolves conflicts between, and converts induced propositions; I first introduce abduction as a mode of reasoning. I do so because abduction represents the underlying logic by which the method of theology achieves its constraining, converting and conflict resolving (what I call *harmonising*) functions.

Abduction

Peirce described abduction as a mode of reasoning that proceeds as follows: “The surprising fact B is observed. But if A were true, B would be a matter of course. Hence, there is reason to suspect that A is true” (1903, p. 189, cited in Hatshorne & Weiss, 1935). The suspicion that A is true may be formalised as a causal hypothesis: A causes, and so explains, B. Abduction, thus, implies reasoning from effect to cause and is distinguished by its use of ampliative inferences to identify causes. Abductive inferences are ampliative because, like induction, abduction leads to conclusions that contain information not present in the premises supporting the conclusion. The ampliative nature of abduction means that, in any reasoning situation, many causal hypotheses are possible. Moreover, of these possible hypotheses, two or more ($A_1, A_2, A_3, \dots A_n$) may be mutually incompatible such that both A_1 and A_2 explain B, but A_1 and A_2 are mutually exclusive.

Peirce’s original formulation of abduction involved finding an *initial* explanation for a surprising observation. So, for example, the hypothesis that God is a Trinity can be used to explain how Jesus can be God when the conjunction of the propositions *the Father is God*,

God is One, and *Jesus is not the Father*, appears to rule against Jesus being God. However, in this thesis, I am also interested in the case where, over time, an initial explanation becomes the *preferred* explanation for a particular observation. In such cases, there is motivation to preserve the explanation even if the explanation encounters recalcitrant evidence that may falsify the explanation. In such cases, abductive reasoning can also be used to find post-hoc explanations that save a preferred explanation from falsification by recalcitrant evidence.

In Chapter 8, I show that the Trinity falls foul of just such recalcitrant evidence. However, in this chapter, I provide a simpler example to illustrate how post-hoc hypothesis generation is used to save preferred hypotheses. If the grass is wet on a fine (cloudless) day, the preferred explanation “rain caused grass to become wet” apparently cannot hold. The motivated epistemic agent (motivated, that is, to retain their preferred explanation) searches for a saving explanation that would explain how the preferred explanation (*rain*) holds despite the recalcitrant evidence (*fine day*). In this example, the saving hypothesis could be that it rained last night. Under this saving (post-hoc, maybe even ad-hoc) explanation, the recalcitrant evidence should ideally be made, as it is in this example, “a matter of course” if the saving hypothesis is true. Further, ideally the recalcitrant evidence should be an expected empirical or logical entailment of the saving hypothesis given some theory which applies to both the preferred and the saving hypotheses. If this situation is the case, explanatory consistency between the two hypotheses is maintained. In the present example, the new explanation “it rained last night” is consistent with the theory that rain, whenever it falls, wets grass; and with the recalcitrant evidence that it is fine now. When this condition is fulfilled, an abductive solution to the abductive problem i.e., wet grass on a fine day, has been found.

One could think that the rational approach to recalcitrant evidence is to abandon a preferred hypothesis in favour of recalcitrant evidence. For example, one might hypothesise

that a hose or sprinkler made the grass wet rather than rain last night. However, as will be seen in this and subsequent chapters, under the method of theology the approach is to favour hypotheses over evidence. Thus, in exploring the method of theology, I am interested in the use of abduction both to deal with the problem of induction, and to save preferred hypotheses that deal with induction from falsification by recalcitrant evidence.¹⁶

The Function of Hypotheses in the Method of Theology

In the context of theology, the type of hypotheses involved are theological hypotheses i.e., hypotheses about God. I call these hypotheses *God-hypotheses* where it is necessary to distinguish theological hypotheses from other hypotheses. However, most of the time I just use the term *hypotheses* when meaning *God-hypotheses*. Importantly, in the context of theology and Christianity in general, these hypotheses are not called hypotheses but are the *doctrines* referred to in Chapter 3. In other words, doctrines are hypotheses by another name. For example, the doctrine of the Trinity is the hypothesis that God is a Trinity, the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception is the hypothesis that Mary was sinless at the birth of Jesus, and so on. Doctrines are, however, not just hypotheses but hypotheses mandated by religious authority. As such, doctrines specify the way CR *must* be interpreted in order to preserve doctrines themselves and the propositions which depend on those doctrines for verification.

¹⁶ There is a debate in the literature concerning the relationship between abduction as hypothesis generation and abduction as hypothesis selection (see, for example, Aliseda, 2006; Harman, 1965; Hon & Rakover, 2001; Lipton, 2004). Hypothesis generation is sometimes taken to be the only form of abduction. Inference to Best Explanation (IBE), however, has also been classified as a form of abduction (Aliseda, 2006), representing the abductive process by which the best explanation (hypothesis) for an observation is generated. This classification is not, however, uncontroversial. Several authors (e.g., Aliseda, 2006; Lipton, 2004; Psillos, 2002) suggest that IBE is not a form of abductive reasoning at all, but is rather a form of inductive reasoning for choosing between hypotheses - conducted against some selection criteria (Lipton (2004) suggests likeliness and loveliness are the most common criteria). According to these authors, IBE mandates that a reasoner should choose from a competing set of hypotheses the hypothesis that best explains the evidence – and that induction guides the reasoner to determine which explanation that is. Rather than attempting to resolve the conflict over these two perspectives on IBE, I show in this and subsequent chapters that both perspectives apply to the method of theology.

The function of hypotheses with respect to the verification of induced propositions is threefold. First, hypotheses are used to constrain induction pre-conditionally such that, under a given hypothesis only one of a set of conflicting yet putatively revealed inductions can be logically selected. This is the *constraining* function of hypotheses. Second, hypotheses are used to amplify CR such that a preferred induction becomes a deduction from CR. This is the *converting* function of theology. Third, hypotheses are used to resolve conflicts between selected induced propositions and any other explicit, deduced or induced proposition taken to be revealed. This is the *harmonising* (conflict resolving) function of hypotheses. Together these functions secure the revealed status of preferred induced propositions.

Constraining Induced Propositions. The constraining function of hypotheses works as follows. For any given set of conflicting induced propositions, a hypothesis can be framed such that only one of the set (the preferred induction) is consistent with the hypothesis, and all others are not. Ideally, this means that the hypothesis proposed should deductively entail the preferred proposition. For example, there is a long running theological dispute concerning whether charismatic spiritual gifts (such as prophecy, healings, and speaking in tongues) have ceased or not. Cessationists (e.g., MacArthur, 1992) hold to the proposition that charismatic gifts ceased at the end of the Apostolic era. Continuationists (e.g., Fee, 2009) hold to the proposition that charismatic gifts are evident in the church today. The hypothesis that gifts were given *only* to particular people (e.g., prophets) for particular purposes (e.g., to validate the words of the prophet) at a particular time in the past (e.g., during the ministry of a prophet) entails the proposition that gifts cease once the recipient dies and/or fulfils their intended purpose. Conversely, this hypothesis rules out the proposition that gifts are given more generally to people over time. On the other hand, the hypothesis that gifts are given to the church as a whole (the body of Christ, not just to individual Christians) in order to support the ongoing life and ministry of the church at all

times, entails the proposition that gifts continue to the present. This hypothesis rules out the proposition that gifts have ceased. Thus, the selection of a given hypothesis rules in or out certain induced propositions at the outset. As such, hypotheses act as pre-conditional rather than post-hoc constraints on induction. We no longer have to decide post-hoc between two or more competing propositions. Under any given hypothesis, only one proposition qualifies as revealed in the first place.

Converting Induced Propositions. Second, hypotheses convert preferred inductions from CR into deductions from CR. The conversion function of hypotheses involves amplifying CR such that a preferred proposition becomes deducible from amplified-CR. This deductive result allows the preferred proposition to be taken as revealed. For example, take Acts 2:16-18:

And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams...

Under the continuationist hypothesis, the *last days* are all those days before the return of Christ, *all flesh* means all Christians, and *prophesy, visions and dreams* imply charismatic gifts in general. Thus, ampliatively, Acts 2:16-18 reads: “God will pour out His Spirit on all Christians until Christ returns and, as a result, Christians will continue to exhibit charismatic gifts until that return”. The deduction then runs:

If Christians continue to exhibit charismatic gifts then continuationism is true.

Christians continue to exhibit charismatic gifts (by amplification of Acts: 2:16-18)

Therefore, continuationism is true.

Of course, once amplification of CR by hypothesis is accepted as a valid methodology for verifying propositions, any hypothesis can be used to amplify CR in any way that is required to convert an induction into a deduction. I return to this thought shortly.

Harmonising Induced Propositions. Third, the harmonising function of hypotheses works as follows. An induced proposition selected under a hypothesis and converted into a deduction may nevertheless conflict with one or more propositions explicit in or deduced from CR. Yet a revealed proposition cannot conflict with any other proposition in CR. Hence, in order for a proposition to be indisputably accepted as revealed it not only has to be selected and converted, but it also has to be harmonised with propositions which are indisputably revealed i.e., explicit and deduced propositions. Put another way, propositions explicit in or deduced from unamplified-CR that conflict with preferred propositions represent recalcitrant evidence that potentially falsifies preferred propositions, even if these latter propositions have been converted into deductions from amplified-CR. Hence, any existing explicit or deduced propositions that conflict with a preferred proposition must be interpreted in such a way that they do not conflict with the preferred proposition.

Such interpretation is achieved under the same hypothesis, or a supporting hypothesis, that selected the induced proposition in the first place. To return to the continuationist / cessationist example: In 1 Corinthians 13:8-12 the Apostle Paul asserts that spiritual gifts will “pass away”, but not until “completeness” comes. Talk about gifts passing away is obviously not helpful to the continuationist. Yet talk of gifts not yet having passed away is not helpful to the cessationist. Under the continuationist hypothesis, however, “completeness” is designated to mean the return of Christ. Hence, the gifts continue (will not “pass away”) until Christ’s return. Under the cessationist hypothesis “completeness” means the completed work of Christ on earth and/or the completion of the Biblical canon. Both works now being complete, charismatic gifts cease. The point here is not to argue one way or the other, but simply to note that, in principle, any recalcitrant evidence – in the cessationist case that gifts have not yet passed away, and in the continuationist case that gifts will pass away – can be interpreted under a hypothesis in such a way as to preserve the preferred proposition. In this way, hypotheses ensure that preferred

propositions satisfy a necessary condition for the proposition to be revealed i.e., revealed propositions must not conflict with other revealed propositions.

The Millennium provides another example of the constraining, converting and harmonising functions of abduction within the method of theology. The Millennium refers to the one-thousand years of peace accompanying the return of Christ. The Millennium is referred to in only one place in the Bible (Revelation 20:1-7) and so provides a contained example on which to comment. Three propositions regarding the Millennium have arisen over time. *Premillennialism* proposes that Christ will return before a literal Millennium. *Postmillennialism* proposes that Christ will return after a literal Millennium. *Amillennialism* proposes that the Millennium does not refer to a literal one-thousand years that will occur at some point in the future. Rather, for example, the Millennium can be construed as a figurative representation of the church's *present* reign in history before the return of Christ.

These very different propositions regarding the Millennium emerge because neither the nature of the Millennium (literal or figurative) or the temporal ordering of Christ's return with respect to the Millennium is deducible from Revelation 20:1-7. This lack of deducibility leaves scope for induction to return conflicting propositions. In order to determine that a preferred proposition (pre-, post or a-millennial) is revealed, different hypotheses are used to constrain, convert and harmonise these three propositions. For the sake of brevity, I deal only with Amillennialism here. The hypothesis that Revelation 20:1-7 is figurative (symbolic) rather than literal verifies Amillennialism and falsifies premillennialism and postmillennialism because both pre- and post-millennialism rely on a literal reading of Revelation 20:1-7. Thus, under the hypothesis that Revelation 20:1-7 is figurative, only Amillennialism can be selected as revealed. An amplified reading of Revelation 20:1-7 under the figurative hypothesis then allows the phrase "I saw" to mean "I saw in my vision of things past and present" rather than "I saw in my vision of the future" (as would be the amplification under premillennialism or postmillennialism). Finally, if the

Millennium is currently in progress, the issue of Satan being bound during the Millennium seems to conflict with the proposition deduced from unamplified-CR that Satan is at large now (1 Peter 5:8). The Amillennial solution is that Satan was bound at the cross, but that this binding will be consummated at Christ's return. Thus, Satan is bound both now and not yet, hence resolving any contradiction between the two propositions.

The important point here is not to affirm or challenge the symbolic hypothesis, but to show that this hypothesis fulfils the constraining, converting and harmonising functions of a hypothesis, leading to the conclusion that *the Millennium is currently in progress* is the revealed proposition in the set of conflicting propositions concerning the Millennium. Constraining, converting and harmonising induced propositions by the use of hypotheses is at the core of the *method of theology*. Theology as a means of dealing with induction, then, boils down to the use of abduction to verify preferred induced propositions. I do not mean by this statement that *all* theology devolves to abduction, but certainly theology seeking to verify induction does.

Problems when Using Hypotheses to Verify Propositions

Despite the standard use of hypotheses in theology, I show in this section that hypotheses should not be taken to be revealed propositions. Further, if not revealed, hypotheses cannot verify propositions. Nevertheless, hypotheses *are* taken by Christians to be revealed propositions particularly *because* hypotheses save induced (and, as it turns out, abducted) propositions believed to be revealed from falsification by CR. In other words, hypotheses are taken to be revealed particularly because they harmonise induced propositions with CR. To give some examples to which I return in detail later in the thesis:

- (a) the hypothesis that God is a Trinity is taken to be a revealed proposition because it saves the induced proposition *Jesus is God* from falsification by the explicit/deduced propositions *God is One*, *the Father is God*, and *Jesus is not the Father*;

- (b) the Penal Substitution Theory (i.e., a set of interlinked hypotheses) of the Atonement saves the proposition *God's justice is retributive* from falsification by the explicit proposition that *God is loving*; and
- (c) the hypotheses that God is infinitely offended by sin (*divine lese majesty*) and humans have free will (*free will*) are used to save the traditional doctrine of Hell from falsification by the explicit propositions that *God is just* and *God is loving*.

In more general terms, where a hypothesis takes a preferred induced proposition p and resolves conflicts between p and any revealed propositions, this resolution facilitates the claim that the hypothesis in question is rightly inferred from CR, and is thus revealed. The reasoning proceeds as follows:

- (a) Propositions p and q (where p is an induced proposition taken to be revealed and q is an uncontestably revealed proposition i.e., an explicit or deduced proposition) are taken to be revealed.
- (b) No two or more revealed propositions can conflict. Equivalently, CR is consistent.
- (c) Hence, if p and q are revealed, and there is a conflict between p and q , that conflict is only apparent and not actual.
- (d) An apparent conflict implies the existence of some another proposition implicit in CR that resolves the conflict between p and q .
- (e) If a proposition in the form of a hypothesis h entails p and resolves the conflict between p and q that hypothesis is in CR.

I show momentarily why this logic fails and, in more general terms, why hypotheses should not be taken as revealed propositions. In doing so, my approach is not to dismiss abduction as a mode of theological reasoning *per se* but, more specifically, to show that hypotheses do not verify propositions. Nevertheless, by constraining, converting and

harmonising propositions, hypotheses are taken by Christians to be revealed and to verify induced propositions, especially those induced propositions threatened by conflicting propositions drawn from CR. The next section shows specifically why using hypotheses for the purposes of verification is problematic. The problems are categorised using the source and methodology distinction used previously to examine induction.

Source Problems of Hypotheses

Theologically, the proper role of the believer when I/Ving propositions is to explicate CR and thus to discover or confirm what is in CR. Hypotheses, however, are speculations concerning what might be in CR and such speculation can, of course, be wrong. Hypotheses return *possible* and, thus, possibly false states of affairs about God, not necessarily actual and thus true states of affairs. Further, divine self-revelation does not involve God revealing propositions corresponding to possible states of affairs about Himself, but only propositions corresponding to actual states of affairs. Thus, in no account of divine revelation is it said that God reveals a proposition about Himself that *might* be the case and, thus, *might* be true. God reveals only that which is the case and, as such, only that which must be true. For this reason, hypotheses cannot be in CR, and so cannot be used as a means of I/Ving revealed propositions.

The believer is, of course, at liberty to speculate about CR, but not for the purposes of I/Ving propositions. The logic underpinning the latter assertion is as follows:

1. Hypotheses are possibly false.
2. No divinely revealed propositions are possibly false.
3. Therefore, hypotheses are not divinely revealed propositions.

The same logic applies to induction:

1. Induced propositions are possibly false.

2. No divinely revealed propositions are possibly false.
3. Therefore, induced propositions are not divinely revealed propositions.

To put the observations above slightly differently, hypotheses simply provide that there are imaginable circumstances under which a given induced proposition is revealed. Yet, only if these imaginable circumstances apply, and only if the application of such circumstances is known by revelation, is the associated induced proposition demonstrably verified by a hypothesis. For this reason, until hypotheses are themselves verified, hypotheses cannot be used to verify that induced propositions are revealed.

Second, as indicated previously in this chapter, hypotheses are used to amplify CR. This amplification occurs both quantitatively and qualitatively. Quantitative amplification involves implicitly adding words to CR. This addition, examples of which have already been provided in Chapter 3 when discussing *Trinity*, involves various syntactical interventions such as the addition of tenses or the specification of referents that are licenced under the assumption that a given hypothesis is true. Second, amplification may involve qualitatively determining the meaning of words. An example of this type of amplification was provided with respect to continuationism and cessationism. As another example, under the hypothesis that God is a/the Trinity and given the verse “I and the father are one”, “one” is taken to mean “one ontologically” not just “one teleologically”. Theologically, the problem here, however, is that any inference from CR should not involve the amplification of CR, but should represent only explication of CR. The believer is not at liberty to expand CR in such a way as to add content to, or read content into, CR. The believer is only licenced to discover or confirm propositions in unamplified-CR.

Third, hypotheses are not just speculative and ampliative but they are also subjugative. Ideally, CR (the facts) should take precedence over any theory of CR i.e., any set of hypotheses used to explain CR. Within the method of theology, however, theories of

CR typically take precedence over CR itself (Chalmers, 2016). By providing explanations of CR, theories effectively subjugate CR to any given explanation consistent with a given theory. For example, under the theory that the Bible is narratively a unified whole, the Creation-Fall-Redemption-Restoration metanarrative (the reader does not require the details of this metanarrative) is widely used to explain the alleged unity of the Bible. In doing so, however, the metanarrative guides the inductive interpretation of CR such that CR yields the metanarrative rather than the other way around. To be fair, it is true that CR interprets itself from time to time e.g., God explains his actions to the Israelites (especially through his prophets), and Jesus explains the meaning of various parables to his disciples. However, these explanations are explicit in or deduced *from* CR not superimposed on CR. To say that an explanation of CR is *implicit* in CR is another matter.

In order to assert that implicit explanations are revealed propositions, the case would first have to be made *from* CR that such explanations exist *in* CR. It is asserted by Protestants, for example, that the Bible is implicitly (as well as explicitly, Vanhoozer, 2005) self-interpreting, but making the assertion does not establish the fact of the matter. Moreover, even if there are such things as implicit explanations of CR in CR, the question remains as to how to distinguish an implicit explanation recovered from CR from an explanation imposed on CR. Unless there is some way of distinguishing an explanation implicit in CR from external explanations imposed on CR then we cannot know whether an explanation is determined by CR or determines CR. I return to this point in Chapter 7. However, for the moment, let us just accept that any given hypothesis can be subjugative and, if it is, it is not revealed.

Fourth, hypotheses ‘only’ cohere with but do not correspond to CR. If hypotheses corresponded to CR they would be explicit in or deducible from CR and so, to some extent, this point is moot. Yet Christians treat the coherence of hypotheses with CR as evidence that hypotheses are revealed. Coherence with CR, however, is only a negative test of the

revealed status of a proposition i.e., coherence is a necessary but *not* sufficient condition for identification of a revealed proposition. In contrast, correspondence of a proposition to CR is a sufficient condition (and, I argue later in the thesis, a necessary condition) for the identification or verification of propositions. Divine revelation is coherent, but the status of any revealed proposition derives not from its coherence but from its demonstrated source i.e., God.

Old-earth and young-earth creationism (see Lennox, 2011, for a comparison) provide an example of how two conflicting theories can be coherent with CR. Old-earth creationism states that God created the earth over a period of billions of years, consistent with scientific dating of the age of the earth. Young-earth creationism states the God created the earth in six-literal days a matter of a few thousand years ago. Both old- and young-earth creationism are coherent with CR depending on how the word ‘day’ in the Genesis narrative of creation (Genesis 1:1ff) is interpreted. Yet clearly the proposition that the world is old and the proposition that the world is young cannot both be true. Hence, coherence fails to distinguish between revealed and non-revealed propositions. Put another way, assuming CR is true, and that truth itself is coherent, any true proposition *revealed or not* will be coherent with CR. Hence, even if coherence is taken as a test of truth, a hypothesis deemed to be true by virtue of being coherent with CR is not, by virtue of either that coherence or that truth, revealed.

Methodological Problems of Hypotheses

The preceding source problems show that hypotheses should not be taken as elements of CR. However, even if for the sake of argument hypotheses are taken as elements of CR, methodologically they do not yield revealed propositions because they both potentially and actually constrain, convert and harmonise propositions inappropriately.

First, as already noted in this chapter, hypotheses if true provide *conditions* under which induced propositions can be true. For example, if the hypothesis that “God requires mandatory, eternal punishment for sin” is true, then the induced proposition “Hell will be populated for eternity” is true. Moreover, in Peircean terms it would be unsurprising that Hell is populated for eternity if God requires mandatory, eternal punishment for sin. In this way, hypotheses supposedly establish the truth of induced propositions. Even if so, this truth status does not make any given proposition *revealed*. Revealed propositions are only a subset of all true propositions. Thus, as noted on several occasions already, while all revealed propositions are true, some true propositions are not revealed. For this reason, even if hypotheses can pre-conditionally constrain induction from CR to return only *true* propositions, those propositions may still not be revealed.

Second, any hypothesis true or false can convert an induced proposition into a deduction from CR that is nevertheless not revealed. So, for example, Ephesians 6:5 says: “Slaves, obey your earthly masters with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ.” The induced proposition taken from this verse is that “Slaves *in all times should* obey...”. Then, under the hypothesis that biblical commands are normative it can be deduced that: “Slaves today i.e., at *this* time should obey their masters... as they would Christ”. Yet, this proposition would not be accepted by many, if any, Christians as revealed even if they were to accept the hypothesis that biblical commands are normative. Thus, even hypotheses that are deemed to be true do not necessarily yield propositions that are accepted as revealed.

Third, any hypothesis (theological or not) chosen by anyone (Christian or not) simply for the purposes of saving a proposition from a recalcitrant body of evidence is open to the accusation that it is *ad-hoc*. Specifically, if any particular hypothesis is adopted *only* because it “works” in terms of saving a preferred proposition, then the selection of the hypothesis is driven by ad-hoc considerations rather than by a genuine theological process

seeking to explicate CR. In such circumstances the introduction of hypotheses is theologically invalid. Propositions ought to be chosen because they are in CR, not just because they have the property of being able to save other propositions thought to be in CR from conflict with CR. For this reason, the theological project of formulating hypotheses as a means of confirming the alleged revealed status of propositions is misguided. Even if successful in saving a proposition, an ad-hoc hypothesis does not by virtue of that salvation establish theologically that the target proposition is revealed.

Abduction and Pluralism

The preceding discussion has demonstrated that hypotheses fail both the source and method tests for verification of revelation. However, if Christians insist that abduction is an appropriate method for constraining induction pre-conditionally, and thus for verifying propositions, I provide now a further reason why abduction fails to constrain induction: namely the problem that besets all other solutions to the problem of induction - pluralism.

The discussion in Chapter 5 showed that faith, authority and tradition fail as means of constraining the results of induction post-hoc because different faiths, authorities and traditions verify different induced propositions. The same problem also applies to theology as a pre-conditional constraint because abduction can and does return multiple conflicting explanations for any given set of induced propositions. Moreover, in the same way that only one at most of a conflicting set of inductions can be revealed, only one hypothesis at most from a conflicting set of hypotheses can be revealed. Thus, the problem of distinguishing between revealed and not-revealed propositions applies equally to abduction by hypothesis as it does to induction.

In Chapter 5, I also examined consensus, right authority and correspondence / coherence as means of constraining the plurality of faith, authority and tradition with respect to induction. Here I explore the role of abduction in attempting to constrain abduction.

Specifically, I explore the role of Inference to Best Explanation (IBE) and secondary hypothesis generation as *logical* means of selecting and saving preferred hypotheses. In Chapter 7, I extend this discussion by exploring two *theological* means of constraining abduction.

Inference to Best Explanation

In this section I explore IBE as a means of constraining abduction. As a guiding example, let's return to the proposition that *Jesus is God*. Previous argument has demonstrated that CR is insufficient to support a sound deduction of this proposition. Previous argument has also shown that the proposition can be represented as an inductive conclusion *from* CR. However, I show here that the proposition can also be represented as an abductive explanation *of* CR.

1. CR indicates that Jesus possesses attribute(s) x, and/or perform action(s) y, and/or is addressed by title(s) z (observation).
2. If Jesus was the Son of God and God the Son, Jesus would possess attribute(s) x, and/or perform action(s) y, and/or be addressed by title(s) z (abductive hypothesis).
3. Therefore, Jesus is the Son of God and God the Son (abductive inference).

But one could also hypothesise as follows:

4. If Jesus was the Son of God and not God the Son, he would possess attribute(s) x, and/or perform action(s) y, and/or be addressed by title(s) z (also by hypothesis).
5. Therefore, Jesus is the Son of God and not God the Son (by abductive inference).

The obvious problem here is that 3 and 5 conflict yet, if hypothesis generation is accepted as a means of I/V-ing revealed propositions, both 3 and 5 can claim to be revealed. In order to break the deadlock, one could use IBE of the inductive type (see Harman, 1965) to select only one hypothesis and, thus, constrain the results of abduction post-hoc e.g.,

6. Jesus is the Son of God and God the Son is the best explanation of CR.
7. Therefore, Jesus is the Son of God and God the Son (by inductive IBE).

However, because there is no consensus in Christianity concerning the criteria for best explanation, some Christians argue:

8. Jesus is the Son of God and not God the Son is the best explanation of CR.
9. Therefore, Jesus is the Son of God and not God the Son (by inductive IBE).

Thus, inductive-IBE fails to select only one hypothesis, and so the problem of selecting between conflicting hypotheses remains. Perhaps, however, IBE of the abductive type works e.g.,

10. The best explanation for why Jesus is the Son of God and God the Son is taken to be a revealed proposition is because this proposition is a revealed proposition.
11. Therefore, Jesus is the Son of God and God the Son is a revealed proposition (by abductive IBE).

However:

12. The best explanation for why Jesus is the Son of God and not God the Son is taken to be a revealed proposition is because this proposition is a revealed proposition.
13. Therefore, Jesus is the Son of God and not God the Son is a revealed proposition (also by abductive IBE).

Stalemate. IBE of either the inductive or abductive type does not enable the selection of only one hypothesis. Further, the unresolved problem of abductive plurality is not restricted to just this example. Given that there are no criteria for best explanation *in CR*, any number of hypotheses can lay claim to be the best explanation of CR. Thus, in principle, inferences to best explanation can verify an indefinite number of hypotheses.

Theological Bootstrapping and Post-hoc Theorising

The problem outlined above is that IBE, whether of the inductive or abductive type, fails to effectively constrain abduction post-hoc to one revealed hypothesis. Hence, another solution is required. One such solution is the secondary use of hypotheses. The use of hypotheses to save hypotheses comes in two forms: theological bootstrapping and post-hoc theorising.

Theological bootstrapping occurs when a hypothesis is used to amplify CR in such a way that the hypothesis itself becomes a deduction from amplified-CR. This procedure has the dual effect of turning a hypothesis into a deduced proposition, and also deductively capturing propositions entailed by the hypothesis i.e.,

1. p is an induced proposition.
2. Hypothesis h entails p .
3. CR amplified (i.e., CR given h) yields h as a deduction.
4. Therefore, h (under amplified-CR) is revealed.
5. Therefore, p is (under h) is revealed (from 2 and 4).

The problem here, however, is that any hypothesis, including a hypothesis that conflicts with other hypotheses, can be bootstrapped in this way. Moreover, theological bootstrapping prospectively verifies hypotheses that may conflict with propositions explicit in or deduced from CR. In the latter case, however, ad-hoc hypotheses can be used save a

preferred hypothesis from falsification by CR. In order to illustrate this procedure, I return to the wet grass example provided earlier in this chapter.

In general terms, an ad-hoc hypothesis acts to save a preferred hypothesis as follows. First, the preferred hypothesis h is found to conflict with some indisputably revealed proposition p such that $\text{not-}h$ is a deduction from p . In order to save h from falsification by p , some other hypothesis h' is proposed such that under h' , p yields h (or, at least, p does not yield $\text{not-}h$). In the rain example used previously, the epistemic agent sought to retain the preferred hypothesis that rain (not a hose or sprinkler) caused the grass to become wet even though it is a fine day. The problem again is that rain doesn't entail the evidence (*fine day* does not permit rain as an explanation for wet grass), whereas hose and sprinkler do perfectly well as explanations for wet grass on a fine day. In order for rain to be retained as an explanation, the rain-believer hypothesised that it rained last night but cleared by morning. Now, it turns out that, according to the weather bureau, it did not rain last night. The weather bureau's pronouncement is recalcitrant evidence p , and p entails that it did not rain last night i.e., $\text{not-}h$. Faced with this evidence, the rain-believer can nevertheless further hypothesise that that weather bureau made a mistake by somehow not recording the rain event that caused the wet grass. Under this explanation (h'), p does not yield $\text{not-}h$, and h is thus saved from falsification by p .

This type of ad-hoc theorising is, in fact, common place in theology. Consider, for example, the alleged two natures of Christ. The hypothesis that God is a Trinity is used to save the induced/abduced proposition *Jesus is God*. However, the proposition *Jesus is a man* appears to conflict with the proposition *Jesus is God* given that God is not human. However, if Jesus has two natures, divine and human, then Jesus can be human and not human at the same time. This solution is logically contradictory (by the law of the excluded middle), but theologically it apparently saves the proposition *Jesus is God* from falsification by the proposition *Jesus is a man*. Nevertheless, even theologically, this solution is not

acceptable because it is not demonstrated from CR that Christ has two natures. It is only hypothesised that *if* Christ has two natures, *Jesus is God* does not conflict with *Jesus is a man*.

For these reasons, neither bootstrapping nor bootstrapping supported by ad-hoc hypothesising are logically or theologically licensed ways of dealing with problematic hypotheses. Even if hypotheses are accepted as valid means of verifying induced propositions, problematic hypotheses should not be saved by bootstrapping or ad-hoc hypothesising. Nevertheless, these strategies are used extensively in theology to save problematic hypotheses and so to verify induced propositions reliant on those hypotheses for verification. In other words, Christianity violates its own standards when necessary to establish and save preferred hypotheses and their associated induced propositions. In contrast, the method of theology should approximate more closely Peirce's (1877) method of science for fixing belief. The next section contrasts the method of theology with the method of science in order to make it clear that Christianity does not follow this course of action, and the consequences of doing so.

Contrasting the Scientific and Theological Method

According to Peirce (1877), the method of science for settling belief proceeds as follows. Abduction provides a novel explanation (a hypothesis) for a surprising observation. Then, a prediction in the form of a logical deduction based on the hypothesis is made. This prediction is then tested against relevant *new* evidence i.e., evidence not involved in formulating the hypothesis in the first place. Induction then confirms whether the new evidence conforms to the prediction and, thus, whether the hypothesis is supported.

The method of theology has the same starting point as the method of science: a surprising observation. In the case of theology, however, the surprising observation is not so much a direct observation of CR, but the observation that propositions induced from CR

conflict with other propositions. Operating under the theory that induction is a licenced form of inference from CR, the theologian is surprised when induction yields propositions that conflict with each other and/or with propositions explicit in or deduced from CR. Thus, a first surprise occurs when a conflicting set of propositions arises inductively from a given set of explicit and/or deduced propositions in CR. A second surprise occurs when induced propositions said to be revealed conflict with one or more propositions explicit in or deduced from CR.

Next, as with science, a hypothesis is proposed to account for any surprising observations. The required hypothesis is one that eliminates induced propositions that conflict with a preferred induced proposition. The required hypothesis is also one that explains why any conflict between an induced proposition and any explicit or deduced proposition is only apparent and not actual i.e., a hypothesis resolves conflict between an induced and any conflicting explicit or deduced propositions.

At this point, science and theology diverge. In theology, hypotheses *cannot* be tested against new evidence even if that course of action was desirable. CR is closed. As such, there is no new evidence available to test hypotheses, only the existing evidence. In any case, the intent in theology is not to test hypotheses against the evidence, but to preserve hypotheses regardless of the evidence so as to save the induced propositions that hypotheses were created to save in the first place. Thus, deduction is not used to formulate a prediction based on a hypothesis. Rather, a hypothesis is used to amplify CR such that the hypothesis itself, and any preferred induced proposition which relies on the hypothesis for verification, becomes deducible from amplified-CR. Deduction, then, is used to verify that the amplification of CR under a hypothesis yields the hypothesis and its dependent induced propositions. Hence, in theology, deduction is not used to make a prediction concerning new evidence, but rather is used to generate new evidence.

To summarise the difference between the method of science and the method of theology the following schematic is helpful. The method of science proceeds as follows:

Observation → Abduction → Deduction → Induction

In contrast, the method of theology proceeds as follows:

Induction → Observation → Abduction → Deduction

The theological problem implicated in the method of theology is that because CR should not be tampered with, any proposition that conflicts with CR should be discarded. In practice, however, what actually happens is that, via abduction and confirmed by deduction, Christians play with their evidence under the guise of ‘doing theology’ in order to save preferred induced propositions. The method of the theology, then, is a certain species of pseudoscience. In pseudoscience, we begin with a theory to be protected. Should that theory conflict with the evidence then the task is to manipulate the evidence such that the evidence no longer poses a problem for the theory. This process is exactly what happens in the method of theology.

The importance of these observations for Christianity as a revealed religion are profound. Christianity ought to explicate CR in order to determine what propositions are in CR. Some of the time Christianity follows this course of action. However, on many theologically important occasions, Christianity follows the path discussed in this chapter. As a result, very often Christianity amplifies rather than explicates CR not in order to discover what is in CR but to impute propositions thought to be revealed to CR. Theology, thus, is not (or not only) “faith seeking understanding” (Logon, 2009, p.85, citing St Anselm) but typically acts as faith manufacturing verification. The irony is that, even if theology is successful in manufacturing verification of sorts, in doing so Christianity reveals itself to be a human theological creation rather than an ontologically revealed religion.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter I have shown that hypotheses, even hypotheses deemed to be the best explanation of CR, should not be accepted as elements of CR. Thus, abduction by hypothesis and/or by IBE should not be accepted as methods for verifying propositions. As such, the Christian should disqualify hypotheses altogether as being revealed, and hence also disqualify any induced propositions relying on hypotheses for verification. However, to do so would be to rule out as revealed many of Christianity's core propositions regarding, for example, Jesus' divinity, the penal and substitutional nature of the Atonement, and the eternal population of Hell. To make matters worse, even if accepted as element of CR, hypotheses do not work methodologically to verify other propositions due to the pluralistic nature of abduction. Finally, neither inference to best explanation, theological bootstrapping or ad-hoc theorising are able to verify that hypotheses are elements of CR.

Christians, then, should not be following the pseudoscientific method of theology in attempting to verify induced propositions. Yet, by elevating hypotheses to the status of doctrines Christianity not only engages in pseudoscience, but mandates and sanctifies this practice. Nevertheless, Christians have two final theological fall-back positions for demonstrating that the method of theology is appropriate. These two positions are material sufficiency and direct revelation, both of which are examined in the next chapter.

Chapter 7

Divinely Guided Abduction and Direct Revelation

In previous chapters I provided a range of *logical* reasons why, despite the fact that many of Christianity's core propositions are induced from CR, induced propositions should not be taken to be revealed. In particular, induction returns both revealed and non-revealed propositions while providing no method for distinguishing between these two types of propositions. I also showed in Chapters 5 and 6 that faith, authority, tradition, and theology fail to solve the problem of induction. With respect to the latter, various hypotheses ought not to be accepted as a solution to the problem of induction because only revealed propositions can be used to verify other revealed propositions. Yet, at best, the revealed status of hypotheses is unknown and, at worst, there are good reasons for thinking that hypotheses are not revealed at all. Moreover, even if hypotheses are accepted as a solution to the problem of induction, in practice abduction fares no better than induction in returning unique propositions as revealed. Pluralism plagues abduction as much as induction, meaning that the problem of identifying and verifying induced propositions remains unsolved.

Despite these arguments, Christians have countered that there are *theological* reasons why abduced propositions should be taken as revealed. If these reasons are valid, then my concerns regarding hypotheses and inferences to best explanation are unwarranted. Specifically, the problem of abduction is said to be solved theologically by the alleged *divine guidance* of abduction. The purpose of this chapter, then, is to examine whether divine guidance provides an adequate theological reason for accepting abduced propositions, particularly hypotheses elevated to the status of doctrines, as revealed. Specifically, the claim could be that under normal circumstances abduction yields only hypotheses, but that under divine guidance abduction yields revealed doctrines.

If God guides abduction (and, indeed, induction) the further claim is that CR need only be *materially* (as opposed to *formally*) sufficient, or may not be needed *at all*, in order to arrive at revealed doctrines. This chapter, thus, is divided into two parts that examine the assertions that CR need only be materially sufficient, or that CR is not needed at all, in order for divinely guided abduction to yield revealed doctrines. I show, however, that even if we assume divinely guided abduction to be at work, if CR is only materially sufficient for a given doctrine, or if CR is not accessed at all, then we have no way of knowing whether abduction has yielded revealed doctrines or not. Hence, even alleging divinely guided abduction fails to assist the Christian to verify propositions.

I conclude the chapter by suggesting that all avenues, both logical and theological, for I/Ving induced and abduced propositions have been exhausted. As such, these propositions should not be taken as revealed. Nevertheless, because I am unlikely in the abstract to convince Christians that this course of action is the correct one, I follow this chapter with three case studies that demonstrate in concrete terms the veracity of my case against hypotheses and the induced propositions they seek to verify.

Material Sufficiency

I define the material sufficiency of scripture to mean that the essential elements of certain doctrines are in CR, even if CR does not contain enough information to I/V these doctrines explicitly or by deduction. This definition is consistent with definitions of material sufficiency in the literature (e.g., Brotherton, 2015; Horn, 2017; Sungenis, 1997). Material sufficiency applies to both the problem of induction and the problem of abduction. However, for the sake of clarity, I focus on material sufficiency with respect to the problem of abduction.

The idea underpinning material sufficiency is that, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, operating at the level of the church (for Catholics and the Orthodox) and/or the

individual believer (for Protestants), CR does not need to be formally sufficient in order to yield revealed doctrines. Under divinely guided abduction, CR only needs to be materially sufficient in order to yield revealed doctrines. Formal sufficiency, discussed shortly, is nice-to-have, but is not necessary in order for CR to yield revealed doctrines. If so, then abduction is a licenced mode of inference from CR for the purposes of I/Ving propositions, particularly those propositions representing or comprising certain doctrines, that are not explicit in or deducible from CR. If this is the case, then my concerns that Christians have not and cannot positively I/V induced propositions by abduction are unwarranted.

To put these ideas another way, to this point I have established that only observation and deduction correctly I/V propositions. This finding implies that CR needs to be formally sufficient in order to I/V any proposition said to be revealed. In the case of formal sufficiency (see Bavinck, 2003; Bauckham, 1988; Turretini, 1992), CR presents in such a way that it is possible to conclude by observation or deduction that a proposition is revealed. In these cases, the Christian can demonstrate *logically* that a given doctrine is revealed. In contrast, the claim that CR is materially sufficient for a given doctrine amounts to saying that information explicit and/or implicit in CR, less than that which makes a doctrine observable in or deducible from CR, is nevertheless sufficient for the spirit-guided Christian to rightly I/V the doctrine and thus conclude that the doctrine is revealed.

Under the assumption of divinely guided abduction, one need not show that CR is formally sufficient for a proposition in order for that proposition to be taken as revealed. For example, God has allegedly revealed that *the Bible is the Word of God* despite the fact that evidence in CR is insufficient to observe or deduce that this proposition is revealed. Nevertheless, under divine guidance, CR is alleged to contain *enough* explicit and implicit information to conclude that the Bible is the Word of God, and thus that the doctrine to this effect is revealed.

However, according to Christians, the judgement of alleged divinely inspired abduction can be wrong. Thus, even if CR need only be materially sufficient to yield revealed propositions, this does not mean that any given doctrine for which it is claimed that CR is materially sufficient is revealed. For example, both Catholic and Orthodox Christians agree that CR is materially sufficient for certain doctrines e.g., Apostolic Succession, Transubstantiation, and Purgatory. Yet, Catholics and Orthodox disagree that CR is materially sufficient for doctrines such as Papal Infallibility, the Immaculate Conception, and the “procession” of the Holy Spirit. In these latter cases someone (or both parties) claiming to be guided in their abductive reasoning by God has (have) nevertheless made an abductive mistake when concluding that a given doctrine is materially in CR. Given that divinely guided abduction cannot be wrong, this error implies that someone claiming to be divinely guided has not been divinely guided. Moreover, there is no test for establishing the divinity or otherwise of abduction itself, a theme to which I return in the second half of this chapter. Given the absence of such a test, neither the insider (the believer claiming to be divinely guided) or the outsider (the believer or non-believer who wants to know whom, if anyone, has been guided) is any the wiser as to the truth of the matter.

Given the possibility of error, even the Christian alleging that their divinely guided abduction has correctly I/Ved a doctrine still needs to demonstrate that their abduction is correct. The absence of a test for the divinity of an abduction means that the Christian (or Christian group) seeking to demonstrate that an abducted proposition is revealed would have to demonstrate that CR is materially sufficient for this proposition. Further, the divinely guided abducer would also have to show that CR was not materially sufficient for any conflicting proposition also claimed to be arrived at by divine guidance. Thus, while lowering the bar for CR from formal to material sufficiency might seem attractive, such lowering does not get the Christian seeking to I/V propositions off the verificationist hook. Of course, consistent with the discussion in Chapter 5, the Christian could simply assert by

appeal to faith, authority or tradition that CR is materially sufficient for a doctrine.

However, this appeal fails for the same reasons that faith, authority and tradition fail to show that induced propositions are revealed. Faith, authority and tradition are pluralistic with respect to the materiality of CR for any given doctrine.

Given the failure of faith, authority and tradition, and consistent with previous discussions, I examine the possibility that induction or abduction can establish that CR is materially sufficient for any given doctrine. What I show, however, is that induction and abduction fare no better in verifying the alleged material sufficiency of CR for any given doctrine than they do in verifying propositions directly. As such, postulating that under divinely guided abduction CR need only be materially sufficient for any given doctrine does not advance the project of I/Ving abduced propositions.

Demonstrating Material Sufficiency

Having alleged that under divinely guided abduction CR only need be materially sufficient to yield a given doctrine, the task that still remains for the Christian claiming divine guidance is to *demonstrate* this alleged sufficiency. Assume, then, under the assumption of divine guidance, a Christian seeks to demonstrate that CR is materially sufficient to yield a doctrine. Initially, the Christian could attempt to use some inductive ordering of elements of CR (say CR') in an attempt to demonstrate CR's material sufficiency for the doctrine. The logic underpinning this move is that relevant elements of CR can be selected and arranged in such a way as to filter out noise from any irrelevant elements of CR, thus making the doctrine obvious, or obvious enough, by induction. This strategy may satisfy the Christian regarding CR's material sufficiency with respect to the doctrine (say d), but will (presumably) not satisfy:

- (a) the sceptic, who can claim that even if CR' is sufficient to justify the Christian's belief that CR is materially sufficient for the doctrine, this sufficiency is not the same as CR actually being materially sufficient for the doctrine; and
- (b) the competitor, who may assert that CR'' (some rival inductive ordering of CR) indicates that CR is sufficient for some alternative doctrine (say d') that contradicts the doctrine in question.

In other words, while CR' may provide the Christian with subjective justification for the belief that CR is materially sufficient, CR' will not for the sceptic or the competitor provide intersubjective verification of the material sufficiency of CR. Should the Christian still seek then to convince the sceptic or competitor that CR is materially sufficient for the doctrine, they will require a different strategy than simply providing a given inductive ordering of CR. In such cases, the Christian could attempt to use Inference to Best Explanation for the purpose of demonstrating the material sufficiency of CR. Specifically, the Christian could claim that if CR suggests to the Christian that the doctrine in question is in CR, then the best explanation for this suggestiveness is that CR is materially sufficient for the doctrine.

Let's accept for the moment that the suggestive power of CR with respect to the doctrine could be an indicator that CR is materially sufficient for the doctrine. Nevertheless, the problem with this explanation is that suggestive power is used by Christians to support the material sufficiency of CR with respect to conflicting doctrines. For example, the propositions *God will punish sinners in Hell for eternity* and *God will annihilate sinners* are both suggested by CR to different groups of allegedly divinely guided Christians. However, under the assumption that CR is consistent, CR cannot be materially sufficient for at least one of these doctrines. Hence, material sufficiency cannot be the best explanation for the suggestiveness of CR with respect to at least one of these doctrines. Further, CR cannot

suggest a doctrine that conflicts with a proposition known explicitly or by deduction to be revealed. Yet, apparently it does. For example, Catholics assert that CR suggests the Immaculate Conception. Yet this proposition directly conflicts with the statement in Romans 3:23 that: “*all* have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God”. Given that CR cannot suggest a conflicting doctrine, in the case of a conflicting doctrine material sufficiency cannot be the best explanation for why CR suggests that doctrine to the believer. In other words, in cases where a doctrine conflicts with propositions in CR, IBE does not work to establish the material sufficiency of CR with respect to the given doctrine any more than it works to directly verify a given induced proposition.

However, now take the case where CR suggests a doctrine that does not conflict with any other allegedly revealed proposition. In this case CR could be thought to be demonstrably materially sufficient for the doctrine. Lack of conflict, however, is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for a proposition to be revealed. So, even in cases where some doctrine does not conflict with any other alleged proposition, the Christian still needs to demonstrate that CR is materially *sufficient* for the doctrine. Specifically, the alleged divinely guided Christian still has to demonstrate that the suggestiveness attributed to revelation derives from revelation itself and not from some other source. Yet, as indicated later in this chapter, for example, confirmation bias or some other motivation may be the true source of CR’s apparent suggestiveness. In any case, until divine revelation is shown to be the only source of CR’s suggestiveness, CR has not been shown to be materially sufficient for the given doctrine.

Now let’s turn to abduction by hypothesis. In case of the failure of IBE, the doctrine in question may be used to amplify CR such that the doctrine itself becomes a deduction from amplified-CR. Further, the Christian could claim that any amplification of CR in this way in fact serves only to make explicit information that is otherwise implicit in CR. Thus,

although I argue that it does so circularly, a doctrine can be used to demonstrate that CR is materially sufficient for the doctrine.

If the doctrine is not revealed, however, then any expansion of CR under the doctrine represents an amplification not just an explication of CR. Hence, even allowing for theological bootstrapping as a methodology i.e., using a doctrine to prove the material sufficiency of CR with respect to that doctrine, the Christian still needs to be able to demonstrate at the *outset* that the doctrine is revealed. Given that, in the cases being discussed the doctrine is not explicit in or deduced from CR, this requirement effectively means that the Christian is back to square one. The strategy of amplifying CR in order to allegedly prove the material sufficiency of CR for a doctrine does nothing to demonstrate the material sufficiency of CR with respect to either that doctrine or any induced propositions reliant on the doctrine for verification. Further, if the doctrine implies some internal contradiction, then such contradictions count as evidence against the doctrine being revealed. In such cases, in order to prove that the doctrine is revealed, further doctrines may be required to resolve such internal contradictions. This strategy, however, only replaces one doctrine with another and so the problem of establishing the material sufficiency of CR for the original doctrine remains unsolved and, further, the alleged solution may be subject to an indefinite regress of hypotheses.

Assuming that I have exhausted all options (induction, IBE, bootstrapping and ad-hoc hypothesising), in cases where CR formally underdetermines a doctrine, CR cannot be shown to be materially sufficient for that doctrine. Thus, even conceding that under divinely guided abduction CR need only be materially sufficient for some abduced doctrine, in practice such sufficiency cannot be demonstrated in any case. As a result, material sufficiency does not solve the problem of verifying abduced doctrines even where divinely guided abduction is allegedly in play.

Material Sufficiency as Justification

In the preceding section, I demonstrated that it is not possible to show that CR is materially sufficient for abduced doctrines. In the absence of such demonstration, even alleged divinely guided abduction does not verify that any given doctrine is revealed. In other words, lowering the bar for demonstrating the revealed status of a doctrine from formal to material sufficiency does not help verify doctrines in any case. At best, then, divinely guided abduction acts only as a justification for the belief that CR need only be materially sufficient in order to yield revealed doctrines. However, even as ‘only’ a justification, divinely guided abduction fails for the following reasons.

First, if the believer cannot *demonstrate* that CR is sufficient for a doctrine, they cannot justifiably claim that the doctrine is true. Given that truth is a necessary condition for revelation, without demonstrating the truth of a doctrine the believer cannot justifiably claim that the doctrine is even a candidate to be revealed. In this sense, failure to demonstrate that CR is materially sufficient for a doctrine leaves the believer in a worse state than they were prior to claiming material sufficiency. Claiming that CR is materially sufficient for a doctrine, but then failing to demonstrate that sufficiency, means that not only the doctrine but also the belief that the doctrine is revealed are now threatened. As such, the fall-back position of material sufficiency provides false sanctuary.

Second, in the case of divine revelation, to make a justification for believing a doctrine requires some sort of externalist (veridic) justification of the doctrine i.e., a justification that links the doctrine to the explicit or deduced content of CR. When dealing with divine revelation, Christians are supposedly dealing with *public* revelation and so they are not at liberty to make internalist (non-veridic) justifications for believing that a doctrine is revealed. Material sufficiency, however, appeals to some non-explicit and/or non-deduced elements of CR assuming these exist. Thus, the justification is an internalist one and for this reason alone material sufficiency ought not be accepted as a justification for the belief that a

doctrine is revealed. Thus, material sufficiency is not a *proper* justification for the belief that a doctrine is divinely revealed.

In summary, theoretically CR might only need to be materially sufficient in order to enable abduced doctrines to be taken as revealed. In practice, however, demonstrating the material sufficiency of CR for abduced doctrines proves to be no less complicated than verifying the status of abduced doctrines in the first place. In the absence of such demonstration, lowering the bar from formal to material sufficiency does nothing to establish that abduction, divinely guided or not, yields revealed doctrines. Further, lowering the bar does not help justify the belief that divinely guided abduction has yielded revealed propositions.

Direct Revelation

Given the failure to demonstrate that CR is materially sufficient to support abduced doctrines, Christians might abandon altogether the strategy of attempting to show that CR is sufficient to support these doctrines. In this case, Christians still have one more option for demonstrating that abduced doctrines are revealed, namely direct revelation. Direct revelation means that certain propositions corresponding to Christian doctrines are directly revealed by God, not inferred from CR. Direct revelation implies that apprehension of non-explicit and non-deduced doctrines is not the result of abductive (or inductive) reasoning on the part of believers. Rather, God directly implants a doctrine in the minds of believers. Direct revelation solves the problem of needing to identify doctrines in, or verify doctrines from, CR. Direct revelation also solves the problem of I/Ving induced propositions which depend on these doctrines for verification.

Despite DRDs being directly communicated by God, it may be that CR plays some role in the apprehension of a DRD. God, for example, could directly communicate a doctrine which is *later* identified in CR. Thus, DRDs may be latent in the believer or the

community of believers before being triggered by CR. Indeed, this is exactly the claim of many theologians (e.g., Boulter, 2002; Smith, 2012; Williams, 2007), including the venerable Newman (1845/2014). So, for example, God may give the Trinity as a DRD and having given this doctrine Christians may then be able to identify the antecedents (“seeds” according to Newman, 1845/2014) of the doctrine in CR, even if the doctrinal consequences of these antecedents were not obvious before the DRD was given. Thus, CR may possess something like a *sensus plenior*, a fuller meaning intended by God but not necessarily intended or communicated by the human authors (Brown, 1953). This *sensus plenior* may account for how the antecedents of a DRD may be only retrospectively identified in CR. In any case, the concept of a DRD implies that the complete set of revealed propositions contains propositions not only beyond those which are explicit in CR, but also beyond those which are inferable by any means (deduction, induction or abduction, the latter being divinely guided or not) from this content.

In this section, I examine the assertion that what I called hypotheses are actually directly revealed doctrines (henceforth DRDs). If what I called hypotheses are actually DRDs then I have made a category mistake. Direct revelation if true solves all problems I have introduced in this thesis. If so, this is good news for Christians but bad news for my thesis. As I will show, however, DRDs do not fare well under scrutiny.

Directly Revealed Doctrines

Assuming the existence of DRDs, Christians could argue that even where CR is not formally or materially sufficient to support some doctrine, that they have nevertheless not simply abducted the doctrine, but that God has in fact directly revealed the doctrine to them without abductive inference. Further, if a doctrine is directly revealed, any expansion of CR under the doctrine may be taken to be an explication rather than an amplification of CR.

Let's assume for the moment that there are such things as DRDs, but that ordinary hypotheses may be confused for DRDs. If so, Christians need to show that a given alleged doctrine is a DRD not an ordinary hypothesis. One key reason for this requirement is again that Christians disagree amongst themselves as to which propositions are DRDs and which are ordinary hypotheses. For example, the Catholic doctrine of original sin, considered to be a DRD by Catholics, is considered to be a hypothesis by other Christians (e.g., Wallace & Rusk, 2011). Given that Christians themselves disagree over direct revelation, it is a reasonable requirement to ask Christians to demonstrate why any given proposition should be taken to be a DRD. I show in the sections that follow, however, that Christians are unable to verify that alleged DRDs are actually DRDs. As such, even if DRDs exist, the inability to verify DRDs means that Christians are no closer to verifying other propositions where such verification relies on knowing whether an alleged DRD is revealed or not.

The obvious question that arises at this point regards how Christians claiming to be in possession of DRDs can distinguish between these DRDs and ordinary hypotheses. A typical answer to the question is for Christians to return to the faith-as-special-knowledge model referred to in Chapter 5. Under this model, I/Ving DRDs relies on Christians (or, at least, certain Christians) having access by faith to special knowledge that allows such identification or verification to be made. For example, the faithful believer (for Protestants), the Pope (for Catholics), or the ecumenical church councils (for Orthodoxy) are each supposedly empowered by the Holy Spirit such that they are able to distinguish DRDs from hypotheses.

The problem with this alleged solution is that, even assuming the Holy Spirit can enable Christians to apprehend and comprehend DRDs, verifying the alleged operation of the Holy Spirit is problematic. For example, whole branches of Christianity (Orthodox, Catholic and Protestant), disagree that the others have been guided by the Holy Spirit when arriving at certain doctrines. Nevertheless, each branch is absolutely convinced that the

Holy Spirit has been at work amongst them and not amongst other branches. Thus, according to *Christians*, the alleged guidance of the Holy Spirit does not help Christians avoid mistakes in distinguishing DRDs from hypotheses. Christians of different persuasions, of course, might have any number of reasons for believing that the Holy Spirit has been at work to directly reveal certain doctrines to *them*, but such belief fails to establish the fact that He has done so. Thus, appealing to faith and the Holy Spirit to solve the problem I/Ving DRDs does not work. All Christians believe that God has spoken to them directly with respect to the propositions they take to be directly revealed, yet all Christians cannot be right where God apparently contradicts Himself.

One explanation for the apparent difficulty in discerning between DRDs and ordinary hypotheses is that direct revelation and ordinary abduction may be phenomenologically identical or, at least, similar enough. As such believers cannot easily distinguish between a revelation given directly by God and a hypothesis generated by a believer or group of believers. Specifically, in religious contexts, the ‘aha’ moment of abducting a hypothesis may be experienced phenomenologically as a direct revelation and labelled as such. Thus, the religious context influences the placement of abduction into a different category of experience (i.e., direct revelation) even though the underlying experience of abduction is identical across religious and non-religious contexts. Moreover, in certain religious contexts abductions may be deemed to be revelations because in these contexts the abductions are predisposed to be accepted as revelations. For example, one could argue that in the Catholic religious context a predisposition towards the primacy of Mary as the Mother of God makes it more likely (more likely, that is, than in the Protestant context) that abductions about Mary will be deemed to be revelations. Given this predisposition, the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception (for example) is more likely to be deemed a revelation in the Catholic context than in the Protestant context. Certainly, Protestants would argue that the Catholic bias towards Mary has resulted in Catholics

making a mistake about the revealed status of the Immaculate Conception. Essentially, then, I am arguing that distinguishing between abduction and revelation in religious contexts is difficult. As a result, by their own estimation, Christians make category mistakes concerning direct revelation.

If it is difficult, or even impossible, for believers to distinguish between abduction and direct revelation, it follows that it is difficult or impossible for believers to distinguish between the explication of CR based on direct revelation, and the amplification of CR based on a hypothesis. If so, then an outsider cannot rely with any confidence on the testimony of believers with respect both to whether a doctrine is directly revealed or not and whether any induced propositions reliant on doctrines for verification are revealed. If believers have trouble distinguishing between direct revelation and subsequent content explication, and hypothesis generation and subsequent content amplification, then the testimony of believers is on this point unreliable.

Retrospective Verification of Directly Revealed Doctrines

At this point the Christian might counter that I am being too sceptical concerning the ability of Christians to distinguish DRDs from hypotheses. Despite the arguments above, surely a Christian (or the church as a whole) can distinguish between a DRD and a hypothesis. Let me be clear what I am, and am not, arguing here. I am not arguing that *any* given hypothesis can necessarily be mistaken for a DRD. However: (a) where a hypothesis is inductively supported by some evidence in CR, (b) the hypothesis can be used to expand CR such that a proposition not otherwise demonstrably revealed but nevertheless believed to be revealed is deductively entailed by CR-expanded, and (c) the context in which the abduction is made is conducive to a hypothesis being taken as a revelation; then a hypothesis can be mistaken for a DRD. In other words, if a hypothesis makes for a logically

and contextually coherent system of propositions then a hypothesis can be mistaken for a DRD.

The point, then, is not that any hypothesis can be confused with a DRD but rather that, in the right context, a well-formulated hypothesis may well be. The task for the Christian, then, is not to show that a straw-man hypothesis is easily distinguished from a DRD, but that a 'good' hypothesis is distinguishable. At this point the Christian could attempt to extend the argument regarding retrospectivity. Previously I noted that that the Christian might say that the antecedents of a DRD can be retrospectively identified in CR. Now the argument might be that the doctrine itself is retrospectively recoverable from CR. In other words, after a DRD is given the proposition is recoverable from CR even if it was not inferable from CR in the first place. It is sometimes argued, for example, that the Trinity is a DRD that once directly revealed enables the church to see that the Trinity was in CR all along. For example:

The Trinity is a mystery of faith in the strict sense, one of the "mysteries that are hidden in God, which can never be known unless they are revealed by God". To be sure, God has left traces of his Trinitarian being in his work of creation and in his Revelation throughout the Old Testament. But his inmost Being as Holy Trinity is a mystery that is inaccessible to reason alone or even to Israel's faith before the Incarnation of God's Son and the sending of the Holy Spirit. (Catholic Church, 2012, para. 237)

In one sense, then, the distinction between a DRD and an *indirectly* revealed proposition is that a DRD was just too hard to see in CR without first being directly disclosed.

In response I assert that if a proposition is so deeply buried in CR that it is not initially inferable from CR, it is hard to see how simply knowing the proposition by some other means would make recovery of the proposition from CR any easier than inferring the proposition in the first place. However, for the sake of argument let's assume that there are some circumstances in which receiving a DRD allows a previously unrecovered proposition

to be retrospectively recovered from CR. In these circumstances there are still only three options for recovering the DRD: deduction, induction and abduction. I briefly explore these options below.

I first assert that a DRD will not be deductively recoverable from CR for the same reasons as indicated above i.e., if the premises of a DRD are so buried in CR that a doctrine was not deductively recoverable in the first place, it is difficult to see how simply now knowing the proposition by direct revelation enables the believer (or anyone else) to identify the premises of the proposition post-hoc in CR. In more general terms, I am not aware of any proposition (or set of propositions) claimed to be a DRD that is retrospectively deducible from CR. Hence, even if deduction theoretically could be used to retrospectively I/V a DRD, in practice this strategy is not viable.

Alternatively, a DRD might be retrospectively I/Ved by induction. As is by now familiar, in the case of induction, recovering a DRD from CR would be achieved by ordering propositions explicit in and/or deduced from CR in such a way as to inductively support an alleged DRD. However, if a DRD is ‘only’ inductively recoverable from CR, then the same problem applies to the DRD as applies to any induced propositions, namely CR can be ordered to support an indefinite number of putative yet conflicting DRDs. As such, induction cannot distinguish between true and false DRDs any more than it distinguishes between other alleged revealed propositions. Thus, attempting to demonstrate that a proposition is directly revealed by inductive inference from CR will not work.

Given the failure of induction to retrospectively I/V DRDs, perhaps Inference to Best Explanation (IBE) might do a better job. In the case of IBE, a DRD could be said to be abductively recoverable from CR when the alleged DRD appears to be the best explanation of CR as a whole. The alleged DRD could also be taken to be revealed because direct revelation is deemed to be the best explanation for why the alleged DRD is taken to be revealed. In the case of *Trinity*, for example, IBE could proceed in the following way:

1. In retrospect, *Trinity* is the best explanation for the totality of CR.
2. The reason why *Trinity* is the best explanation of CR is because *Trinity* is a DRD.
3. Hence (by IBE) *Trinity* is a DRD.

IBE holds at least two advantages over induction with respect to the retrospective verification of DRDs. First, IBE facilitates the claim that CR as a whole verifies certain DRDs. Thus, IBE protects the believer from the accusation that their preferred DRD is retrospectively verified by induction based only on a selective ordering of CR. Second, competing DRDs can be more easily discredited using IBE than induction because, so it can be argued, inductive alternatives to preferred propositions do not adequately explain the entirety of CR even if a given inductive selection from CR may appear to inductively verify a competing DRD.

Despite its advantages over induction, the same problem besets IBE as besets induction i.e., plurality. First, IBE licences competing explanations for why propositions are taken retrospectively to be DRDs. For example, a sceptic could argue that the reason *Trinity* retrospectively explains CR is not because *Trinity* is a DRD but because confirmation bias makes *Trinity* appear to be the best explanation of CR for the Trinitarian. According to this explanation, the explanatory power of *Trinity* is attributable to the believer's prior belief in *Trinity*, not to direct revelation. This belief guides the believer to positively evaluate the explanatory power of *Trinity* over other explanations. Further, the implicit nature of this bias means that when *Trinity* explains CR, the *Trinity*-believer can nevertheless genuinely claim that perceived explanatory power is due to revelation not due to biased cognition. In other words, it will appear to the *Trinity*-believer that revelation really is the best explanation for the explanatory power of *Trinity*.

Second, some explanations deemed to be the best by some Christians are taken to be explanatory mistakes by other Christians. So, for example, for Catholics the Immaculate Conception (*Conception* for short) is retrospectively the best explanation for CR and so, by IBE, *Conception* is a DRD. Yet Protestants hold *Conception* to be a late explanatory mistake of the Catholic Church. *Conception* was only formally recognised in the 19th Century, which makes it a good candidate for errant retrospectivity. Similarly, Universal Priesthood (a.k.a., the Priesthood of all Believers - *Priesthood* for short) is retrospectively the best explanation of CR for Protestants, but not so for Catholics. Apparently, the explanatory power of *Priesthood* is not evident to Catholics, even though Catholics affirm the existence of DRDs. This lack of universality with respect to the recognition of explanatory power militates against taking explanatory power as a means of I/Ving DRDs. Presumably, if God directly reveals a proposition, the explanatory power of the proposition would be self-evident to all Christians not just some.

A final problem for IBE with respect to retrospectively verifying DRDs is that explanatory power is a necessary but not sufficient condition for any revelation, including direct revelation. Thus, all DRDs may be explanatory, but not all explanatory propositions are necessarily DRDs or, for that matter, indirect revelations. Explanatory power does not establish that an explanatory proposition is a revealed proposition even if all DRDs are explanatory in some way.

For all these reasons, IBE is not a reliable method for retrospectively verifying DRDs. The possibility of competing best explanations, and disagreements over whether a proposition is an explanation or an explanatory mistake, invalidate IBE as a reliable methodology for verifying DRDs (again, assuming there is such a species of proposition). Moreover, even if it is retrospectively *agreed* that a proposition explains CR, this explanatory power does not mean that the proposition is a DRD.

Counter Responses

In response to the observations above, the believer could counter that even if deduction, induction or abduction-by-IBE do not retrospectively I/V DRDs, *some* method must surely have worked because God would not allow believers to erroneously conclude that any given doctrine is directly revealed when it is not (e.g., Pope Paul VI, 1965). On the assumption that some effective method must be at work, the Christian could argue that if a proposition is claimed to be a DRD then the burden of proof lies on the sceptic to prove otherwise. In fact, we could broaden the burden of proof argument out to include all propositions that are not explicit in or deduced from CR. In response I assert that if Christians cannot demonstrate that a proposition is revealed then the proposition in question is, at least, not a *publicly* revealed proposition. However, public revelation is exactly the sort of revelation Christians claim to have. In the absence, then, of being able to demonstrate that a proposition is revealed the Christian is in no position to claim that they are in possession of public revelation at all.

Here Christians might assert that the DRDs they possess *are* public within their communities i.e., to those with the ‘eyes of faith’ (Psalm 25:15; Hebrews 11:27) certain propositions are demonstrably revealed within communities even if these same propositions are not demonstrably revealed outside these communities. Let’s allow, then, that a given doctrine is a within-community direct revelation. Even if so, this claim effectively amounts to Gnosticism i.e., in the case of within-community revelation, Christians would be in possession of knowledge that a doctrine is revealed yet such knowledge is not available to those outside the community. Christians, however, do not claim that their knowledge that certain propositions are revealed is gnostic. Rather, such knowledge is *according to Christians* a matter of evidence.

Nevertheless, let’s make one more concession and accept that within-community revelation passes for what Christians mean by divine revelation. Even in this case, the most

charitable concession we could make is that, from the point of view of the *outsider*, the alleged DRD is only hypothetically a revelation. Thus, a within-community revelation gets the Christian seeking to demonstrate to some outsider that an alleged DRD is actually revealed no further than if the alleged revelation is actually a hypothesis. A hypothetically directly revealed proposition has, to the outsider, the same characteristic features as a hypothesis. For these reasons, even if the sceptic on whom the burden of proof allegedly falls cannot show that a proposition is a hypothesis, the sceptic is still well within their rights to assert that the believer only *hypothetically* holds a DRD. Thus, the retreat from fully public i.e., evidential, revelation does not get the believer anywhere in terms of demonstrating that any alleged DRD is, in fact, a DRD.

Chapter Summary

In the last Chapter I showed that there are both logical and theological reasons for not accepting hypotheses as elements of CR. In this chapter I showed that, even if divinely guided abduction could render CR materially sufficient to yield revealed doctrines, it is nevertheless still not possible to demonstrate that CR is materially sufficient for those doctrines. I also showed that, even if what I called hypotheses are actually DRDs, no satisfactory method for distinguishing between hypotheses and direct revelations is provided by Christians. Neither deduction, induction or abduction, even in retrospect, distinguish direct revelations from hypotheses. Further, even if the sceptic fails to demonstrate that an alleged DRD is a hypothesis, the sceptic may still rightly conclude that from the outsider's point of view Christians only hypothetically hold DRDs. For these reasons, neither divinely guided abduction nor direct revelation saves abducted doctrines. As such, it is not unreasonable to proceed on the basis that what I called hypotheses are in fact hypotheses.

Thus far in the thesis, I have introduced the problem of induction, and shown that faith, authority and tradition fail to solve this problem. I then examined the method of

theology to see whether that method fares any better. It does not. Hypotheses should not be accepted as elements of CR, and all attempts, whether by logical inference or theological argumentation, to show that hypotheses should be accepted fail. Having exhausted all options, it is fair to conclude that induced and abduced propositions are not demonstrably revealed. To illustrate the wisdom of this conclusion, the next three chapters of the thesis provide case studies on the Trinity, the Atonement, and Hell. These case studies show in detail how and why the method of theology fails to verify core Christian propositions through the doctrines that supposedly verify these propositions.

Chapter 8

Case Study 1 - The Trinity and the Deity of Christ

In Chapter 6, I showed by example and by deductive logic that abduced propositions ought to be disqualified as revealed propositions. Nevertheless, for the sake of further argument, in Chapter 7 I accepted that under divinely guided abduction CR might be materially sufficient to yield revealed propositions. If so, then limiting CR to explicit or deduced propositions is too restrictive. I went on to show, however, that even under alleged divine guidance CR is not demonstrably materially sufficient to support abduced propositions. So, even if in theory CR materially supports abduced propositions, the point is moot until such sufficiency is actually demonstrated. In the absence of such demonstration, the revealed status of abduced propositions remains questionable.

The last chapter also tackled the assertion that what I called hypotheses are actually Directly Revealed Doctrines (DRDs). In doing so, I argued that even if what look like hypotheses could theoretically be DRDs in disguise, Christians do not have a viable means for distinguishing DRDs from hypotheses. Indeed, conflicts amongst Christians concerning the status of putative DRDs indicates that even amongst believers in DRDs distinguishing between DRDs and hypotheses is problematic. In other words, the same problems that beset indirectly revealed propositions (propositions revealed *through* CR) also beset alleged DRDs. Further, hypothesising that DRDs are not hypotheses does not help Christians in the task of verifying DRDs or verifying induced propositions that may be deduced from these alleged DRDs. The underlying problem here is that until an alleged DRD is shown to be revealed any conflict resolution or expansion of CR achieved under the DRD represents a potential mistake about what is revealed, with no way of determining whether a mistake is being made or not.

Despite these observations, Christians nevertheless use hypotheses extensively in an attempt to verify preferred propositions. In this and the following two chapters, I provide a set of case studies showing how hypotheses are used to I/V preferred induced and abduced propositions. In each case, standard theological reasoning with respect to divine revelation involves postulating hypotheses for the purposes of: (a) eliminating competing propositions, (b) resolving conflicts between induced or abduced propositions said to be revealed and explicit or deduced propositions known to be revealed, and (c) expanding CR such that the expanded content of CR leads to a preferred proposition by deduction. Yet, in each case I also show how and why hypotheses fail to verify their target propositions.

Purpose

Given this introduction, the specific purpose of this chapter is to demonstrate how *Trinity* as a hypothesis is used to verify the proposition that *Jesus is God* (JiG). In this chapter, I build on but do not seek to repeat at length the material covered in Chapter 3, where the development of *Trinity* was used as a historical example of the processes outlined in more detail in subsequent chapters. Instead, in this chapter I explore in particular how *Trinity* is used to amplify CR such that amplified-CR yields JiG as a deduced, and hence revealed, proposition. At the same time, however, I also provide further detail as to why using *Trinity* to do so is in fact both logically and theologically invalid. The conclusion of the chapter is that *Trinity* does not work to verify JiG.

For clarity, I should note what I am not attempting to do in this chapter, which distinguishes the chapter from other approaches to *Trinity* (e.g., Barber, 2006; Edgar, 2005; Hardon, 2003). Unlike other approaches, I am not seeking to show that JiG and *Trinity* are false. For all I know, they may be true. However, what I am seeking to show is that even if these propositions are true, they are not true by virtue of being revealed. In both cases, it is the alleged revealed status of the propositions in which I am interested including, not least,

the legitimacy or otherwise of using one unverified proposition in an attempt to verify another. Simply put, the issue at stake in the chapter is not whether JiG and *Trinity* are true, but whether JiG and *Trinity* are revealed.

Making *Jesus is God* Revealed

A, perhaps the, central problem for Christianity is that arguably its core proposition *Jesus is God* is not explicit in or deduced from CR (Zevit, 2010). Nevertheless, this proposition is taken to be revealed (Claunch, 2013; Emery, 2011). The question then is: How do Christians attempt to show that JiG is revealed given all the limitations of induction and abduction discussed earlier? The short answer to this question is that despite the limitations of hypotheses in verifying propositions, Christians nevertheless persist in using hypotheses to verify the induced proposition that *Jesus is God*.

It is not seriously disputed that JiG is not explicit in CR. Nevertheless, most Christians claim that JiG is rightly inferred from CR, and hence is a revealed proposition. However, because JiG is not inferred *by deduction* from CR, the claim that JiG is revealed is consistently challenged, not least by Christians who believe not-JiG (e.g., Tuggy, 2011). Given the failure of deduction to yield JiG, believers that JiG use various inductive orderings of CR in an attempt to verify JiG. However, this strategy both historically and currently ends in a theological stalemate because sceptics and competitors can and do claim on the basis of rival inductive orderings of CR not-JiG.

In order to resolve the stalemate, believers that JiG claim by IBE that the best explanation for why JiG is taken to be revealed is because JiG is in CR. However, the problem of rival best explanations is no less intractable than the problem of competing inductions. Perhaps the more pressing problem for JiG, however, is that even if induction or IBE can support JiG in some way, JiG appears to conflict with several propositions derived

explicitly from CR, including *The Father is God*, *God is not a man*, and *Jesus has a God*.

Formally:

Set 1:

1. The Father is God (1 Corinthians 8:6).
2. Jesus is not the Father (John 14:28).
3. Jesus is not God.

Set 2:

1. God is not a man (Numbers 23:19).
2. Jesus is a man (Acts 2:22).
3. Jesus is not God.

Set 3:

1. Jesus has a God (John 20:17).
2. God does not have a God (Isaiah 45:5).
3. Jesus is not God.

Further, Jesus apparently possesses many qualities that God does not e.g., Jesus is not omniscient (Matthew 24:36), he is temptable (Matthew 4:1-11), he is given authority (Matthew 28:18), he does nothing on his own discretion (John 5:30) and, crucially, he dies (Matthew 27:50). These conflicts *prima facie* disqualify JiG as a revealed proposition. In order save JiG as a revealed proposition, at minimum the conflicts above have to be resolved.

The Purpose of *Trinity*

As indicated in Chapters 3 and 6, the purpose of *Trinity* is to eliminate any proposition to the effect that not-JiG, to make JiG deducible from CR, and to harmonise JiG with any explicit and deduced propositions in CR with which JiG apparently conflicts. In this chapter I focus in more detail on each of these purposes. Simply put, *Trinity* is the hypothesis is that the one God exists as three divine Persons – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. In more detail, the Athanasian Creed of the fourth Century says:

...we worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity; Neither confounding the persons nor dividing the substance. For there is one person of the Father, another of the Son, and another of the Holy Spirit. But the Godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit is all one, the glory equal, the majesty coeternal... And in this Trinity none is afore or after another; none is greater or less than another. But the whole three persons are coeternal, and coequal. So that in all things, as aforesaid, the Unity in Trinity and the Trinity in Unity is to be worshipped. He therefore that will be saved must thus think of the Trinity. (O'Caroll, 1987, p. 78)

Now let's see how *Trinity* fares as a solution to the problems outlined above. First, if *Trinity* is true, then any proposition to the effect that Jesus is not God is untrue. The question of course is whether *Trinity* is true. However, assuming it is, *Trinity* does invalidate propositions to the effect not-JiG.

Second, under *Trinity*, Christians can ampliatively interpret CR such that JiG becomes a deduction from amplified CR e.g.,

1. Jesus forgives sins *by his own authority* (amplification of CR under *Trinity*).
2. Only God forgives sins by his own authority.
3. Therefore, Jesus is God

Further, *Trinity's* auxiliary hypotheses (homoousios and hypostasis, see Chapter 3) also facilitate the ampliative interpretation of CR such that JiG is transformed into a deduction from amplified-CR. Some examples of this process include:

- (a) the verse John 8:58b: "...before Abraham was born, I am!" may be given the implicit meaning "before Abraham was born, I *was and still am God!*" i.e.,

homousios allows for Jesus to be God in substance in the past despite being a man in the present.

- (b) the verse John 10:30: “I and the Father are one” may be given the implicit meaning “I and the Father are one *in substance*” i.e. homousios allows for an ontological reading of ‘one’ such that ‘one’ means one in substance as distinct from, for example, being one in purpose, intent and/or motivation.
- (c) the verse John 20:28: Thomas said to him (Jesus), “My Lord and my God!” may be given the implicit meaning “*You are* my Lord and my God!” i.e., homousios allows for Thomas’ words to be interpreted as a statement directed towards one person (Jesus) as opposed to two persons Jesus and (indirectly) God the Father.

In more general terms, *Trinity* allows CR to be read ontologically, a particular species of ampliative interpretation. Under *Trinity* statements about, or narratives concerning, Jesus can be said to include or imply information about his divine nature regardless of whether or not a given biblical writer was attempting to convey ontological truths about this nature. An ontological reading of CR assumes that revelation by God necessarily involves revelation of God, and so permits the reader to discern ontological meanings in CR that are not explicitly stated by the author of each text (Barth, 2004; Letham, 2005). Criticisms of an ontological reading of CR (e.g., Tuggy, 2003) include that this manner of reading facilitates the imposition of various theological and philosophical frameworks on the Bible that are foreign to the Bible itself. Moreover, an ontological reading of the Bible allows that biblical interpretation can move from what various authors actually say to hypotheses about what God presumably *meant* to say even if not actually said.

For present purposes, the key issue is that *Trinity* licenses an ontological reading of CR in service of saving JiG from falsification by CR. Table 4 outlines how *Trinity* supports

an ontological interpretation of several specific verses concerning, or references to, Christ in the New Testament. The list of these verses and references is not intended to be exhaustive, but is indicative of key verses and references used to support JiG under a Trinitarian reading of CR. This ontological reading of CR goes partway to explaining why Trinitarians find the Trinity so obviously revealed in CR.

Table 4

Ontological Reading of CR

Biblical Data	Source	Trinitarian Ampliative Inference	Resultant Conclusion	Non-Necessity of the Inference
Titles of Christ have ontological as well as functional and relational significance				
Jesus is called “Son of God”	47 occurrences in the New Testament	To be “of” God in origin entails being “as” God in person	Son of God implies God the Son	Son of God implies a relationship, not necessarily an identification, with God.
Jesus is called “Lord”	250 (approx.) occurrences in the New Testament	The title Lord (kurios) when applied to Christ entails identification with God.	To say Jesus is Lord is equivalent to saying Jesus is God.	“Lord” can be a positional title as well as a personal title. Even as a personal title Lord does not necessarily refer to God. In the same phrases, Lord and God are used to denote distinct beings in the NT.
Thomas (ostensibly) called Jesus “Lord” and “God”	Once in the NT (other similar cases are Tit. 2:13; 1 Jn. 5:20)	<u>My</u> Lord and <u>my</u> God entails <u>the</u> Lord and <u>the</u> God	Thomas identified/ confessed Jesus as God	An exclamation or a statement of devotion to Jesus does not necessarily imply ontological identification with God.
“I am”	Eight times in NT (once alone John 8:58)	“I am” (ego eimi) entails “I am what I am” (ego eimi ho on)	The use of “I am” means Jesus is referring to himself as God	Ego eimi is: (a) optionally translated <i>I am</i> (but can also mean <i>I was</i> , <i>I have been</i> , <i>it is</i> , <i>I am he</i> , etc.), (b) used by others than Christ to refer to themselves (e.g., John 9.9).

Biblical Data	Source	Trinitarian Ampliative Inference	Resultant Conclusion	Non-Necessity of the Inference
Qualities of Christ have ontological as well as personal significance.				
Jesus shared Divine nature	Three direct references in the NT	Possessing the nature of God entails being the person of God.	Jesus is God because he possesses Divine nature	Those other than God are said to share the Divine nature e.g., 2 Peter 1:4. Thus, divinity doesn't necessarily imply Deity.
Jesus is the image of God	Two direct references in the NT	Possessing the image of God entails possessing the identity of God	The image of God in Christ implies the identity of Christ with God	The image of God is not restricted to God. All mankind is in the image of God without being identical with God. Thus, the image and identity of God are not necessarily linked.
Jesus is one with God	One direct reference in the NT	Being one with God entails being one being with God	Oneness with God means shared identity with God	Oneness plausibly can, and typically does, refer to unity of purpose and/or motivation i.e., teleological unity not necessarily ontological unity
Jesus possesses God's authority	50 (approx.) direct and indirect references in the Gospels	Possessing the authority of God entails possessing the identity of God	Having the authority of God means Jesus is God	Divine authority is delegated to Christ. If Christ was God the authority would not need to be delegated – it would be His already. Delegation of Divine authority doesn't necessarily imply the assumption of divine personality e.g., God regularly delegates His Divine authority to humans. Even the extent of authority delegated ("all") does not necessarily imply the assumption of deity.
Jesus is sinless	Seven direct references in the NT	Sinlessness entails ontological perfection i.e., (by definition) being God	Sinlessness implies Jesus is God or even defines Jesus as God.	Sinlessness can mean relational/existential "obedience" rather than ontological perfection. Jesus was made perfect through obedience rather than being perfect and thus demonstrating obedience (Hebrews 5:7-9).

Biblical Data	Source	Trinitarian Ampliative Inference	Resultant Conclusion	Non-Necessity of the Inference
The actions of Christ have ontological as well practical significance.				
Creation was made in/through/ by Christ	Three direct references in the NT	Being the means of creation entails being the cause of creation.	Creation through, in or by (means of) Christ implies creation by Christ	The greek words en (“in”), eis (“to/into/unto”), and dia (“through”), do not necessarily need to be translated or understood as “by X....”
The Word was God and the Word became flesh	One reference in the New Testament (John 1:1, 14)	The Word becoming flesh entails Jesus becoming flesh not the Word becoming Jesus	God became flesh	The Word gave up its/his divinity when becoming flesh
Jesus performed miracles	37 miracles recorded in New Testament	Possessing power from God, or even the power of God entails being God in person	Miracles imply Jesus is God	Miracles are performed by the power of God but not necessarily by the person God. Those other than God perform miracles.
Jesus forgave sins	Three direct references in the NT	Forgiving sins entails being the ultimate forgiver of sins	Forgiveness of sins indicates Jesus is God	The authority to forgive sins can be delegated to those other than God (e.g., John 20:19-23). Jesus’ authority to forgive sins was, thus, not necessarily independently possessed by Him as God, but plausibly delegated to him by God

The point of Table 4 is not to descend into the usual debates over how to interpret CR.

Rather, the point is to show that, licenced by *Trinity*, the New Testament can be read ontologically even though such a reading is not necessary order to make sense of the explicit content of CR. Thus, even if an ontological reading of the New Testament can make sense of CR, such a reading is not required by CR itself. An ontological reading is, however, required if JiG is to be reconciled to CR. So, the motivation for an ontological reading of CR is not revelation itself, but what CR needs to include in order for JiG to be revealed.

Making Trinity Coherent

Having concluded by deduction from ontologically-amplified-CR that JiG, Christians can (although I still say erroneously) claim that JiG is revealed. As indicated in Chapter 3, historically this result was the primary motivation for the development of *Trinity*. However, despite leading to the preferred conclusion, it is not clear that *Trinity* is either internally (within the doctrine itself) or externally (with the rest of CR) coherent. So, some further work needs to be done.

Internal Conflicts

The immediate coherence problem for *Trinity*, even ignoring the compounding problem of the Holy Spirit, is that simply asserting that *Jesus is God*, the *Father is God*, *Jesus is not the Father*, and *God is One* are coherent does not resolve the apparent incoherence of the propositions. Nevertheless, by proposing two further hypotheses (in the form of the hypothetical constructs *homoousios* and *hypostasis*) JiG-believing Christians attempt to show that *Trinity* is not internally contradictory i.e., if God is One in substance (one *ousios*), but three in person (three *hypostases* of the one *ousios*) then the proposition that *God is One* does not conflict with the proposition entailed by *Trinity* that *more than one are God*. When we refer to God being One we are referring to His substance or essence. When we are referring to God being more than one we are referring to the divine hypostases (persons). Put slightly differently, the theoretical constructs *ousios* (substance) and *stasis* (states of a substance) allow God to be defined consistently as a multi-person but unitarily-substantive Being.

To be specific, *prime facie* it looks like *Trinity* doesn't deliver on JiG:

1. If there is only one God (personally – normally God would be taken to be a person),
2. and the Father is God (personally),

3. and the Father is not the Son (personally),
4. then the Son (Jesus) is not God (personally).
5. Yet, Trinitarians hold that Jesus is God (personally).

However, under homoousios and hypostasis, *Trinity* can be made to be internally coherent.

1. If there is only one God (substantially),
2. and the Father is God (substantially),
3. and the Father is not the Son (personally),
4. then the Son (Jesus) can still be God (substantially).

The question is whether such a move is legitimate. I assert that it is not for the following reasons. Homoousios and hypostasis effectively allow an equivocation on the word “God” such that “God” can mean both “a divine being” and “a divine person”. Hypostasis implies a divine person. Homoousios implies a divine being. One could think that a being and a person are the same thing. Yet, under *Trinity*, a being (e.g., Father, Son and Holy Spirit) is different to a person (Father, Son or Holy Spirit). In other words, God refers *both* to the conjunction and the disjunction of the persons of the Trinity. Once the equivocation between the conjunction and the disjunction of the three divine entities is established, all that needs to be done to secure the coherence of *Trinity* is to apply this equivocation to the word “God”. For example, if not equivocating on the word “God” i.e., if “God” has a single meaning, *Trinity* does not deliver on JiG. In the following example “God” means only “divine being”:

1. God (divine being) is the Trinity (divine being).
2. Jesus is not the Trinity (divine being).
3. Jesus is not God (divine being).

However, if we are prepared to equivocate such that “God” can mean both divine being and divine person then Trinity does deliver on JiG:

1. God (divine being) is the Trinity (divine being).
2. Jesus (divine person) is not the Trinity (divine being).
3. Jesus (divine person) is God (divine person).

Or, if preferred, without equivocation we cannot deliver on *Trinity*:

1. Jesus is God (divine person).
2. The Trinity is not Jesus (divine person).
3. The Trinity is not God (divine person).

Yet, equivocating:

1. Jesus is God (divine person).
2. The Trinity (divine being) is not Jesus (divine person).
3. The Trinity (divine being) is God (divine being).

The problem here is obvious: the conjunctive set Father, Son and Holy Spirit is not the same as the disjunctive sets Father, Son or Holy Spirit. Yet, the one word “God” is used to refer to both.

A similar equivocation on the word “God” involves using God to refer to a divine *being* and using God to refer to *divinity* itself i.e., under *Trinity* God can mean “a divine being” or just “divine”. For example, the following list of propositions which does not equivocate on the word “God” appears to indicate that we have four entities that qualify as God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit individually, and then collectively the Trinity.

Specifically:

1. The Father is God.

2. The Son is God.
3. The Holy Spirit is God.
4. The Trinity is God.

Yet, four entities qualifying as God apparently conflicts with the revealed proposition that *God is One*. However, equivocating on *divine* and *divine being* we can say:

1. The Father is God (divine).
2. The Son is God (divine).
3. The Holy Spirit is God (divine).
4. The Trinity is God (the one divine being).

The point here again is that *Trinity* can be made coherent if “God” is allowed to mean different things at the same time.

External Conflicts

External problems with the coherence of Trinity arise, perhaps paradoxically, as direct result of verifying JiG. If JiG is taken to be a revealed proposition, the question remains as to how JiG can be harmonised with propositions explicit in or deduced from CR with which JiG apparently conflicts. A similar type of theorising to that involved in resolving internal conflicts is engaged to resolve apparent external conflicts between JiG and propositions in CR. For example, there is an apparent external conflict between JiG and the proposition that *Jesus has a God*, namely, if Jesus is God he should not have a God (see Gunton, 1997, for a competing perspective). Here the equivocation used to resolve the apparent conflict is again employed on the word “God”, but in a different way than in the cases above. Specifically, the theoretical distinction between the *economic* Trinity (Baik, 2018) as the functional relationship between the persons of the Trinity and the *ontological* (or *immanent*, Baik, 2011) Trinity as the metaphysical relationship between the persons of

the Trinity is used to explain how Jesus has a God. The problem may be represented deductively as follows:

1. Jesus has a God (ontologically).
2. God does not have a God (ontologically).
3. Jesus is not God (ontologically).

The problem is resolved by equivocation as follows.

1. Jesus has a God (economically).
2. God does not have a God (ontologically).
3. Jesus is God (ontologically but not economically).

The resolution here occurs not because JiG is a conclusion from *Jesus has a God* and *God does not have a God*, but because under equivocation JiG is not inconsistent with *Jesus has a God* and *God does not have a God*. The point, then, is that by licencing the theoretical distinction between the economic and the ontological Trinity, the conflict between Jesus being God and Jesus having a god is *theoretically* resolved. However, the resolution comes at the expense of equivocating on relationships between the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The economic and ontological relationships between the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are typologically *different* relationships (even if they both happen to exist). One cannot validly use these typologically different relationships in the same set of propositions as if they were the same type of relationship. In other words, even if the hypothesis that there are typologically different relationships between the Father, Son and Holy Spirit holds, one must still distinguish between these relationships if seeking to show that Trinity is coherent. Conversely, conflating these typologically distinct relationships does nothing to establish the coherence of Trinity.

JiG also needs to be reconciled with another revealed proposition, namely, *Jesus is a man*. Here, yet more Trinitarian theorising comes to the fore. Jesus, so it is hypothesised, is *both* God and man by virtue of the *hypostatic union* which unifies the nature of God with the nature of man (Park, 2017). The alleged *two natures* of Christ can be used to resolve the conflict between JiG and *Jesus is a man* by licensing an equivocation on the identity of Jesus as follows:

1. God is not a man.
2. Jesus (with respect to his human nature) is a man.
3. Jesus (with respect to his divine nature) is God.

Here the resolution is again achieved not by deducing JiG from *God is not a man* and *Jesus is a man*, but by showing that the three propositions when taken together do not conflict. The immediate problem, however, is exactly the same as that which applies to *homoousios* and *hypostasis*, and to the *economic* and *ontological* Trinity i.e., using two different referents to apply to Jesus at the same time. Thus, even if Jesus is God and man, equivocating between the two does nothing to demonstrate that JiG does not conflict with the remaining propositions.

I suggested that the motivation for these theoretical distinctions is to make Trinity internally coherent and externally coherent with CR. However, at the very least, equivocal reasoning using these distinctions does nothing to establish this coherence. Moreover, even if it did, this coherence does not mean that either JiG or *Trinity* are *revealed*. Coherence is only a necessary but not a sufficient condition for a proposition to be revealed. More broadly, the problem with using hypotheses to resolve conflicts within a doctrine, or between a doctrine and CR, is not that these hypotheses do not work *theoretically* to resolve such conflicts. Rather, the problem is that no amount of theorising can establish that a proposition is *revealed*. At best, hypotheses conditionally resolve conflicts - conditional,

that is, on the hypotheses being true. Yet, even if true, hypotheses are not by virtue of such truth revealed. Revealed truths are only a subset of all truths. Additionally, in the context of Christianity as a revealed religion, the only test of truth is revelation. Thus, in the context of Christianity, there is an asymmetrical relationship between truth and revelation such that one can establish the truth of a proposition by virtue of establishing the revealed status of the proposition but not vice versa. The point here is that post-hoc theorising does nothing to save *Trinity* as a revealed proposition, even if *Trinity* is true. As such, post-hoc theorising also does nothing to save JiG as a revealed proposition.

God and “I”

In the preceding sections of this chapter, I showed that post-hoc hypotheses do not establish that *Trinity* is revealed and, as such, *Trinity* does not establish that JiG is revealed. These concerns put aside for the moment, there is also much debate among *Christians* concerning whether *Trinity* is theologically licensed in the first place (Tuggy, 2003; cf. Fisher, 2016; Williams, 1994). Theologically, it appears that God is not just *one*, but *one person* e.g., God refers to Himself and is referred to using personal pronouns: I, me, He, Him, you. Thus, *Trinity* apparently conflicts with the explicit proposition that there is one God, and the deducible conclusion that *that* one God is one person. Somewhat more specifically, the Trinitarian God is hypothetically many ‘whos’ (persons) and one ‘what’ (substance/being) whereas theologically God is only one ‘who’. Thus, it is not at all obvious that a multi-person Being could refer to *Himself* as “I”. However, even if “I” could refer to the Trinity there are theological reasons why it should not.

Let’s assume that God is a multi-person Being that refers to Himself as “I”. This God cannot reveal His true nature. This God is not able to reveal his true nature because there is no way for human beings to distinguish between a single-person God who refers to Himself as “I”, and a multi-person God who refers to Himself as “I”. If “I” can refer to one

divine person *and* more than one divine person, then the nature of a divine being who refers to Himself as “I” is intractable. The only way that God could reveal Himself using “I” is if “I” means *only* one person or *only* a multi-person Being. God would also have to identify explicitly or deductively which is the case, but He has not. For these reasons, it looks like God could not have *revealed* Himself to be a *Trinity* – even if in fact He is. Following Descartes (see Cottingham, 1992) the problem of who/what am/is “I” appears to apply to God as much as it does to humans. The conclusion is that even if God is a multi-person Being referring to Himself as “I” and/or is a Being that is both personal (‘who’) and impersonal (‘what’) in nature, this God *could not* reveal himself ontologically. Yet the claim is that God has revealed Himself ontologically. Thus, an unresolved contradiction.

Chapter Summary

In this Chapter I have shown how *Trinity* and its attendant hypotheses eliminate competing propositions, licence the amplification of CR in order to deduce JiG, and resolve contradictions inherent in *Trinity*. Nevertheless, in all cases I also indicated that it has not been demonstrated that *Trinity* or its attendant hypotheses are revealed propositions. Moreover, because we do not know that *Trinity* is revealed, we do not know that JiG is revealed. I have not sought in this chapter to rehash reasons why abduction should not be accepted as a proper means of verifying propositions. However, even if abduction was accepted, in the case of *Trinity* it does not work regardless. The importance of this finding is that, despite the impressive theoretical framework centred on *Trinity* built by Christians, the key induced proposition JiG remains unverified. Thus, it remains open to the reasonable person to conclude that the deity of Christ is (at least possibly) a proposition of human rather than divine origin.

In the next chapter, the second of my three case studies, I examine the Atonement and how, in particular, the Penal Substitutionary Theory of the Atonement relies on

hypotheses not demonstrably in CR for its verification. This second case study builds on material in the current chapter, but also introduces some new applications of abduction not evident with respect to *Trinity*.

Chapter 9

Case Study 2 - Retribution and Atonement

This chapter represents the second of three case studies on the use of hypotheses to verify propositions within the method of theology. In this chapter I show how a theory of the Atonement (Penal Substitutionary Atonement – typically denoted PSA) is used to reconcile a preferred proposition (divine punishment for sin is retributive – henceforth *Retribution*) with recalcitrant data (God is love and loving – henceforth *Loving God*). The purpose of this reconciliation is to show that *Retribution* is a revealed proposition. However, in order for PSA to save *Retribution*, PSA itself would need to be revealed. Indeed, Christians claim this very thing (Beilby & Eddy, 2009; Pugh, 2015). In this chapter, however, I show that for a different reason than is the case with *Trinity*, that PSA is not demonstrably revealed. Thus, even if PSA reconciles *Retribution* to *Loving God* any such reconciliation does not show that *Retribution* is revealed.

One key aim of this and the following chapter is to show that the analytical model developed in the first half of the thesis is applicable to a range of cases including but not limited to *Trinity*. In the last chapter, I showed how a theological hypothesis (*Trinity*) said to be revealed can be used to reconcile an induced proposition (Jesus is God) with recalcitrant data (the Father is God, God is One, and Jesus is not the Father) in CR. This reconciliation allows the induced proposition and the hypothesis that rescues the proposition to be taken as revealed, even though neither the proposition nor the hypothesis are demonstrably revealed. However, I showed in the last chapter that *Trinity* is both internally and externally incoherent and so, even if hypotheses are accepted as a means of verifying propositions, *Trinity* nevertheless does not work to verify JiG.

In this chapter, in contrast, I do not seek to show that, even accepting theory as a means of verifying propositions, that a particular theory (PSA) is incoherent. Rather, I seek

to show that an equally virtuous alternative theory (Restorative Substitutionary Atonement) that verifies a conflicting proposition (*Restoration* – explained shortly) means that PSA cannot be taken as a revealed proposition. Thus, while both *Trinity* and PSA can be ruled out because they are hypothetical/theoretical, they can also be ruled out for differing reasons, thus extending the analysis of abduction within the method of theology.

Retributive and Restorative Justice

Like *Trinity*, it is claimed that PSA is revealed (Crawford, 1970; Davis, 2014; Terry, 2013). In fact, it is sometimes claimed that PSA is the core of the gospel (Campbell, 2019). According to this view, PSA is not only a revealed proposition, but a revealed proposition of the first order. The argument in this chapter, in contrast, is that PSA (again, for reasons different to *Trinity*) is not revealed or, at least, has not been shown to be revealed. Rather, PSA is a hypothesis (or, more properly, a network of hypotheses i.e., a theory) intended to save *Retribution* from falsification by *Loving God*.

At the outset I should note what I mean and do not mean by *Retribution*. *Retribution* is not a hypothesis about the character of God but a hypothesis about the justice of God. Obviously, God's character has implications for God's justice, but God's character and his justice are not the same thing. Thus, in examining *Retribution* I do not mean to imply that God never gets angry, or never appears violent, vengeful or retributive. Clearly, at least in the Old Testament, God does get angry and is on occasion violent, vengeful and retributive (see Deuteronomy 9:8; Exodus 15:7; Jeremiah 32:37; Ezekiel 7:8). Nevertheless, the issue is not whether God acts retributively from time to time, or even often. Rather the issue is whether God's justice is characteristically or exclusively retributive and whether a proposition to this effect is a revealed proposition. The observation that God is sometimes retributive might provide data that inductively informs the proposition that God's justice is retributive, but the issue is still whether or not this proposition is revealed.

Given that a minimum requirement for a revealed proposition is that it does not conflict with another revealed proposition, a key issue for demonstrating that *Retribution* is revealed concerns whether *Retribution* can be successfully reconciled with *Loving God* and, if so, how. In order to explore the potential for such reconciliation, I first briefly explore the difference between retributive and restorative justice in general terms (e.g., Braithwaite, 2002) before moving on to exploring retributive and restorative justice in Christian theological terms (e.g., Boersma, 2003; Fiddes, 2016).

Retributive justice refers to the unilateral assignment of punishment in response to a transgression that requires such punishment (Alschuler, 2003; Perry, 2006). From a retributive perspective, punishment is *necessary* for justice to be achieved. Under this model of justice, an offender's suffering, humiliation and/or degradation are the intended outcomes of punishment (Zaibert, 2006). The logic underpinning this model is that, by transgressing against their victims, offenders create some sort of moral imbalance. Moral balance can be restored if offenders are punished proportionally to the harm caused by their transgression. In turn, proportionality is determined by estimating the extent to which a victim has been harmed. This estimation may include damage to a victim's status and power. When status and power are salient concerns, retributive justice seeks to diminish the offender to the same extent that an offender is estimated to have diminished the victim.

In contrast to retributive justice, restorative justice involves a set of responses aimed at restoring an offender to good standing, and to restoring the relationship between victims and offenders where this relationship was broken as a result of the actions of an offender (Braithwaite, 2002; Van Ness & Strong, 2010). Restorative justice is served when the restoration of the offender, and the relationship between the victim and the offender, are achieved in a such a way that takes the initial offence seriously but does not render punishment for the sake of punishment. The logic of restoration is that any moral imbalance that occurs as a result of an offender's actions cannot be rectified by punishment alone.

Punishment is not excluded from a restorative model, but such punishment is not an end in itself (Shapland, 2013). Damage to status and power may be considerations in recognising harm to a victim. However, under restorative justice the aim is not to diminish the offender through punishment. Rather, when confronted with the consequences of their action, the hope is that the offender will humbly diminish themselves and seek forgiveness from, and reconciliation with, their victim. Some key aspects of justice and how these are construed under retributive and restorative justice are summarised in Table 5.

Table 5

Elements of Justice: Retributive and Restorative

	Retributive Justice	Restorative Justice
Transgression	A legal offense against an authority	A social/relational offence against a person or community
Punishment	Punishment is the outcome of justice	Justice is (or can be) the outcome of punishment
Focus of Judicial Proceedings	Establishing blame or guilt for an offence	Establishing the causes and outcomes of an offence
Offenders	Are accountable to the system of justice concerned	Are accountable to the victims of their transgressions
Victims	Enact vengeance or have vengeance enacted for them	May exercise forgiveness after, or in the context of, some restorative process

Table 5, and the text that immediately precedes it, is not meant to imply that retributive and restorative justice are mutually exclusive (Armstrong, 2014). Retributive justice might in some circumstances restore dignity, worth or esteem to a perpetrator. Similarly, restorative justice may involve some sort of retributive punishment, but for restorative ends. The key difference between retributive and restorative justice, then, is the primary intent or goal of any punishment (Fiddes, 2016).

Retribution as a Revealed Proposition

The issue under consideration in this chapter is not so much whether God's justice is retributive *per se*, but whether a proposition to that effect is revealed. Consistent with previous chapters, if *Retribution* was an explicit or deduced proposition there would be no argument that *Retribution* is revealed. However, as an induced proposition, the revealed status of *Retribution* is not known. In order to show that *Retribution* is revealed, the typical theological strategy is to mount an inductive case for *Retribution*. I will not rehearse again here the reasons why such inductive case building fails to verify *Retribution*. However, in order to be fair to those who advocate that *Retribution* is revealed, and in order to contrast retribution with restoration in theological terms, I briefly outline an inductive case for *Retribution* below.

An inductive case for *Retribution* can be built as follows. First, sin is identified in legal terms. For this purpose, verses such as: "Whoever sins breaks the law, for sin is lawlessness" (1 John 3:4) might be cited. Moreover, breaking even one part of the law renders a person guilty of breaking all of the law (James 2:10). As a result, all are guilty of sin and justly punishable as a result (Psalm 130:3). Further, God's law is invoked as the standard by which sin is identified and defined. For example, knowledge of sin comes through the law (Romans 3:20, 7:7) yet, conversely, sin is not recognised when there is no law (Romans 5:13).

Like sin, God is also characterised in legal/judicial terms. For example, God is characterised as the omniscient judge of all the earth (Genesis 18:25; Psalm 69:5; Romans 3:19) who cannot tolerate evil (Habakkuk 1:13), and who will judge the world in righteousness through Jesus Christ (Acts 17:31). Thus, God does not leave the guilty unpunished (Exodus 34:7; cf. Nahum 1:3) and, as a result of punishment, God's justice is satisfied (Deuteronomy 32:35; Jeremiah 23:20; Romans 12:19). God is also a righteous judge. As such, God's penalties are never capricious, but every transgression receives its

just recompense or reward (Hebrews 2:2). Despite being a righteous judge, God is also an angry one. Thus, “the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men” (Romans 1:18) and, at the final judgement, it will be evident that all men have been storing up wrath against themselves for the day of God’s judgement (Romans 2:5-6).

The punishment for sin is typically construed as death (Genesis 2:17; Proverbs 11:18-19; Romans 6:23) and this punishment is appropriate because God is the author of life (John 1:4). Thus, to sin against God is necessarily to engage in a fatal activity (Proverbs 8:36). As a result, the death penalty for sin is not arbitrary but corresponds both to the nature and the seriousness of sin. However, in addition to mortal death there is a second spiritual death invoked as the punishment for sin. So, after mortal death Christ will declare: “Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels” (Matthew 25:41). Paul (assuming the traditional attribution of authorship) also explains that, post-death, unrepentant sinners will be “punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of His power” (2 Thessalonians 1:9). John adds that these sinners will be “tormented day and night forever and ever” (Revelation 20:10).

Given this particular inductive approach to CR it is not surprising that retributivists conceive of salvation as escape from the legal/judicial condemnation of God (Boersma, 2003). Further, sin makes humans God’s enemies and God’s enmity toward his enemies cannot be removed without first turning away God’s judicial wrath. The question then becomes: “How is salvation (the abolition of guilt and wrath) achieved? The retributivist answer to this question is that Jesus, who was perfectly righteous, was punished in the place of the unrighteous thus setting them free from God’s punitive condemnation. Those who advocate *Retribution* conclude that the judicial (penal) and substitutionary death of Christ

was the necessary prerequisite for sinners to be justified and thus to receive the favourable judgment of God (Craig, 2018).

Responding to *Retribution*

At this point the typical way a theological debate on the matter proceeds is for a theologian (or anyone else) disagreeing with *Retribution* to frame a different inductive ordering of CR in support of another proposition. For example, a competing theologian, let's say a theologian who simply wants to demonstrate that CR supports *not-Retribution*, could note that God apparently regrets some of his more vindictive actions (Genesis 8:21) or intended actions (2 Samuel 24:16; Psalm 106:45); and that even when God is angry, God's compassion often wins out over his anger (2 Kings 13:3 cf. 2 Kings 13:22-23). Interestingly, given that holiness is often used to justify God's retributive wrath, at least on occasion God uses his holiness as a reason for *not* executing his wrath (Hosea 11:9-10). Further, God takes no pleasure in the death of anyone (Ezekiel 18:32) and, in fact, wants to give life not take it (John 10:10). God also desires mercy not sacrifice (Matthew 9:13), is kind even to the ungrateful and the wicked (Luke 6:35-36), and sends his Son into the world not to condemn it but to save it (John 3:17). Lastly, Jesus commands his disciples to be merciful (Luke 6:36) and to love their enemies (Matthew 5:44-45) precisely because God is merciful shows love to his enemies.

I could go on. The point here, however, is not to show by some competing inductive ordering that *Retribution* is not-revealed which, again, is typical of theological debate. Rather my point is to show that different inductions can lead to conflicting conclusions, in this case *Retribution* and *not-Retribution*. Hence, the now familiar problem of how to determine which of a set of induced propositions is revealed arises again. In order to address the choice between conflicting inductions, the same strategy as that used for *Jesus is God* (hypothesis formation) is also used to determine the choice in favour of *Retribution*. In the

case of PSA, the hypotheses used to determine the choice in favour of *Retribution* are, in fact, a set of interlinked hypotheses, in other words a theory.

Penal Substitutionary Atonement

In this section I briefly provide some background on atonement before going on to describe PSA. Consistent with my comments above regarding theological disputation, the purpose of this description is not to set up PSA for either support or attack. Rather the purpose of the description is to highlight the salient features of PSA that enable PSA to be used to reconcile *Retribution* and *Loving God*.

The word “atonement” means, literally, “at-one-ment” i.e., a state of being at one, or in harmony, with someone or something. Theologically, atonement refers to the state that human beings both individually and collectively may achieve by becoming one with God through Christ. *The Atonement* (capital ‘A’) generally refers to the crucifixion, but may also refer to the forgiveness of sins achieved as a result of the crucifixion that leads to oneness with God. Thus, broadly, both atonement and *The Atonement* may refer to the outcome of becoming one with God, with the latter specifically referring to the act through which this outcome is achieved (Vidu, 2015). For the purposes of this chapter, I concentrate on discussing the *Atonement*. However, the points I make typically apply to atonement in general as well as to the *Atonement* in particular.

CR does not make it clear, explicitly or deductively, how Christ’s suffering and death achieved reconciliation between God and humanity, and thus exactly how Christians become one with God. For this reason, Christians use different metaphors for, and provide differing theories of, the Atonement. These theories include the *Recapitulation*, *Ransom*, *Christus Victor*, *Satisfaction*, *Moral Influence*, and *Penal Substitution* theories of the Atonement (Aulén, 1931/1969; Beilby & Eddy, 2009; Pugh, 2015). PSA is currently the

dominant, but also the most contested, theory of the Atonement (Kyle, 2013; Weaver, 2001).

PSA, sometimes referred to as the “legal or “forensic” view of the Atonement, essentially contends that there can be no forgiveness of sin (and hence, no atonement) without first addressing the punishment for sin. Thus, according to PSA, even though God is willing to forgive sin He is unable to do so without first punishing sin. PSA contends that God’s justice demands that God punish sin, hence the *penalty* in PSA. Yet, God is love and so God is unwilling to punish, even justly. The competing demands of God’s justice and God’s love motivate God to offer Jesus Christ as a substitutionary sacrifice, hence the *substitution* in PSA, for sin. Thus, Christ’s death on the cross serves God’s justice and demonstrates God’s love, and PSA explains *how* this is the case.

The roots of PSA can be traced back at least as far as Anselm of Canterbury (2019). Anselm developed a theory of the Atonement that centred on the restoration of God’s honour which had, theoretically, been violated by sin. According to Anselm, the problem of achieving atonement is how God’s honour can be restored in order that God is in a position to forgive sin. Anselm argued that Jesus’ punitive death restores God’s honour which was defiled by human sin. As a result, God’s honour is now satisfied and God is thus able to forgive the sin that caused Him offence. In *Summa Theologicae*, Thomas Aquinas (2017) changed the emphasis of Anselm’s theory by suggesting that the primary problem dealt with in the Atonement was not the restoration of God’s honour but the repayment of a debt owed to God as a result of sin. Thus, through the Atonement, Jesus paid by punishment a debt that could not otherwise be settled. John Calvin (1536/1960) adopted the thrust of both Anselm’s and Aquinas’ theories, but modified these theories by suggesting that the problem of atonement is not so much the restoration of God’s honour, nor the repayment of a debt, but the propitiation (appeasement) of a God angry with the human sin. Thus, the crucifixion did

not just restore God's honour, or settle a debt, but the physical and spiritual agony that Jesus suffered on the cross appeased God's anger against sin.

Whether construed in magisterial (Anselm), financial (Aquinas) or emotional (Calvin) terms, the idea underpinning PSA and its antecedents is that God is owed something as a result of sin, and that sin cannot be forgiven until that something is recompensed in some way. Someone has to pay something in order for sin to be forgiven. Importantly, punishment is construed as making payment, thus qualifying PSA as a retributive theory of The Atonement. Consistent with *Retribution*, punishment is deserved by all persons because all people have *knowingly* and *with intent* broken God's law and, thus, sinned against God. As a result, God's retributive punishment is just because sinners are morally responsible for their sin (Terry, 2013).

For the purposes of this chapter, I do not seek to dispute whether PSA entails *Retribution*. Nor do I seek to dispute whether PSA provides an adequate justification for *Retribution*. So, allow me to grant that if PSA is true, then *Retribution* is both true and justified. The question in which I am interested is whether *Retribution* is *revealed*. As indicated earlier in this chapter, in order for *Retribution* to be revealed it must, at least, not conflict with any other revealed propositions. Yet *Retribution*, as I will show, does *prima facie* conflict with *Loving God*. The question then becomes: Can PSA reconcile *Retribution* to *Loving God*?

Reconciling *Retribution* with Divine Love

There is no argument that PSA holds that, because of sin, humans deserve divine retributive punishment, and that retributive punishment is exactly what sinners get. The question is whether and, if so, how *Retribution* can be reconciled with *Loving God* given that these two propositions apparently conflict. To rehearse a basic deduction similar to that given in Chapter 4:

1. God is Love (1 John 4:16) (i.e., *Loving God*).
2. Love is kind, does not dishonour others, keeps no record of wrongs, and protects (1 Corinthians 13: 4-6).
3. Therefore, God is kind, does not dishonour others, keeps no record of wrongs, and protects.

Retributive justice, on the other hand is not kind, does dishonour others (retributive punishment is *designed* to dishonour offenders), is enacted on the basis of an established record of wrongs, and does not seek to protect the offender. Formally, then:

4. *Loving God* means *at least* that God is kind, not dishonouring, not a record-keeper of wrongs, and protective (from 3).
5. Retributive punishment is not kind, is dishonouring, relies on a record of wrongs and is not protective.
6. Hence, retributive punishment is not consistent with *Loving God*.
7. *Retribution* entails retributive punishment.
8. Hence, *Retribution* is not consistent with *Loving God*.

Further:

9. If *Retribution* then not *Loving God* (from 8).
10. *Loving God* (from 1).
11. Therefore, not *Retribution*.

The deductions above appear to rule out *Retribution* as a revealed proposition.

Interestingly, in the theological realm at least, there is no attempt of which I am aware of by defenders of PSA to defend retributive punishment itself as loving. However, within the PSA framework, *Loving God* is said to be reconcilable to *Retribution*. This reconciliation

occurs not because retributive punishment itself is loving but because God appoints a substitute to take the retributive punishment deserved by humans, even though such an appointment also seems not to be loving. This act of appointing a substitute allegedly reconciles *Retribution* with *Loving God*. Further, the willing obedience of Christ to the Father's command to become a substitute is also seen as a loving act directed towards both God and humans. If Jesus is God then, by his willing substitution, God is again allegedly shown to be loving. Despite this reasoning, in the paragraphs that follow I show that requesting/requiring substitution is not loving, even if acquiescing to such a request or requirement is loving. For this reason, PSA does not entail *Loving God* and so cannot reconcile *Retribution* with *Loving God*.

Let's grant that Christ was motivated by love to die for humanity and that, because of the benefits accrued to humanity through the crucifixion, the act of allowing himself to be crucified was a loving act. Many defenders of PSA focus on these points, and I do not seek to challenge them here. Even granting this concession, however, the following questions remain:

- (a) Is God's retributive justice made loving just because a voluntary substitute is involved?
- (b) Even if the Son willingly acquiesces, how is it loving *to the Son* for the Father to even ask (let alone command) the Son to take punishment for others? This question especially applies given that the motivation for God's request to the Son is, under the PSA regime, to appease God's own anger.
- (c) Assuming God is not constrained in any way with respect to the way he deals with sin (a debated assumption e.g., Rosenkrantz & Hoffman, 1980; but nevertheless), how is it loving for the Father to ask the Son to take a *discretionary* punishment which the Father could avoid?

In response to the first question, it is hard to see how divine retributive justice is made loving simply because a voluntary substitute is asked to, and does, take retributive punishment. Under PSA, Jesus shows *his* love by voluntarily taking retributive punishment, but that changes nothing about the punishment itself. The punishment itself is made no more loving just because the substitute taking the punishment is motivated by love to do so. Moreover, let's say God the Father is motivated by love to offer his son as a substitute. This offering also does nothing to make retributive punishment itself more loving. God's love in offering a substitute cannot be traded off against his lack of love in still requiring non-loving retributive punishment. Yet, that does seem to be the logic underpinning claims that PSA reconciles God's justice with his love (Packer, 2019). In order for the punishment *itself* to be more loving *something* about the punishment itself would need to change. Thus, any changes in terms of *who* gets punished, regardless of who initiates these changes, means nothing if whomever eventually gets punished is punished in exactly the same way as that intended for the original recipients. For all these reasons, God's son becoming a substitute would seem to make no difference to the lovingness or otherwise of *Retribution*.

In response to the second question, it is certainly not obvious how it is loving *to Jesus* to ask or require Jesus to take the retributive punishment of others. It might be construed as loving *to others* for God to ask or require Jesus to take others' retributive punishment, but it is not loving to Jesus to request/require this action of Jesus. The logic of this assertion is as follows:

1. It is not loving to ask another to experience a non-loving action.
2. Retributive punishment is a non-loving action.
3. Therefore, it is not loving to ask another to take retributive punishment.

However, what if Jesus initiated the idea of taking the punishment of others? It could be argued that it is loving for Jesus to initiate the idea of taking retributive punishment, and

loving for the Father to acquiesce to this idea. However, there is no evidence in CR that Christ initiated any such request. In all cases, God sends his Son into the world, the Son does not request to be sent. Moreover, even if Christ did make such a request, it can still be argued that it is not loving for God to accede to this request. Perhaps better, the Father himself could volunteer to take retributive punishment on behalf of humanity, maybe leaving the Son in charge of the universe while he did so. This would certainly seem more loving than either requesting or acceding to a request for Jesus (no disrespect intended) to do the Father's dirty work.

Further if, as is the case with retributive punishment, the command or request is motivated by the need for *God* to be appeased (whatever benefits such appeasement holds for others) then the command or request is an example of God prioritising His needs over the needs of others. Under PSA, the Father apparently prioritises his own need for appeasement *before* any forgiveness or mercy is shown to sinners and regardless of (or at least *knowing*) the impact that such appeasement would have on the Son. None of this seems to qualify as love in the Biblical or perhaps any other sense. According to Christians love is denoted by putting the needs of others before the needs of self (Mark 10:45; John 15:13; Philippians 2:4). Even according to defenders of PSA, God is supposedly motivated not by his own needs but by the needs of sinners (Isaiah 1:18; Romans 5:8). Yet, under PSA, providing Jesus as a substitute is about God first and sinners second.

In response to the third question, it is argued by defenders of PSA that it is loving for God to require Jesus to take retributive punishment because God has no choice but to inflict such punishment on someone. If retributive punishment is inevitable, then transferring such punishment to a willing substitute for the benefit of others might be both justified and loving. Here I make two further observations. First, the reason typically provided for why retributive punishment is inevitable is God's holiness. Specifically, it is said that God's holiness requires that God must punish sin, and this punishment is inherently retributive

because God's holiness can do none other than inspire his punitive wrath with respect to sin. To the contrary, holiness requires separation from sin (Exodus 3:5-6; Leviticus 20:26; 1 John 1:5) not punishment of sin. Separation from sin can be achieved by removing sin, and if sin is removed then there is nothing left to provoke God's wrath. Thus, it is not clear that any form of punishment for sin is *required* by holiness at all. Moreover, even if holiness (or justice, or any other quality of God) required punishment, such punishment would do nothing in and of itself to remove sin. No punishment removes sin. At best, punishment removes the penalty for sin, which is not the same as removing sin itself. Hence, God's holiness would still be offended in the case of the punished sinner. So, holiness does not require punishment (removal of sin is at least one alternative), and even if holiness did require punishment this requisite would be superfluous to any satisfaction of God's holiness, and thus pointless from the perspective of holiness.

In return, it might be agreed that removal of sin is the issue for holiness, but that such removal can only be obtained by first enacting retributive justice. Retributive justice is, then, the pre-requisite for the removal of sin. In response I note that there nothing in CR that requires punishment of sin before removal of sin. It may well be that in CR punishment does proceed the removal of sin in some cases (e.g., Isaiah 24, cf. Isaiah 25:7-8), but this is not the same as saying that CR requires such an ordering. Further, even if CR does require that punishment precedes removal of sin, CR does not indicate that any particular *form* of punishment is required. Hence, restorative punishment could just as easily satisfy the alleged requirement that punishment of sin should precede the removal of sin.

In addition to the points above, it seems that there is some confusion in PSA between the removal of sin and the removal of the guilt of sin. Let's say that under PSA, removal of the guilt of sin requires retributive punishment of sin and, further, that the guilt of sin needs to be removed before sin itself can be removed. If so, then once a person is retributively punished for sin they are able to be declared no longer guilty of sin and, hence,

have their sins removed. Nevertheless, nothing in CR explicitly or deductively *requires* guilt to be removed before sin is removed. Similarly, there is nothing in CR that explains why the removal of guilt would be required in order for the removal of sin to occur. Moreover, if sin is removed then guilt is also removed. So, a reverse ordering is consistent with the removal of both sin and the guilt of sin whereas the PSA ordering seems questionable on both counts.

Finally, there is a case to be made that substitutionary atonement is not retributive in the correct sense of the word. Punishing a volunteer for the sins of the sinner is hardly retributive towards the sinner. The sinner has not “paid back” anything, the cost is borne by the volunteer. It might be argued that the repentant sinner pays the volunteer (Christ) back by devoting their life to Christ after Christ pays the penalty for sin. However, this would mean that the life of devotion to Christ is in some sense retributive punishment for sin, which is not the way devotion to Christ is typically conceived. In any case, even if the life of devotion is in some sense retribution, it is still the case that Christ takes the actual, as opposed to the symbolic (symbolised, that is, through the devotional life of the repentance) punishment for sin. Thus, at the very least, retribution is primarily directed towards the volunteer which would seem to negate the purpose of retributive punishment in the first place.

Interim Summary

The point of the preceding section of this chapter is neither to argue for nor against PSA. Rather, the point has been to demonstrate that PSA does not resolve the conflict between *Retribution* and *Loving God*. Hence, however worthy PSA may or may not be as a theory of the Atonement, it does not remove a key hurdle to *Retribution* being taken as a revealed proposition. I have argued from CR that *Retribution* is not loving. Moreover, even if the inevitability of *Retribution* could make retributive punishment loving in the case of a

voluntary substitute, such inevitability has not been demonstrated. I have also argued that punishment of any sort, including retributive punishment, need not necessarily precede the removal of sins. Yet, even if punishment of some sort must precede the removal of sins, restorative punishment would satisfy this ordering. Finally, there is a question as to whether PSA properly entails retributive punishment and, hence, *Retribution*.

For these reasons, PSA fails to reconcile *Retribution* and *Loving God*, and so fails to establish that *Retribution* is revealed. However, for the sake of further argument, let's assume that PSA is successful in reconciling *Retribution* and *Loving God*. Next, I show that even if PSA is successful, PSA still does not show that *Retribution* is a revealed proposition. This situation arises because:

- (a) the ability of PSA to resolve the conflict between *Retribution* and *Loving God* means neither that *Retribution* nor PSA are revealed. As with previous resolutions noted in this thesis, neither coherence nor coherence-making imply revelation.
- (b) at least one theory (which I label *Restorative Substitutionary Atonement*) arises by induction/abduction from CR and conflicts with PSA. As with previous theoretical conflicts, this conflict is irresolvable by induction, IBE or hypothesis. Hence, it is not known if either PSA or its rival is revealed.

Given that I have dealt at some length with coherence as a necessary but not sufficient condition for revelation, I will not do so again here. Suffice it to say that the same limitations that apply to the coherence-making properties of *Trinity* with respect to determining revealed propositions also apply to PSA. In both cases, neither the coherence of a proposition with CR nor the ability of a proposition to bring about such coherence verifies those propositions as revealed. Given this previous treatment of coherence, I focus the rest of this chapter on the issue of the competitor to PSA.

Restorative Substitutionary Theory of the Atonement

In this section I first outline a somewhat original theory of the Atonement that is derived by abduction and justified by induction from CR, as is PSA, yet directly conflicts with PSA. I call this theory the Restorative Substitutionary Theory of the Atonement (RSA). This theory draws on other restorative-type theories of the Atonement, such as *Recapitulation*, *Ransom*, and *Christus Victor*; that have received less attention in Western Christianity than retributive models, such as *Satisfaction* and *Penal Substitution* (Cross, 2001; cf. Crisp, 2008). RSA also has a parallel structure to PSA, thus making it relatively easy to show how a restorative approach to the atonement differs from a retributive approach.

Unlike standard debates in theology, however, I do not frame this new theory in order to argue that RSA is revealed and PSA is not. Rather, I simply seek to show that RSA can be derived from the metanarrative of CR in parallel with PSA, and that RSA has the same explanatory scope as PSA. Moreover, the central proposition that RSA seeks to defend, that “God’s justice is restorative justice” (henceforth *Restoration*), manifestly does not conflict with *Loving God*. For these reasons, RSA is a viable competitor to PSA thus making it unclear whether PSA, RSA or neither are revealed. Hence, it is not clear whether *Retribution*, *Restoration* or neither are revealed. The problem of choice between conflicting theories militates against either dependent proposition being verified as revealed.

Deriving RSA from the Metanarrative of CR

In common with retributivist theories in general and PSA in particular, RSA starts with humans being created sinless in a sinless world. Yet, despite the blessings of living without sin, including absence of suffering, unity with God, and eternal life, humans nevertheless chose to sin when tempted by Satan. Like PSA, the punishment for sin *in this life* was (and is) suffering, separation from God and eventual death. However, unlike PSA,

under RSA this punishment is construed as a ‘natural’ consequence of sin rather than as the punitive act of a wrathful God. This punishment is evidentially ubiquitous and continuous: all humans at all times suffer, are separated from God, and die. The punishment for sin *in the next life* is more of the same for eternity i.e., the punishment for sin in the next life is a second ‘spiritual’ death characterised by eternal suffering as a result of irrevocable separation from God.

RSA does not preclude some form of retributive punishment for sins in this life, and perhaps even in the next. However, should it occur, such punishment would be in addition to the natural consequences for sin, and would be directed towards restorative ends. In this life, retributive punishment would only magnify the natural consequences of sin i.e., retributive punishment could conceivably increase suffering, increase the degree of isolation from God, or hasten death. Such punishment could conceivably be used in order to highlight or even exacerbate the consequences of sin, thus making clear to humans their need to repent of sin. In the next life, retributive punishment could conceivably increase suffering and the sense of separation from God. Here again, however, under RSA such retributive punishment would be directed towards *restorative* ends. For example, if repentance after death is allowed, then retributive punishment could be used to promote such repentance. In contrast, under any given retributive model, retributive punishment post-death can only serve retributive ends. The only purpose of retribution after death is to increase the woes of the punished person, which would seem nothing more than vindictive.

Regardless of any retributive additions to suffering and separation, under RSA the underlying problem of sin is not the retributive (legal) punishment that God might impose, but the ontological punishment of sin which is fatal in all cases. In other words, the legal problem of sin is secondary to the ontological problem of sin. Moreover, if the ontological problem is resolved, then so is the legal problem. In contrast, even if the legal problem of sin is solved the ontological problem remains. Specifically, if sin itself is removed, then

there is no longer any guilt associated with sin and so no legal punishment is required for sin. Conversely, under any given retributive theory, even if the legal punishment for sin is removed, the guilt of the sinner nevertheless remains and so does the ontological problem of sin.

Motivated by his ongoing love for sinners, RSA postulates that God is unwilling for sinners to suffer the ontological punishment of sin either in this life or the next. This unwillingness arises not only because sin brings suffering and death to sinners, but critically because sin separates sinners, who remain the object of God's affections, from God. God desires to be united with his creation not separated from it. Yet, at the same time, God is also holy and so cannot be associated with sin. Consistent with my observation above, holiness is defined under RSA as separation from sin. Hence, the problem of sin from God's point of view arises from the tension between his love for sinners which motivates the desire to be united with sinners, and his holiness which prevents him from being united with sinners.

Under these circumstances, God would conceivably (perhaps certainly) be angry with sin as the ontological state of human beings that separates sinners from him. RSA does not preclude that God could also be angry with both sin and sinners when sin leads sinners to violate God's law in any number of ways i.e. to commit *certain* sins. Further, God could also be angry that violations of his law effectively represent violations of his honour to the extent that violations of the law represent a disrespectful attitude towards God. Under RSA, however, God's anger is a help for sinners because God's anger is directed towards the elimination of sin in the ontological sense. Sin itself is the primary problem, not God's reaction to sin. Contrast this attitude with any given retributivist theory where God's *anger* becomes the problem for sinners. This problem arises because God's righteous anger motivates God to want to punish sin and sinners. Thus, from a retributive perspective, the problem that needs to be resolved is God's *reaction* to sin.

Under PSA, God's love for sinners supposedly motivates God to find a substitute who will take sinners' punishment for sin. Under RSA, in contrast, God's love for sinners motivates God to find a means to remove sin from sinners, and thus to restore sinners to their ontological state before sin defiled them. Let's assume, unlike legal punishment which could presumably be taken by any perfect person human or divine, the only way for sin to be ontologically removed from humanity is for a perfect *human* to take on the sin of the world. In this case, God would be ineligible to die for sin. Further, consistent with RSA, let's assume that the punishment taken for sin is 'only' a natural consequence of sin. Hence, punishment is not directly metered out by God Himself. In these circumstances, it could be loving for God to ask a substitute to step in for humanity.

Setting aside for the moment, however, the issue of love for the substitute, the logic of penal substitution is that as long as the retributive punishment for sin is taken by some qualified person, then God's anger towards sinners is appeased. God is then in a position to forgive sins: sin is expiated because God is propitiated. In contrast, the logic of restorative substitution is that if sin is taken from sinners then sinners are no longer (or, at least, need no longer be) separated from God. God, then, has no reason to be angry: God's wrath is propitiated because sin is expiated.

Consistent with the hypothesis, shared by PSA, that sin is transferrable; from a restorative perspective Jesus takes on the sin of humanity on the cross and so takes on the punishment for sin (suffering, separation and death). Hence, under a restorative view, Jesus *is* punished but this punishment is a consequence of taking on sin not a consequence of God's wrath being directed to Jesus instead of to others. Also, from a restorative perspective, Christ is still a substitute but for different purposes than under PSA. Under PSA, Christ is a legal substitute: Christ vicariously takes the punishment for sin. Under RSA, Christ is an ontological substitute: Christ vicariously takes sin itself.

Interestingly, under both PSA and RSA, Jesus does not take the punishment for sin *in this life* away from sinners. Regardless of the theory adopted, every human continues to suffer, to be separated from God (i.e., even allowing for occasional visions or other mystical encounters, humans do not typically have person-to-person contact with God), and to die. In the next life, according to PSA, those who are “in Christ” receive no further punishment because the punishment for sin has been already taken by Christ. Under RSA, there is no further punishment for sin for those who are in Christ because Christ has taken sin itself. Thus, both retributivists and restorationists postulate the same outcome for repentant sinners i.e., no further punishment; but for different reasons. The latter perspective accords with the understanding that Jesus is the New Testament equivalent of the Passover Lamb. In the Old Testament, the Passover Lamb was not retributively punished for sin, but the blood of the lamb protected the Israelites from punishment.

It is typically thought that Christ’s death on the cross occurred because of his physical injuries. However, under Roman crucifixion it typically took days not hours (as in the case of Jesus) for the crucified person to die, lending weight to the hypothesis that Jesus died for reasons other than physical injury and suffering. One possibility is that Christ’s death on the cross occurred because death is a consequence of sin. Yet, it can also be argued that Jesus died of a ‘broken heart’ (see Omerovic, 2009) i.e., separation from God as a result of taking on sin would have been a fate worse than death for Jesus. Whatever the immediate cause of Jesus’ death, however, because Jesus as a perfect person died for the sin of humanity i.e., “our” sin not his own sin, death has no power to “hold” Jesus (Acts 2:24; Romans 6:9). Thus, Jesus’ resurrection from the dead demonstrates that Jesus *was* innocent of sin and that he was successful in taking sin out of the world. Hence, the resurrection both vindicates Jesus and demonstrates the success of his mission to remove sin.

Assessing Restorative and Retributive Models of the Atonement

The point of outlining RSA at some length, is to show that a direct competitor to PSA can be framed using exactly the same methodology as PSA i.e., theory formation by abduction. Thus, RSA cannot be criticised by adherents of PSA on methodological grounds. Further, RSA covers the same metanarrative domain as PSA: starting with sin, acknowledging punishment, allowing for a substitute, accounting for the removal of sin, and explaining how those in Christ escape punishment for sin in the next life.

Despite the methodological similarities and narrative parallels between RSA and PSA, it might be argued that RSA does not cover key concepts of atonement, or perhaps that RSA does not adequately explain explicit elements of CR. If so, then by IBE, RSA is not the best explanation of CR with respect to the Atonement. To the contrary, I show in Tables 6 and 7 show that RSA covers the conceptual domain of atonement at least as well as PSA, and that explicit elements of CR explained by PSA are just as effectively explained by RSA. Again, the point of this comparative analysis is not to show that RSA is superior to PSA, but to show that RSA is no less viable than PSA as an explanation. Thus, even if IBE could establish any given explanation as being revealed (a contention disputed in previous chapters of this thesis) PSA can, nevertheless, not be deemed to be revealed by IBE because it is not demonstrably the best explanation of the facts.

Table 6 shows how various elements of the atonement can be interpreted in retributive *or* restorative terms.

Table 6

Retributive and Restorative Views of the Atonement

	Retributive View of Atonement (PSA)	Restorative View of the Atonement (RSA)
<i>Sin</i>	Is a crime against God	Is a state of being that separates humans from God

	Retributive View of Atonement (PSA)	Restorative View of the Atonement (RSA)
<i>God's Holiness</i>	Motivates God to punish sin	Motivates God to eliminate sin
<i>God's Anger</i>	God is angry with sin because it offends (damages) him	God is angry with sin because it damages sinners
<i>God's Wrath</i>	Is directed towards sinners	Is directed towards sin
<i>God's Justice</i>	Is retributive: God punishes sin because sinners deserve retributive punishment	Is restorative: God restores sinners despite sinners deserving retributive punishment
<i>God's Love</i>	Is demonstrated by God providing Jesus to take the punishment for sin so that humans would not be retributively punished after death	Is demonstrated by God providing Jesus to take sin itself so that humans would not experience the ontological punishment for sin after death
<i>Jesus' Love</i>	Is demonstrated by Jesus voluntarily taking the punishment for sin in order that God can be reconciled to the world	Is demonstrated by Jesus voluntarily taking on sin itself in order that the world can be reconciled to God
<i>Problem of Sin</i>	Sin makes us objects of God's (punitive) wrath now and, as a consequence of the immortality of the soul, potentially forever. Sinners are objects of God's wrath because of sin.	Sin separates us from God now and, as a consequence of the immortality of the soul, potentially forever. Sinners remain objects of God's love despite their sin.
<i>Punishment for Sin</i>	Retributive: The punishment for sin is suffering inflicted (directly or indirectly) by God	Resultant: The punishment for sin is separation from God now and (potentially) forever
<i>Forgiveness of Sin</i>	Punishment facilitates the forgiveness of sin by God	Forgiveness of sin by God facilitates the removal of sin
<i>Salvation</i>	Jesus saves humans from suffering at the hands of God	Jesus saves humans from suffering caused by separation from God
<i>Means of Salvation</i>	The Atonement propitiates (appeases) God's wrath thus facilitating the removal (expiation) of sin.	The Atonement expiates (removes) sin thus propitiating God's wrath.
<i>The Crucifixion</i>	Jesus suffered because the sin he bore attracted God's wrath. Jesus, thus, experienced the unwanted attention of God.	Jesus suffered because the sin he bore separated Him from God. Jesus, thus, experienced isolation from God.
<i>Repentance</i>	Motivated by the desire to avoid punishment	Motivated by the desire to avoid separation from God

Table 6 indicates that various elements of the Atonement are accounted for by both a restorative and a retributive perspective. Thus, coverage of the domain of the Atonement is not a criterion discriminating between RSA and PSA. Perhaps more importantly, RSA demonstrates that under abduction CR can support not only competing but equivalent theories of the Atonement. Thus, even if one again accepts abduction as a proper method of verifying propositions, the equivalence of competing theories in effect makes it impossible to know which of any competing theories concerning atonement are revealed.

The believer in PSA, however, might argue that there are good inductive reasons for preferring PSA over RSA. Against this argument, Table 7 shows how both restorative and retributive perspectives on the Atonement can account equally well for specific elements of CR. I realise these elements are not exhaustive. However, I have deliberately chosen elements that, according to defenders of PSA, show that PSA is revealed (e.g., Marshall, 2008).

Table 7

Elements of CR from Retributive and Restorative Perspectives

Verse	Summary	Retributive View	Restorative View
Isaiah 53:1-5	Upon the “suffering servant” was the chastisement / punishment that brought peace	The punishment the “servant” (typically understood to be Jesus) took was direct punishment from God	The punishment Jesus took was the ‘natural’ consequences of bearing sin
Isaiah 53:6	God laid the iniquity of all people on Jesus	Laying the iniquity (sin) of all on Jesus implies actively laying retributive punishment for sin on Jesus	Laying sin on Jesus implies consequentially laying the punishment for sin on Jesus

Verse	Summary	Retributive View	Restorative View
Romans 3:25; 1 John 2:2	Christ was a propitiation by his blood; Christ is the propitiation for the sins of the world	The punishment implicated in Christ's suffering and death (involving the shedding of his blood) appeased God	The removal of sin achieved by Christ's suffering and death appeased God
Romans 5:16-18	One trespass led to the condemnation of all, one act of righteousness leads to the justification of all	The act of righteousness was Jesus' acquiescence to being punished by God on the cross	The act of righteousness was Jesus' acquiescence to taking sin upon himself on the cross
Galatians 3:13	Jesus became a curse in order to redeem humanity from the curse of the Law	Jesus became a curse because he subjected himself to the punishment required by the Law	Jesus became a curse because God placed on Jesus the sin of the world
2 Corinthians 5:21	Jesus became sin so that those in Christ could become the righteousness of God	God actively punished Jesus because Jesus became sin	God withdrew from Jesus because Jesus became sin
Colossians 2:13-15	God cancelled the record of debt that stood against humans	God cancelled the record of debt as a result of the (punitive) atonement	God cancelled the record of debt prior to the atonement (God did not treat us as our sins deserved; Psalm 104:10-14)
1 Peter 3:18	Christ suffered for sins to bring people to God	Christ suffered by taking the retributive punishment for sin	Christ suffered by taking the consequential punishment for sin

Table 7 indicates that relevant elements of CR (verses) can be explained by both a retributive and a restorative model of atonement. I cannot, of course, show that every verse that might be produced by a defender of PSA can be easily accounted for by RSA. However, the selection of verses above is a fair representation of key verses that are commonly used to support the explanatory power of PSA. Further, at least to my knowledge, there are no elements of CR explainable by PSA that are not also explained by

RSA. The point then, is that RSA has the same explanatory power as PSA. As such, the problem of abduction (choosing the best explanation) applies no less to the Atonement than it does to other theological topics.

Given the observations above, PSA is not better off abductively than RSA. Thus, even if abduction by IBE could theoretically verify PSA, it has not done so in this case. For this reason, I can conclude that PSA is not demonstrably revealed. Consequently, *Retribution* is not demonstrably revealed because the determination that *Retribution* is revealed depends on PSA being revealed. None of these observations, of course, mean that RSA or *Restoration* are revealed. However, the fact that PSA is not demonstrably a better explanation than RSA, means that both RSA and *Restoration* remain candidates for being revealed. This situation might be thought to represent a pyrrhic victory for the champion of *Restoration*, but does not represent such a victory for those who are simply trying to show (as I am) that *Retribution* has not been demonstrated to be revealed. The live candidacy of *Restoration* alone is enough to facilitate the conclusion that PSA and *Retribution* are not verified as revealed propositions.

Chapter Summary

The point of this chapter has been to show that PSA is not demonstrably revealed and so *Retribution* is not demonstrably revealed. PSA does not successfully reconcile *Retribution* with *Loving God*, the latter proposition being explicit in CR. Moreover, even if *Retribution* is said to be verified on the basis of PSA's alleged resolution of the conflict between *Retribution* and *Loving God*, RSA and *Restoration* still provide live alternatives to PSA and *Retribution*. Thus, even being generous to defenders of *Retribution*, their case for *Retribution* being taken as revealed is not in any way established. Like *Trinity* PSA fails, but for different abductive reasons. Nevertheless, IBE does not save PSA any more than post-

hoc theorising saves *Trinity* and, as such, PSA does not save *Retribution* any more than *Trinity* saves JiG.

In the next chapter, the third of my case studies, I explore the issue of Hell showing how various theories are used in an attempt to show that the proposition that *Hell is a mandatory punishment for sin* is a revealed proposition.

Chapter 10

Case Study 3 - Hell

This chapter focuses on the following induced proposition: “Many people will suffer for eternity in hell”. Call this proposition *Hell*. Verification of *Hell* constitutes the third case study examining the use of hypotheses to verify preferred propositions. In this chapter I show that *Hell* is not verified both because it conflicts with explicit and deduced propositions in CR, and because propositions conflicting with *Hell* are also inducible from CR.

I begin by contrasting the present case study with the preceding case studies on *Trinity* and PSA. I then go on to review the hypotheses (explained momentarily) used to save *Hell* from falsification by the propositions *Just God* (also explained shortly) and *Loving God* (from the last chapter). The chapter then explores two competitors to *Hell*, Annihilationism and Universalism, both of which are claimed to be revealed. The presence of these competitors to *Hell* raises the familiar problem of choosing between induced propositions, particularly conflicting induced propositions. I end by concluding that *Hell* is not revealed.

Context

To briefly review the last two chapters: In Chapter 8, I examined the claim that *Trinity* is revealed. In that chapter it was of interest to show that, as a hypothesis, *Trinity* has not been demonstrated to be revealed. This failure was attributed to problems with both the internal and external coherence of *Trinity*. Thus, even if the church has by some methodology ruled out all other contenders to *Trinity*, *Trinity* still does not work to I/V *Jesus is God*. PSA is also claimed to be revealed, not just to be a *theory* of the atonement. In the case of PSA then, it was of interest not only to show that PSA is a theory but also that a

rival theory (RSA) accounts equally as well for CR as PSA. The equal virtue (or so I allege) of this rival theory excludes verification of PSA.

In the case of *Hell*, two hypotheses intended to save *Hell* from falsification by *Just God* and *Loving God* are examined: *divine lese majesty* and *free will*. Neither of these two hypotheses are said to be revealed. So, in one sense, the defence of *Hell* as a revealed proposition is lost at the outset because, consistent with previous argumentation in this thesis, non-revealed propositions cannot be used to verify revealed propositions. Non-revealed propositions add to CR and, further, if false these propositions may falsely verify other propositions. Thus, to show that *Hell* is not demonstrably revealed by virtue of its verifying hypotheses not being revealed is redundant with previous argument and examples in the thesis.

The interest in this chapter, then, is not to show that *Hell* is a non-starter as a revealed proposition. Rather, the interest is to show that the alleged saving hypotheses, which are widely thought to save *Hell* from falsification by CR (McCord Adams, 1975; Talbot, 2020), in fact fail to do so. These two hypotheses fail for the same reason as *Trinity* i.e., their internal incoherence and external incoherence with CR. Thus, even if we were to grant that the reconciling hypotheses are revealed, these propositions do not work to verify *Hell* in any case. The defence of *Hell* fails even if we grant that the verifying propositions are revealed. The defence of *Hell* also fails because *Hell* has two competitors by induction, Annihilationism and Universalism, both of which lay claim to being revealed. There is, of course much theological argumentation as to whether these competitors *are* revealed. However, this argumentation is inconclusive for reasons rehearsed already in this thesis, particularly that induced propositions cannot be verified by either induction or abduction. Thus, the defence of *Hell* fails on both counts exemplified in the previous two chapters. Summarising Chapters 8, 9 and 10 together then:

- (a) *Trinity* fails to verify JiG because *Trinity* is both internally and externally (with CR) incoherent;
- (b) PSA fails to verify *Retribution*, because RSA is a viable conflicting alternative to PSA;
- (c) *Divine lese majesty* and *free will* fail to verify *Hell* both because *divine lese majesty* and *free will* are internally and externally (again, with CR) incoherent, and because Annihilationism and Universalism are viable conflicting alternatives to *Hell*.

Due to this double failure, examination of the attempted verification of *Hell* acts as a capstone study for the thesis. In doing so, the study also deals with several issues of broader philosophical importance related to the defence of *Hell*, namely issues concerning the nature of justice and the operation of free will.

Verifying Hell

The problem of hell from a verificationist perspective is twofold. The first fold refers to how to reconcile *Hell* with the deduced, and hence demonstrably revealed propositions that “God is just” (henceforth, *Just God*) and “God is loving” (*Loving God* from the last chapter). The second fold refers to how to secure *Hell* against at least two conflicting induced propositions also claimed to be revealed, namely: “unrepentant sinners will be annihilated at some point after death” (Annihilationism) and “all sinners will eventually be saved from hell” (Universalism).

To the first issue. *Hell prima facie* logically contradicts *Loving God* and *Just God*. Formally:

1. God is just (*Just God*).
2. If God is just, then God punishes proportionally.
3. God punishes proportionally (from 1 and 2).

4. If *Hell*, then God punished disproportionately.
5. *Hell*.
6. Therefore, God punishes disproportionately (conflicts with 3).
7. Therefore, God is not just (from 2).

Similarly:

1. God is love (*Loving God*).
2. Love always protects.
3. God always protects (from 1 and 2).
4. If *Hell*, then God does not protect (those assigned to Hell).
5. *Hell*.
6. Therefore, God does not protect (conflicts with 3).
7. Therefore, God is not love (from 2).

The “problem of hell” here, then, is not the commonly discussed ethical problem of how a just and loving God could send people, or allow people to go, to hell (e.g., Cain, 2002). Nor is the problem of hell here the epistemological problem i.e., that the existence of hell provides evidence that undermines the rationality of believing *Just God* and *Loving God* (McCord Adams, 1975; Stump, 1986). Rather, the problem is theological i.e., that the existence of an eternally populated hell is said to be a *revealed* proposition even though it apparently conflicts with the deducible (and, thus, certainly revealed) propositions that *God is just* and *God is love* (Buckareff & Plug, 2005; Egan, 2014; Wessling, 2017). The typical way that *Just God* and *Loving God* are reconciled with *Hell* is by attempting to demonstrate the alleged justice and lovingness of *Hell*. These allegations are explored in the following section.

The Justice of Hell

Christianity holds that God is just (henceforth *Just God*). The problem of Hell in light of God's justice is how Hell can be a revealed proposition given that Hell appears manifestly unjust on the principle of proportionality, a principle explicit in CR e.g., Leviticus 24:17-24; Deuteronomy 19:19; 25:11-12. Thus, Hell apparently conflicts with *Just God* (Fudge & Peterson, 2000). In order for Hell to be taken as revealed Hell must, at least, not conflict with Just God. In order to resolve this apparent conflict proponents of Hell need to demonstrate that eternity in hell is just punishment for sins.

In order to demonstrate the justness of Hell, the context of Hell has been described by its proponents as follows. Sin is defined as rebellion against God. In the words of one author (Sproul, 2019) sin is "cosmic treason". Under this definition, sinners are defined as rebels and God is defined as the rightful authority against which rebellion is directed. As the authority towards which rebellion is directed, God is not implicated in the rebellion despite creating and sustaining the circumstances under which the rebellion can and does occur. The punishment for rebellion, for reasons provided shortly, is eternal punishment. Moreover, God as the offended authority allegedly has no choice but to mandatorily punish sin to the maximum extent in every case where sin remains after a particular point in time. For these reasons, it is argued that it is, if not just, then at least not unjust for God to assign people to eternity in hell.

Even given this context, Hell faces several questions that relate to God's justice. How does the rebellion of finite creatures in any way affect an infinite God? Why should rebellion attract eternal punishment, and why should such punishment be mandatory? How is God not responsible (even indirectly) for sin committed on his watch? Until these justice-related questions are answered, the justness of *Hell* looks problematic. To these questions proponents of *Hell* do offer answers. These answers may be broadly grouped under two hypotheses: *divine lese majesty* and *free will*. The problem with these alleged solutions,

however, is not only that *divine lese majesty* and *free will* are hypothetical solution to these questions, with all the now familiar problems associated with hypotheses being in attendance, but they also do not work to reconcile *Hell* with *Just God* and *Loving God* in any case. In the section that follows I focus on *divine lese majesty* as a hypothesis putatively reconciling *Just God* to *Hell*. In the section following that I focus on *free will* as a hypothesis putatively reconciling both *Loving God* and *Just God* to *Hell*.

Divine Lese Majesty

First to the scene of the alleged crime. As an infinitely powerful Being, God cannot be directly injured by any finite being or action. So, God cannot be directly hurt by the rebellion of human beings. Unlike rebellion against a finite authority, any rebellion against an infinite God would be infinitesimally small in terms of its direct effect on that God. However, so the theory goes, rebellion can harm the majesty of God (including God's authority and reputation). Essentiality, then, rebellion corresponds in legal terms to the crime of *divine lese majesty*. Moreover, acts of rebellion may incur or imply harm to other human beings to which God is favourably disposed, thus not only harming the humans involved but also frustrating God's affections. In this sense, then, rebellion can be said to *indirectly* harm God by injuring both his majesty and his affections. Moreover, even if God is not indirectly harmed, God is nevertheless said to be offended by human rebellion and this offence attracts God's punitive wrath.

Following Anslem (2019), the crime of *divine lese majesty* (Anslem did not use this term specifically) is worthy of infinite punishment because the injured/offended party (God) is infinitely holy. The seriousness of the offence, then, is not determined by the offence *per se*, or even by the intent of the offender in committing the offence, but by the status of the offended party. In these circumstances, even trivially or unintentionally detracting from the infinitely high-status of God is defined as a crime of infinite seriousness and so worthy of

infinite punishment. Defining the punishment for sin in terms of the offended rather than the offender or the offence, has the effect of infinitely magnifying any and every sin to the point where it is worthy of eternal punishment.

Assuming that the crime of *divine lese majesty* is worthy of eternal punishment, and that God is not implicated in the crime, the question remains as to why the punishment should be mandatory in every case. Mandatory punishment is just and justified (again, so it is argued) because human beings are deemed to be morally culpable for their rebellion against God (Fudge & Peterson, 2000). Thus, not only is ignorance ruled out as a possibility but, even if it was ruled in, ignorance is nevertheless no excuse. Further, by defining the punishment for sin exclusively in terms of the offended, the mandatory nature of punishment is guaranteed i.e., this definition has the effect of asserting that there are no actual (and perhaps no conceivable) circumstances in which the offender or the offence is worthy of anything less than mandatory maximal punishment. Together, then, the moral culpability of sinners, the magnification of sin through the lens of *divine lese majesty*, and the exclusion of any mitigating circumstances explain why eternal punishment is universally mandatory for unrepentant sinners.

The reasoning above enables the believer in *Just God* to hold *Just God* and *Hell* as non-conflicting propositions. However, I assert that the definition of sin as rebellion, the magnification of sin by the infinite status of God, the moral culpability of humans, and the mandatory nature of the punishment (all of which I group under the hypothetical crime of *divine lese majesty*) do not, in fact, work to reconcile *Hell* with *Just God* for the reasons that follow.

Sin as Rebellion

The Old Testament uses six nouns and three verbs in total, on nearly two-thousand occasions, to refer to sin. Only one of these words (*pasha* used, to be fair, nearly one-

hundred times) carries implications of rebellion. The New Testament uses five nouns, five adjectives and three verbs in total, on nearly five-hundred occasions, to refer to sin. Only one word (*parabain* used four times) can be construed as meaning something like rebellion, but probably means something more like disobeying a command. Without engaging in an exhaustive theological word study of sin, this overview suggests that the proposition *sin is rebellion* represents, at best, a minority view of sin in CR. Attempting to I/V *Hell* based on this definition of sin alone, then, could lead to an incorrect conclusion regarding the revealed status of *Hell*. Moreover, the possibility that sin-as-rebellion could lead to errant verification means that any such verification can be justifiably contested based on what else is known from CR regarding the meaning of sin.

To use a counter example, let's say that sin is defined as something 'contrary to God's nature' (following the most commonly used word for sin in the Old Testament – *ra-ah*, used more than six-hundred times) or as 'missing the mark' (following the most commonly used word for sin in the New Testament – *hamartia*, used one-hundred and seventy-six times). These definitions do not lead readily to the verification of *Hell* because *Hell* does not seem anything like just punishment for 'simply' acting against God's nature or missing the mark, whatever that mark that may be.

One point of the observations above is that the definition of sin chosen can affect whether *Hell* is verified if not. Thus, given the multiplicity of definitions for sin available in CR, it is not possible to tell whether any particular definition that leads to the verification of *Hell* does so correctly or not. In response to this assertion, it is typically argued that, regardless of the diversity of definitions available, *all* sin may be *characterised* as rebellion against God even if some sin is not strictly defined as rebellion. The inductive logic behind this proposition is that if some sin can be characterised as rebellion, then all sin can be characterised as rebellion. Again, given the diversity of definitions available, a more reasonable conclusion would be that rebellion applies to only one type or aspect of sin.

However, if someone wants to propose that *all sin can be characterised as rebellion* this proposition is still only an induced proposition the revealed status of which, like all other induced propositions, is underdetermined by CR. Further, until the revealed status of the proposition is determined, this proposition cannot be used to verify *Hell*. Specifically, even if it is convenient to characterise sin as rebellion for the purposes of reconciling *Hell* with *Just God*, hence clearing one obstacle to verifying *Hell* itself, this convenience does not get the protagonist for *Hell* very far. Nevertheless, for the sake of further argument let's grant that all sin is rebellion and move on to the next issue.

Is God Offended by Sin?

Whether sin is rebellion and/or something else, the issue to be discussed now is whether God is offended by sin. The doctrine of divine impassibility (e.g., Gavriluk, 2006) asserts that God does not feel pleasure or pain with respect to the actions of any other being. If so, God could not be offended by sin on the basis of some harm caused to him either directly or indirectly. Further, the doctrine of immutability, which may be deduced from CR e.g., Numbers 23:19; 1 Samuel 15:29; Malachi 3:6; James 1:17; asserts that God does not change, including with respect to any emotional change caused by either internal or external forces. Immutability entails impassibility in the sense that, if God cannot change, he cannot go from a state of not being hurt to a state of being hurt i.e., he must be impassible.

Immutability could imply that God cannot be offended by sin. For God to be offended by sin, he would have to be in some state of non-offence and then, later, be in some state of offence. This situation denotes change and, thus, could be conceived of as being contrary to immutability. Alternatively, God might be permanently and infinitely offended by sin (let's say sin past, present and future). In this case, it could be argued that there can be no forgiveness of sin. Forgiveness conceivably implies a change in God from being in a state of unforgiveness to being in a state of forgiveness, which would in turn

imply a change from being in a state of offence to being in a state of non-offence with respect to a given sin. Yet it is explicit in CR that God does forgive sin. Thus, a contradiction. So, on both immutability and impassibility, the case can be made that God cannot be offended by sin. However, given that there is dispute on this matter (see Weinandy, 2000), let me again for the sake of argument concede the point and move on.

If offended, God could be offended in at least two ways. First, God could be offended by sin because of what it does to him (implying that God is harmed in some way, even if only indirectly). Second, God could be offended by sin because of what sin does to us (humans), the objects of his affections. As noted previously, God cannot be directly harmed by sin. However, the thought is that sin represents a *bad attitude* towards God, and that this attitude offends God. In turn, God's offence translates into God's wrath being directed towards sinners. In the second instance, God is offended by sin because sin directly harms humans and because sin separates sinners from their loving God. This offence translates into God's wrath being directed towards sin, expressing God's desire to rid his creatures of the harmful effects of sin. In other words, the first instance takes a retributive view of the offence of sin, the second instance takes a restorative view.

Clearly the retributive view is easier to square with *Hell* than the restorative view, but both are hypothetical, and both can garner inductive support from CR. Hence, it is not clear whether a retributive or a restorative view (or neither, for that matter) of any offence God takes to sin is revealed. However, again for the sake of pursuing the issue, let's assume that God does take offence at sin and that this offence deserves retribution. The next question is: Should the retributive punishment for sin be eternity in hell? To take a convenient example, Hitler (assuming he remained unrepentant) would not be sentenced to eternity in Hell because of his finite crimes, however horrendous those crimes clearly were, but rather because those finite crimes offended an infinite God. But, to what does this claim amount?

God *could* sentence Hitler to hell for eternity for the crime of *divine lese majesty* by virtue of the fact that God is eternal. Moreover, God could maintain his displeasure at this crime for eternity for the same reason. Thus, God is able and potentially willing to send Hitler to hell forever. *Would* God do this? One could argue both ways from CR. Retributively, God would. Restoratively, God would not. However, the more important question for the present analysis is *if God did* send Hitler to hell and throw away the key would such action be just. Under a restorative regime, of course, the action would not be just. At some point, if restoration is the end, captivity in hell must end as well. However, even if the point of punishment is retribution for the crime of *divine lese majesty*, is assignation to hell forever just? Using our example, the specific question is: “even under a retributivist regime, how many years in hell qualifies as just punishment for Hitler not for *war crimes* but for the crime of *divine lese majesty*?”

There is a distinction to be made here between justification and justice. Offence against the infinite nature of God could be used as a justification for sending Hitler to hell for eternity and for *Hell* more broadly. Further, offence against the infinite nature of God could be used as a justification for the belief that such action is just. Yet those justifications do not mean that *Hell* is just. Any number of unjust acts, and/or belief in the justice of unjust acts, can be justified by some reasoning. More broadly, every act is potentially justifiable, but not every justifiable act is just. So, justification is not a sufficient condition for establishing the justice of an action. Thus, even if *divine lese majesty* justifies eternity in hell, this justification does not show that *Hell* is just.

However, perhaps God himself uses offence against his infinite nature as justification for sending people to hell for eternity. If God did so, would that make *Hell* just? If God justifies any action, then presumably that action is just on the premise that God would not have reason, or give reason, to act in a way that was contrary to his just nature. In other words, God would not justify an unjust action. The problem here is that the

proposition that God justifies *Hell* by reference to his infinite nature is hypothetical with respect to CR. As such we do not know, and have no way of knowing short of further revelation, that the proposition that *God uses his infinite nature to justify Hell* is revealed. As a result, we cannot use that proposition to establish that *Hell* does not conflict with *Just God*, but can only speculate that that this might be case.

Divine lese majesty also faces one further problem, namely, it confuses the potential of infinite offence with the actuality of infinite offence. It is possible that God could be infinitely offended by any sin no matter how large or small any individual sin is in an objective sense. However, this possibility does not mean that God must be infinitely offended by all, or even any, sin. God could choose to exercise some discretion in the offence that he takes to sin. Conversely, if God exercises no discretion in the offence taken to sin there is an argument that God has not acted justly (Clark, 2001; Corabi, 2011). A child, for example, could not *intentionally* offend a God the existence of whom they may not even be able to conceive. We would guess that God's response to this child would be moderated in some way even if God were offended by the child's words or actions. The thought here is that just punishment for even the supposedly heinous crime *divine lese majesty* should discriminate between intentional and unintentional offence. If God, just because he can, applies the same retributive punishment to a non-intentional offender as to an intentional offender, this punishment looks *prime facie* to be unjust. Moreover, failure to discriminate looks both petulant and immature, which does not seem right for a God who is meant to be greater than his creation emotionally as well as in every other way.

In summary, the point of the observations above is that, even on the crime of *divine lese majesty*, *Hell* is not just. Even if the crime of *divine lese majesty* is used as a justification for believing that *Hell* is just, this justification does not establish the justice of *Hell*. Eternal punishment for *divine lese majesty* looks no less problematic than eternal punishment for any other crime even, perhaps, for Hitler himself.

Free Will

In the previous section of this chapter, I dealt with the function of *divine lese majesty* in attempting to reconcile *Hell* with *Loving God*. In this section I explore the role of the free will theodicy (formulated as a proposition) in attempting to reconcile *Hell* with *Just God* and *Loving God*. Following the classic Augustinian theodicy (Cavadini, 1999), the free will theodicy may be formulated as the proposition: *God condemns no one to hell, but some freely choose hell and God facilitates that choice*. Henceforth, call this proposition *free will*. In a little more detail, the free will theodicy suggests that God has endowed all his creatures with both free will and knowledge of Himself (Kyrtatas, 2009; Sohn, 2007). The universal knowledge of God shared by each creature means that there is no such thing as ignorance of God (Romans 1:18-21) and, thus, no such thing as non-resistant non-belief (Schellenberg, 2005). Using their fully-informed free will humans choose to reject God on earth and choose to continue to reject God after death, where there can be no doubt that God is plainly evident. Given universal knowledge of God, humans effectively choose to enter hell, choose to lock the door behind them (Lewis, 1962), and choose to throw away the key i.e., to remain in hell in an unrepentant state forever. Thus, God sends no one to hell. God only facilitates human choice to enter and reside there.

Even if humans freely choose Hell (but I deal with arguments to the contrary shortly), it can be argued that God is nevertheless implicated in this choice because God creates the conditions (free will and universal knowledge of God) under which humans choose hell. In return, it is argued both theologically and philosophically that, despite the fact that God creates the conditions under which humans rebel, God is not implicated in the rebellion of humans in any way. Theologically, for example, God's sovereignty means that God is above reproach in everything that he does even if his actions have deleterious outcomes for his creatures (Romans 9:18-22). Theologically, God has also given ample warning to all (Romans 1:18-32) concerning the consequences of choosing to exercise free

will inappropriately. Thus, God surprises no-one with hell, and so God cannot be said to be implicated if some end up in hell. Those who go to hell, choose to do so *knowing* the consequences of their actions.

Philosophically, God is not implicated in the choice of hell for, at least, the following reasons. In providing these reasons I am not seeking to engage in an exhaustive analysis of supports for the free will theodicy. Rather, I focus on those supports that relate most closely to the alleged ability of *free will* to reconcile *Hell* with *Just God* and *Loving God*.

First, according to some (e.g., Kane, 1996), the *best* possible world is one in which creatures have free will and fully informed choice, even if their free will and knowledge lead them to hell. Moreover, so it is said, for God to intervene in such a world to prevent his creatures choosing hell would be unloving and/or otherwise undesirable (e.g., Lewis, 1962). Intervention would be unloving because to restrict free will once granted is, so it is alleged, unloving. For a counter argument see Talbott (2020). Intervention is also undesirable if intervening to restrict free-will would result in *worse* outcomes than not-intervening (see, for example, Plantinga, 1977). The theodicy, then, is that if a world with free will and knowledge that leads to hell is the best possible world, then God can hardly be accused of being unjust for allowing people to choose hell. God would only be unjust if the world leading to hell is not the best possible world that he could create. Proponents of *Hell* (e.g., Konieczka, 2011; Sproul, 1992) also note that God rewards human beings who freely choose to repent of their sin with life in Heaven forever. In this sense, free-will works both ways and this dual working shows that God is just with respect to hell i.e., under the same dispensation, God not only allows people to go to hell, but also to heaven.

Second, it may be that a world with free will leading to evil, and thus to the possibility of hell for some creatures, is the *only* possible world that God could create. According to Plantinga (1977), for example, it is possible that God even being omnipotent

could not create a world with free creatures who never choose evil and so (I say, not Plantinga), by extension, hell. In other words, it might be logically necessary that if there is to be any free will at all, the exercise of free will would be allowed to lead to evil and so to hell. Thus, if a world where free will leads to hell is the only possible world that could be created, God can hardly be called unjust for creating such a world.

God, however, could still be held accountable for creating the world *at all*. If God knows that in any created world free will must lead to evil and so to hell, then God should perhaps not create the world in the first place. Here Plantinga (1977) also argued that it is possible that God, even being omnibenevolent, would desire to create a world with free creatures who choose evil, if moral goodness requires free creatures who choose evil. In other words, it is logically possible for an omnibenevolent God to create a world in which free will leads inevitably to evil actions. Building on Plantinga, defenders of *Hell* (e.g., Seymour, 2000) have argued that if creating a world where free will leads to evil is not unloving, then creating a world where free will leads to *Hell* is not unloving. If so, *Hell* does not contradict *Loving God*. In other words, even if hell (the place) itself is not loving (which clearly it is not), allowing people to choose to enter hell is not necessarily unloving. Thus, *Hell* (the proposition) does not necessarily conflict with *Loving God*.

Against the Free-Will Theodicy

Free will has obviously desirable features in terms of reconciling *Just God* and *Loving God* with *Hell*. First, it makes *Hell* (a bad thing) an inevitable consequence of God's unconstrained allowance of free-will (a good thing), against which God is unwilling and/or unable to act. Moreover, if God has no choice but to allow free will, he cannot be accused of negligence for allowing free will, or cruelty for allowing punishment that is a consequence of free will.

Second, *free will* justifies the eternal nature of hell. If God will forever allow free will and forever be unwilling or unable to intervene against free will, then hell will last forever. Third, *free will* makes *Hell*, in a certain sense, ‘good’ i.e., if allowing free will is good, and constraining free will is bad, then allowing *Hell* is good because *Hell* is a consequence of allowing free will. Thus, even if hell (the place) looks bad, this badness (so to speak) is misleading as it disguises the loving and morally justified allowance of free will. The goodness of *Hell* means that those who hold to *Hell* can do so without sacrificing the moral high-ground. Further, if the result of allowing unconstrained free-will is morally good, then God is not in any sense culpable for allowing sinners to be populate hell forever. Thus, by extension again from Plantinga, the free-will theodicy ensures that *Hell* does not morally compromise God in any way.

Despite these ‘benefits’, and the widespread application of the free will theodicy (see Kane, 1996; Talbott, 2020), there are several reasons why this hypothesis does not work to reconcile *Just God* and *Loving God* with *Hell*. So as to progress the discussion, I set aside disputes concerning whether humans have free will in the first place (e.g., Harris, 2012; Mele, 2006), and whether all or any humans make an informed choice to go to hell (e.g., Seymour, 1997). Rather, I focus on the aspects of free will introduced thus far in this section. The argument against the free will theodicy is two-fold:

- (a) It is not necessary that a world with free will leads to evil.
- (b) It is not necessary that a world with evil leads to hell (the place) or *Hell* (population of that place for eternity).

Against the first proposition I assert that free will need not entail the necessity of evil (see Lewis, 1993). It is both logically and theologically possible for God to create a world where the only choices available to humans are good choices. Logically, there is no reason why there could not be at least one possible world where no evil choices are available. In

such a world, there is only the choice between good options, not between good and evil. Thus, in such a world, humans can have unrestrained free will, yet never choose evil. Theologically, this world does exist. It is Heaven. Heaven is populated by free creatures who only have good options available to them and so can only choose good. Thus, the proposition that “a world with free will necessarily leads to evil” is both logically and theologically false.

It could be objected, however, that any world where free creatures cannot choose evil is not really a world with free will. Free will, so it could be argued, implies a ‘real’ choice between good and evil, not just a choice between good and better. Another possibility for God, then, is that he could create a world where real choices between good and evil exist, but God arranges circumstances in that world such that free creatures only choose good. The logic here is Molinist (e.g., Keathley, 2010) i.e., if God has perfect knowledge of all possible futures, then God in his omnipotence could arrange circumstances such that free creatures never choose a possible future that entails evil even though such choices are freely available to them. Molinism is, as might be imagined, hotly debated (e.g., Boyd, 2003; Hasker, 2000). However, the point is that if, as some *Christians* suggest, God has *middle* knowledge i.e., in this case, knowledge of what it *would* take for free creatures to avoid evil choices; he presumably *could* actualise a world where evil choices are always avoided.

If a loving God could create a world without evil, it could be argued that a loving God would do so. A world without evil would be the best possible world, and a loving God would presumably want to create the best possible world. However, we could concede that a loving God could create a world with evil if, in such a world: (a) evil choices did not lead to all consequences of such choices, especially hell, or (b) evil choices lead to hell, but not for eternity. Under these conditions, a loving God could create a world with evil.

A loving God could create a world where free will entails evil choices, without necessarily allowing his creatures to experience any or all of the consequences of their evil choices. If, for example, the evil choice of any creatures placed them in jeopardy of hell, God could act to prevent this consequence. In such a world, free creatures are entirely free to choose evil, but do not always experience the negative consequences of choosing evil, especially the most serious consequences such as hell. Alternatively, a loving God could create a world where free will led to hell, but all those creatures who chose hell would eventually be saved from hell. Thus, against the proposition that: “a world with evil necessarily leads to hell”, I assert that neither free will nor the possibility of evil under free will entails the necessity of any particular consequences of evil, including *Hell*.

The preceding points indicate that God could allow for the possibility of evil *choices* without allowing at least certain *consequences* of evil to occur or, if these consequences occurred, that they would remain (MacDonald, 2011). Theologically, this world may be one such world. Universalists, for example (dealt with later in this chapter), posit that God will not allow anyone to inhabit hell for eternity even if they deserve such a fate. Here it could be argued that restricting the consequences of evil is tantamount to restricting free will itself. For example, restricting consequences might be seen to be a restriction on free will because it does not allow the full force of a person’s choices to be put into effect. In response I assert that restricting the consequences of free will does nothing to restrict a person’s free will itself. The distinction to be made here is between the outcome, intended or not, of choices and the choices themselves. I can freely choose any number of actions, and intend by those actions to achieve certain ends, yet have those ends frustrated by circumstances beyond my control. I take this state of affairs to be self-evident. Yet, even in this state of affairs, I still have free will, just not full control over what my free will achieves. I am free, even if I am not omnipotent. Thus, if my choice to do evil does not

result in the full consequences of that choice coming to bear, I have nevertheless made a free choice.

In response to the argument just made, someone could assert that even if restricting the consequences of free will is not a restriction of free will itself, nevertheless it is not loving (for whatever reason) to enact such a restriction. If so then God, for example, *could* restrict the consequences of evil choices without compromising free will, but a loving God *would* not do so. In response I argue that restricting the consequences of free will is entirely loving if such restriction saves a person from, perhaps, *any* negative consequence but certainly an irretrievably negative consequence of the most serious nature, in this case hell. Conversely, *not* to act to restrict the consequences of the free-exercise of a person's free will is in many cases considered to be unloving. For example, if I act to resuscitate a person who has attempted suicide, I can hardly be accused of acting in an *unloving* manner. In fact, precisely the opposite. If I did not act to resuscitate the person (assuming I could do so) I could be accused (and rightly so) of not acting in a loving manner. By analogy, if God does not to stop us going to hell (at least hell for eternity) surely God has not acted in a loving way. But if he does act, such an act would be loving.

Here the defender of *Hell* could assert that God only wants people saved from hell if *they* want to be saved from hell. At least, two responses are possible here: An omnipotent, eternal and loving God i.e., a God with unlimited resources, time and motivation; could woo reluctant sinners such that they did, eventually, want to be saved from hell. In the meantime, God could protect the reluctant sinner from the consequences of any action that would land them in hell. Second, a loving God could waive *his* preference for the sake of the individuals concerned. God might want Heaven to be populated only by volunteers, but he could suffer some recalcitrant individuals for their own welfare even if they did not thank God for his kindness. In other words, God could do as he commands through Jesus (Matthew 5:44) i.e., love his enemies even if they do not love him back, or even minimally

appreciate his gracious actions on their behalf. The point here is that a loving God could exercise *his* free will in favour of even those who are hell-bent. God has options. Moreover, for God not to exercise his free will in favour of his enemies, in the name of some divine preference for volunteers or anything else, would seem *prima facie* not to be loving.

For all the reasons provided, *free will* does not help reconcile *Just God* and *Loving God* with *Hell*. God can, and does in Heaven, create a world where free will does not lead to evil. Moreover, God can create a world, and perhaps has already done so in this world, where free will leads to evil but evil does not lead to certain consequences of evil. Finally, an argument can be made that, if in this world or any other world *free will* really does lead inevitably to *Hell*, it would not be loving for God to create such a world in the first place. Thus, even if we disregard the fact that *free will* is a hypothesis, and so cannot in principle I/V *Hell*, as a hypothesis *free will* does not verify *Hell* in any case.

God's Holiness

My arguments against *divine lese majesty* and *free will* are to the effect that God has choices both in terms of the world he creates, and in terms of whether and how he punishes evil or not. A Christian could concede that my arguments concerning *divine lese majesty* and *free-will* hold some weight but still maintain that *Hell* is inevitable by virtue of God's holiness. God's holiness, so it is asserted, constrains God to punish sin mandatorily even taking into consideration his justice and his love (Pieper, 2001). As such, *Hell* is inevitable (Spurgeon, 1859/2019). Thus, even if God in his love wants to save all sinners, and even if it might be just to do so, God's his holiness means he cannot.

In the last chapter, I outlined theological reasons why God's holiness does not require that God punish sin, but only that God separate himself from sin. I also noted that even if God does punish sin in some cases, that does not mean He is required to do so in all cases. However, even conceding for the moment that God must punish sin, this still does not

mean that God must punish sin in any particular way e.g., by assignation to hell, or to any particular extent i.e., forever. Moreover, if God does not have to punish sin in any particular way or to any particular extent then not doing so does not compromise God's holiness. In other words:

- (a) *If holy God, then punishment of sin,*
- (b) *does not imply if holy God, then particular punishment of sin,*
- (c) *and so also doesn't imply if not particular punishment of sin, then not holy God.*

Thus, even conceding that God's holiness means that He must punish sin, God's holiness does not constrain God to punish sin for eternity in hell. Further, in order to I/V *Hell*, what is required is not just an argument that justifies God mandatorily punishing unrepentant sinners for eternity, but a demonstration from CR that eternal punishment in hell is a necessary conclusion from CR. Such a demonstration must show that God can do no other than enact eternal hell-bound punishment. This demonstration would be to the effect that God cannot be accused of injustice or lack of love because he has no other choice but to act in a certain way. Acting unjustly and withholding love are acts of volition. But if God has no volition with respect to *Hell*, then he cannot rightly be accused of injustice or lack of love for facilitating *Hell*.

Tying the inevitability of *Hell* for unrepentant sinners to the character of God would remove all doubt concerning its mandatory, retributive and eternal nature; thus securing *Hell* as a revealed proposition. According to the holiness hypothesis, God is effectively morally disabled while God's creatures through free will are maximally morally enabled. Holiness means that God does not have the moral autonomy (or even, perhaps, the moral imagination) to exercise judicial discretion, and thus to act in any but one manner towards disobedient human beings. In contrast, human beings have complete moral autonomy in the exercise of their personal discretion and moral imagination, and thus incur maximal

culpability for their poor moral choices. The obvious question to ask is: “How is it that the Creator has less room to move morally than his creation?” or “How can the creation have options and/or capacities addition to that of the Creator?” Of course, it could be asserted that God cannot act in unholy ways whereas his creation can, but this limitation on God does not meant that God is somehow less than his creation. Fair enough. However, even in this circumstance, it has not been demonstrated that: (a) there can be no way that God could act to save recalcitrant sinners other than by violating his holiness; and (b) that if there is a way for God so save recalcitrants that God is somehow *intellectually* disabled to the extent that he cannot figure out what is that way. To my knowledge, no such argument to this effect has been forthcoming. In fact, assuming there is a way to save recalcitrant sinners an omnipotent and omniscient God would be able to do just that. Thus, if the possibility of a holy God saving recalcitrants remains open then the actuality of God saving recalcitrant sinners also remains open. The point here is that God’s holiness does not necessarily disallow God from saving recalcitrants. Even if God’s holiness *could* hypothetically exclude him from saving recalcitrant sinners it has not been shown, especially from CR, that this *must* be so.

The effect of the argument above is that God is not required by holiness to enact mandatory and eternal punishment in Hell. Thus, using God’s holiness in an attempt to get around the failures of *divine lese majesty* and *free will* to reconcile *Loving God* and *Just God* to *Hell* fails. For this reason, I conclude the work so far in this chapter with the conclusion that *Just God* and *Loving God* remain in conflict with *Hell*, and that this conflict is not circumnavigated by an appeal to God’s holiness. For these reasons, *Hell* should not be accepted as a revealed proposition even if hypotheses are accepted as a means of verifying propositions in general and *Hell* in particular.

Alternatives to Hell

Problems with the verification of *Hell* have motivated not only attempts to get around *Loving God* and *Just God*, but have also motivated the formulation of alternatives to *Hell* itself. In this section of this chapter, I show that theological alternatives to *Hell* exist and that these alternatives are viable competitors to *Hell*. This viability means that *Hell* can be ruled out as a revealed proposition not only because it conflicts with *Loving God* and *Just God*, but also because of the now familiar problem of choosing between hypotheses i.e., the problem of abduction from Chapter 6.

The failure to reconcile *Just God* and *Loving God* with *Hell* has led some Christians to abandon *Hell* altogether (Henry, 2015; van Holten, 2003). In its place are two alternatives: Annihilationism (Krapohl, 1997; Moskala, 2015) and Universalism (De La Noval, 2018; Hengstermann, 2017; Ludlow, 2000; MacDonald, 2011). Annihilationism posits that God will destroy unrepentant sinners rather than punish them for eternity in hell. Universalism posits that God will eventually save all from hell. Hence, with respect to the doctrine of hell there are three propositions are claimed to be revealed:

1. God will punish unrepentant sinners for in hell for eternity (Traditionalism).
2. God will destroy unrepentant sinners, perhaps after some time in hell (Annihilationism).
3. God will eventually save all sinners, perhaps after some time in hell for recalcitrant sinners (Universalism).

These propositions correspond to three logical possibilities:

4. God will destroy neither the unrepentant sinner nor the sin (under Traditionalism both the unrepentant sinner and the sin survive in hell for eternity).
5. God will destroy both the unrepentant sinner and the sin (under Annihilationism the sinner and their sin are extinguished).

6. God will destroy the sin but not the unrepentant sinner (under Universalism the unrepentant sinner is preserved until they repent, at which time their sin is removed/destroyed).

Assuming on theological grounds that if a sinner is destroyed their sin is also destroyed, the fourth logical possibility i.e., destroying the sinner yet sin remaining, is not an available option. Thus, the three possibilities above exhaust the available theological options.

Propositions consistent with the traditional doctrine of hell are evident in CR. Examples include those referring to eternal punishment (Matthew 25:41), eternal life (Matthew 25:46), eternal torment (Revelation 20:10), and eternal fire (Revelation 20:15). However, propositions consistent with Annihilationism and Universalism are also evident in CR. For Annihilationism are verses concerning destruction of the body in hell (Matthew 10:28b), death as the recompense for sin (Romans 6:23), and destruction as the result of lawbreaking (James 4:12a). For Universalism are verses referring to life for all people (Romans 5:18-19), all being made alive (1 Corinthians 15:22), and God as the Saviour of all (1 Timothy 4:10b).

Given that *Hell* is the orthodox position, the theological problem for Annihilationism and Universalism is how to secure preferential verification for these propositions over Traditionalism. The strategy used for both Annihilationism and Universalism is to attempt to show that these two positions are, unlike Traditionalism, just and loving, and thus consistent with *Just God* and *Loving God*. As is by now familiar, in both cases a hypothesis is used to reconcile *Just God* and *Loving God* to the proposition in question. In the case of Annihilationism, the hypothesis is that the death penalty is just and loving punishment for sin, perhaps especially the sin of *divine lese majesty*. In the case of Universalism, the hypothesis is that neither the death penalty nor eternal torment are just and loving.

Annihilationism

In the preceding sections of this chapter, I have shown that *Hell* is disproportional and insufficiently discriminating punishment even for the crime of *divine lese majesty*. With respect to God's justice, then, the task for the annihilationist is to show that annihilation is proportional and appropriately discriminating even granting that the crime of *divine lese majesty* is at issue. We can concede that the death penalty represents a more palatable alternative to eternal torment. Better to be dead than tormented forever. Presumably, this palatability is part of the motivation for preferring Annihilationism over Traditionalism. However, considerations of palatability are separate from those of justice. Here I suggest that all the objections to *Hell* being consistent with *Just God* apply equally well to annihilation being consistent with *Just God*.

Under both Traditionalism and Annihilationism, potentially billions of non-Christians will suffer punishment. The only thing that changes between the two positions is the nature of that punishment. Thus, even if the death penalty is considered proportional to the crime of *divine lese majesty* on an individual level, on the collective level the death penalty seems as wildly disproportionate as eternal torment. On the basis of proportionality at the level of the collective, death on a mass scale hardly seems any more just as punishment than eternal torment, even for the crime of *divine lese majesty*. Further, on the basis of judicial discretion, a *mandatory* death penalty is not any more consistent with *Just God* than mandatory eternal torment. On both counts, the one-punishment-fits-all approach is taken. This approach provides no scope for God to discriminate between the circumstances of individuals, even if all have offended God with their sin. Yet, God must have at least as much moral and judicial discretion as his creatures. So, if humans are able to exercise moral and judicial discretion (which, clearly, they can) God must be able to exercise discretion also. Further, if God can exercise discretion but chooses not to do so,

then He is open not only to the accusation of being unjust but also to the accusation of being unloving.

With respect to God's love, we could concede again that destruction of the unrepentant is *prima facie* more loving than eternal torment of the same. As such, Annihilationism looks easier to reconcile with *Loving God* than Traditionalism. Nevertheless, the task for the annihilationist that seeks to show that Annihilationism is *revealed* is not to show that final destruction is easier to reconcile with *Loving God* than eternal torment, but rather that annihilation taken on its own terms is consistent with *Loving God*.

Without rehearsing all the arguments presented against *free will* in this chapter, nothing in Annihilationism shows that sin must be punished, or must be punished in some irrevocable way i.e., by death or by eternal torment. Thus, Annihilationism and Traditionalism share the assumption that God will not intervene to save the recalcitrant despite the fact that, as shown in this chapter, even on *free will* God does have options to intervene. If God does not intervene, then, he must choose not to intervene which is not loving. Moreover, in some respects Annihilationism is worse off than Traditionalism with respect to *Loving God*. As shown in this chapter, traditionalists can argue that people in some way choose hell, and that God reluctantly allows this choice. However, on Annihilationism, God actively enforces the death penalty. It is hard to see how any God who supposedly loves his creation could be actively involved in its destruction or, at least, the destruction of a good part of it.

Universalism

If Annihilationism cannot be reconciled with *Just God* and *Loving God*, the only remaining theologically licenced possibility for verification is Universalism. Various versions of Universalism exist, but the common theme in each is that all will eventually be

saved from hell. Universalism is intuitively more consistent with *Loving God* than Traditionalism and Annihilationism inasmuch as Universalism implies that God will not extinguish or allow the eternal torment of a good portion of humanity. A loving God should be, and under Universalism is, demonstrably concerned for the eternal welfare of all, not just some, of his creation. Perhaps paradoxically, Universalism is sometimes criticised for being unloving because, for example, it supposedly disrespects human choice not to submit to God. However, consistent with the arguments in this chapter, God could save all people without violating the free will of any. As such, free will does not count against Universalism. Finally, Universalism is consistent with qualities of love explicit in CR (e.g., 1 Corinthians 13:4-8) such as patience, kindness, honour, humility, selflessness, and protection. Thus, there are both logical and theological reason for suggesting that Universalism is consistent with *Loving God*.

Although sometimes challenged on the grounds of love, by far the most common criticism of Universalism is that because it supposedly excludes judgement it is not just (Walls, 2003). If so, Universalism is not reconcilable with *Just God*. Without seeking to mount a defence of Universalism, I simply note that not all versions of Universalism exclude judgement by God, punishment in hell (albeit not forever), or the necessity of repentance in order to be released from hell (Murray, 1999). Thus, depending on the version of Universalism concerned, Universalism is straightforwardly reconcilable with *Just God*. Put the other way, even if in the estimation of defenders of Traditionalism or Annihilationism some versions of Universalism may be difficult or even impossible to reconcile with *Just God*, this difficulty or impossibility does not imply that all versions of Universalism are irreconcilable with *Just God*.

It should be noted, of course, that even in the case where some version of Universalism is reconcilable with *Just God*, such reconciliation does not mean that this version, or Universalism more generally, is revealed. Yet, even if no version of

Universalism was reconcilable with *Just God*, Universalism would still be in no worse position than Traditionalism or Annihilationism which are also not reconcilable with *Just God*. In other words, even if Universalism in all its versions does conflict with *Just God*, that conflict does not help the case for Traditionalism or Annihilationism.

The point of the preceding discussion is that Traditionalism has competitors. Annihilationism might seem better than Traditionalism with respect to *Just God* and *Loving God* at the level of the individual. However, at the collective level, mass mandatory extinction, especially when God has options to the contrary, looks as unjust and unloving as mass eternal torment. On the other hand, Universalism appears to be more loving than both Traditionalism and Annihilationism and, depending on the version concerned, need be no less just than its competitors. These observations do not mean that Universalism or Annihilationism are verified, but it does mean that both, Universalism in particular, are viable competitors to Traditionalism. For this reason alone, *Hell* is not verified.

Chapter Summary

The issue in this chapter has been the verification of *Hell*. Two particular impediments to the verification of *Hell* are evident in the chapter. The first is that *Hell* conflicts with *Just God* and *Loving God*. The second is that viable alternatives to *Hell* are available. *Divine lese majesty* fails to reconcile *Hell* with *Just God*, and *free will* fails to reconcile *Hell* with both *Just God* and *Loving God*. Furthermore, faced with the failure of *divine lese majesty* and *free will*, God's holiness also fails as a fall-back position for those seeking to establish that God must punish sin eternally. In light of these failures, *Hell* is not verified even if hypotheses such as *divine lese majesty* and *free will* are accepted as means of verifying *Hell*.

The failure to reconcile *Hell* with propositions indisputably in CR motivates the need for alternatives to Traditionalism. The fit of these alternative propositions is, at least,

no worse than Traditionalism. As such, both Annihilationism and Universalism remain viable competitors to Traditionalism. For this reason, too, *Hell* remains unverified. Thus, *Hell* is unverified on two counts, replicating the difficulties identified with respect to both JiG/*Trinity* and *Retribution*/PSA.

Chapter 11

Summary of Case Studies

Chapter 10 concludes the three case studies demonstrating that and how various hypotheses are used to putatively verify induced propositions. In the first study, *Trinity* if revealed does verify *Jesus is God*. However, as a hypothesis, *Trinity* is not revealed and so cannot verify *Jesus is God*. In the case of the Atonement, the Penal Substitution theory of the Atonement (PSA) is used to save the proposition that divine justice is retributive (*Retribution*) from falsification by CR. Yet another theory of the Atonement i.e., Restorative Substitutionary Atonement (RSA) can be used to secure the proposition that God's justice is restorative (*Restoration*). Given that induction cannot separate *Retribution* and *Restoration*, and abduction by IBE cannot separate PSA and RSA, neither pair can claim to be demonstrably revealed. This represents a pyrrhic victory for the defender of *Restoration*, but is not a defeat if the purpose is to show (as my purpose is) that under induction and abduction CR supports irreconcilably conflicting propositions and their supporting hypotheses. Finally, in the case of *Hell*, two hypotheses that are admittedly not-revealed i.e., *divine lese majesty* and *free will* do not reconcile *Hell* to *Just God* or *Loving God*. Thus, even if the use of non-revealed hypotheses is considered to be a legitimate method for verifying *Hell*, these hypotheses fail to do the trick anyway. Further, as with JiG and *Retribution*, viable alternatives to *Hell* are available, and the failure to separate these alternatives on the basis of either induction or abduction precludes verification of *Hell*.

In each case study then, for overlapping reasons, hypotheses fail to verify their target propositions. Table 8 summarises the target propositions and their saving hypotheses, alongside their competing propositions and hypotheses.

Table 8

Summary of Case Studies

Case Study	Target Proposition	Conflicting Propositions	Saving Hypothesis	Competing Proposition	Competing Hypothesis
Trinity	Jesus is God (JiG)	God is One The Father is God Jesus is not the Father	Trinitarianism: God is a Trinity (<i>Trinity</i>)	Jesus is not God	Unitarianism: The Father alone is God
The Atonement	God's justice is retributive (<i>Retribution</i>)	<i>Loving God</i>	Penal Substitutionary Atonement (PSA)	God's justice is restorative (<i>Restoration</i>)	Restorative Substitutionary Atonement (RSA)
Hell	Traditionalism	<i>Just God</i> <i>Loving God</i>	<i>Divine lese majesty</i> <i>Free will</i>	Annihilationism Universalism	The death penalty is just and loving Neither eternal torment nor the death penalty are just and loving

These studies are not, of course, exhaustive. However, they do serve to demonstrate how the principles identified in earlier chapters with respect to induction and abduction apply to three important propositions said to be revealed: JiG, *Retribution* and *Hell*. My consistent point throughout the thesis, and in each case study, is that abduction by either hypothesis or IBE, or some combination of both, fails to verify induced propositions.

If induction and abduction fail to verify induced propositions, one can question what purpose, if any, induction and abduction serves in the larger scheme of Christian belief. My contention is that induction and abduction justify Christian belief that certain propositions are revealed as opposed to verifying that these propositions are revealed. Induction and abduction also serve to fix the belief that certain propositions are revealed when that belief be threatened. The point of this contention is that, for reasons given shortly, Christians *ought* (normatively) to be in the business of verifying that certain propositions are revealed, and revising their belief that certain propositions are revealed if evidence in CR demands

such a revision. Instead, in the absence of verification and a willingness to revise belief, what Christians do is seek to (externally) justify their belief that certain propositions are revealed and (internally) fix this belief even in the face of evidence in CR to the contrary. I explore this contention before moving on to my final argument in Chapter 12.

Justification and Verification

Despite their inability to I/V propositions, induction and abduction are used to justify the belief that propositions otherwise underdetermined by CR are, in fact, revealed.

Induction is used to marshal evidence in support of this belief, and abduction provides the hypothetical conditions under which it is rational to believe that certain propositions are revealed. So, for example, induction marshals evidence that supports the belief that *Jesus is God* is a revealed proposition, and abduction in the form of *Trinity* provides conditions under which the belief that Jesus is God is a revealed proposition is rational and, hence, justifiable. Using induction and abduction, then, Christians may be said to have justified belief that certain induced propositions are revealed but not verification that these propositions are revealed. Yet here is precisely the problem. Christians claim to *know* that certain induced and abducted propositions are revealed by virtue of the fact that these propositions are verified. I claim that, on the basis of CR, Christians do not know that these propositions are revealed. Demonstrably, Christians have only justified belief (not justified true belief i.e., knowledge) that such propositions are revealed. If so, then Christians have overstated their knowledge claims concerning which propositions are revealed.

It might be case, however, that Christians have been lucky with respect to their putative knowledge of the revealed status of propositions. Suppose it turns out that the propositions Christians justifiably believe are revealed are, in fact, revealed. In this case, Christians would on the standard tripartite analysis of knowledge have justified *true* belief, and hence could claim knowledge that these propositions are revealed. Yet, even in such

circumstances Christians have a problem. The problem is that induction and abduction are not appropriate means of *justifying* beliefs in the revelatory context any more than they are correct or successful means for *verifying* propositions. I explain this assertion in what follows.

In the context of divine revelation, beliefs ought to be justified against CR and CR alone. In other words, the appropriate form of belief justification with respect to divine revelation is *strict* external justification i.e., justification against only one licenced source of information. However, in neither the case of induction nor abduction are beliefs justified against CR alone. Rather, in these cases, justification of belief occurs with respect to some *amplification* of CR. Thus, neither induction nor abduction are appropriately externally referenced. Reference should be made against only CR, not against CR-amplified. Conversely, one could argue that the reason induction and abduction are employed in the first place is because external justification of belief against CR alone is judged inadequate. This inadequacy implies, however, that CR itself is inadequate which is theologically unlicensed for any supposedly revealed belief. So, whether by means of inappropriate logic or inappropriate theology, external justification against CR-amplified is not sufficient to justify the belief that a proposition is revealed.

The upshot of these observations is not only that justification is not verification, but that induction and abduction do not provide appropriate justification in this case. In the case of ordinary belief, it might be quite appropriate to possess only internal, or some form of loose external, justification for belief. Yet, in the case of divine revelation, only strict external justification is appropriate and neither induction nor abduction provide such justification. Hence, even if Christians really do get lucky and find (perhaps in heaven) that their belief that certain induced and abduced propositions are revealed is true, they do not have proper justification on earth that these propositions are revealed.

Put a different way, in the case of ordinary belief, justification has a lower bar than verification because verification requires a demonstration that a proposition is the case whereas justification requires only internally or loosely externally referenced reasons for believing that a proposition is the case. In the case of revealed belief, however, verification and justification have the same threshold standard i.e., external reference to CR and to CR alone. Thus, Christians ought to be strict evidentialists with respect to verification, and strict externalists with respect to justification. Yet neither appears to be the case. The importance of this discussion is that believers in the revealed status of propositions are no better-off if they attempt to retreat from verification to justification. Unlike ordinary belief, the appropriate reference standard remains the same. Only CR appropriately sources verification and externalises justification. Thus, believers in the revealed status of certain unverified propositions have no fall-back position that legitimately preserves the justification of belief that these propositions are revealed.

Belief Revision and Belief Retention

In the preceding section, I indicated that not only are induction and abduction insufficient to verify propositions, but neither are they normatively sufficient to justify the belief that a given proposition is divinely revealed. In this section I indicate, again normatively, that Christians should be involved in belief revision when their belief that certain propositions are revealed is threatened by recalcitrant evidence in CR. Descriptively, however, Christians are involved in belief retention despite that fact that belief retention is theologically unlicensed.

Belief revision (e.g., Bonanno, 2009; Gärdenfors, 2011; Huber, 2013) and belief retention (e.g., Giaquinto, 1996; Hillberg, 2017; Reippel, 2011) represent two different approaches to belief in the face of recalcitrant evidence. One attitude favours evidence, the other favours belief. Belief revision implies that the believer is willing to give up beliefs

and/or fix on new beliefs in the face of recalcitrant evidence. Belief retention implies that the believer is unwilling to give up beliefs and, instead, desires to fix on current beliefs even in the face of evidence to the contrary. Christians ought to be belief revisionists when it comes to verifying propositions. Evidence in CR ought to take precedence over belief that a proposition is revealed. Instead, however, Christians act to retain belief that propositions are revealed despite contrary evidence in CR to that effect.

The belief revision framework focusses on what happens to a set of beliefs held by a believer when the believer is willing to revise beliefs in the face of new and/or recalcitrant evidence that hold implications for their beliefs. Three possibilities are generally presented: belief expansion (a belief or beliefs are added to the set of beliefs), belief contraction (a belief or beliefs are subtracted from the set of beliefs), and belief revision (beliefs are both added and subtracted from the belief set). The believer's aim in belief revision is to fix on a set of beliefs that are internally coherent and externally consistent with the evidence. The belief retention framework, on the other hand, works in the opposite direction.

The belief retention framework focusses on what happens to recalcitrant evidence (potentially expansion, contraction or revision) in the face of a belief that (for the believer) should be retained. Evidence expansion occurs when evidence is amplified in order to yield new information. Evidence contraction occurs when evidence contrary to belief is ignored or is deemed inadmissible in some way. Evidence revision occurs when, by both expansion and contraction, recalcitrant evidence is reinterpreted such that recalcitrant evidence becomes a confirming instance of the belief to be retained. As in the belief revision framework, the believer's aim in the belief retention framework is to ensure the consistency of belief and evidence. However, the mode of doing so is to revise evidence not to revise belief. In the belief revision scenario, belief is treated as variable and evidence is treated as fixed. In the belief retention scenario, belief is treated as fixed and evidence is treated as variable. For this reason, revision of evidence during belief preservation may be construed

as the opposite of the revision of belief in the ‘classical’ AGM belief revision framework (see, for example, Rott & Williams, 2001). In the AGM belief revision framework, an agent adjusts their belief set in response to some new evidence. In the belief retention framework, an agent adjusts their evidence set in order to preserve belief.

I have focused on the case where a believer finds it necessary to revise (i.e., both expand and contract) their evidence base in order to, supposedly, verify a proposition. Expansion involves taking an incontrovertible body of evidence, ampliatively interpreting that body of evidence consistent with a given hypothesis, and on the basis of that interpretation deducing a proposition corresponding to a belief (or beliefs) to be retained. Contraction involves eliminating competing propositions using the same hypothesis as that used to expand the evidence base in favour of the preferred proposition in question. Evidence revision fails to verify propositions for all the reasons I have outlined in the thesis and, for reasons outlined previously in this chapter, also fails to justify the belief that a proposition is revealed. Nevertheless, revision of evidence under a hypothesis can act to fix belief that a proposition is revealed. This fixation of belief helps explain why propositions not verified as revealed and/or not justifiably believed to be revealed, may nevertheless be firmly held to be revealed. However, using abduction to amplify CR in order to eliminate competing propositions and/or transform preferred induced propositions into deduced propositions, is not theologically warranted because this action both adds information to, and subtracts information from, CR. Thus, not only does abduction not provide verification or justification that a proposition is revealed, but to the extent that it refixes the belief that a proposition is revealed it does so illegitimately. Hence, retreat from justification to simple belief fixation is no more warranted than the retreat from verification to justification.

A Final Note on Evidence

One final line of defence a Christian could use to defend the revealed status of propositions is to pursue the claim that I have unnecessarily, unreasonably and/or invalidly constrained Christians to their evidence. Some Christians, perhaps most famously Plantinga (2000), have argued that evidentialism, or at least strict evidentialism, does not apply to the issue of verification or justification of religious beliefs in general (see also Fairlamb, 2010; Gellman, 2014). If so, by extension, evidentialism may not apply to belief fixation either. However, Christianity makes the claim that CR is public. Moreover, the various modes of inference (deductive, inductive, and abductive) by which the propositional content of CR is inferred from the Bible are also public. The point of these observations is that, even if evidentialism does not apply to religious propositions in general, it does apply to the verification of propositions, and to the justification and fixation of the belief that propositions are revealed. Christians themselves consistently appeal to CR as the evidential basis upon which the claim that a given proposition is revealed rests. So, the imposition of evidentialism with respect to verification, justification and fixation is not an arbitrary imposition on my part, but is rather an authentic imposition that matches Christianity's own theological commitments. One corollary of this observation regarding evidence is that one does not need to be a Christian believer in order to evaluate whether or not a proposition is verified, whether belief that a proposition is revealed is justified, or whether any method for fixing belief that a proposition is revealed is theologically warranted.

One also does not need to be a believer to determine the extent to which Christians have demonstrated their alleged religious knowledge that a proposition is revealed. It is sometimes said by Christians that only Christians are in a position to determine what propositions are verified, and thus whether Christians have demonstrated their alleged religious knowledge that certain propositions are revealed. To the contrary, because both the evidence and the method by which propositions are judged to be revealed is public, non-

believers are in a position to judge whether propositions have been verified and, thus, the extent to which Christians can validly claim knowledge that such propositions are revealed.

Chapter Summary

Thus far in the thesis, I have shown by analysis that induced propositions have not by abduction, or any other method, been verified. I have also shown that even if Christians seek to retreat from verification to justification, or from justification to belief fixation, this retreat fails to assist the believer to appropriately defend or entrench their belief that given propositions are revealed. In all cases, abduction misuses the evidentiary basis to which Christians bind themselves. In the next chapter, I show by the method of exhaustion that induced propositions cannot be verified and, by further argument, that propositions that cannot be verified are not revealed.

Chapter 12

Final Argument

The purpose of this chapter is to argue that unverified propositions are not revealed. In order to contextualise this argument, I first briefly review the salient findings of the thesis relevant to the final argument. I then make the final argument and respond to some potential objections to the argument. In conclusion, I briefly explore some implications of the final argument before conducting a more detailed analysis of these implications in the next and final chapter.

Review of the Thesis

At the outset of this thesis I indicated that I would address three claims. The weakest of these claims is that certain propositions said by Christians to be divinely revealed have not been demonstrated to be divinely revealed by Christianity's own standards and are, thus, not verified. A stronger claim is that these propositions cannot be demonstrated to be revealed by any standard. The strongest claim is that, by virtue of the fact that these propositions cannot be demonstrably revealed and thus verified, we can conclude they are not revealed. In the discussion that follows, I review the evidence presented in the thesis to support the first claim. I then explore the second claim before going on to defend the third.

I readily conceded that certain propositions said to be revealed are easily shown to be revealed. These propositions are those that are explicit in or deduced from the content of revelation. Explicit propositions, i.e., those propositions directly corresponding to the meaning of sentences in sacred texts, are easily accepted as revealed because they are either identical with, or are isomorphic transformations of, the meaning of those sentences. Hence, there is no dispute that these propositions comprise part of CR.

Propositions directly or indirectly deduced from CR can also be uncontroversially taken to be revealed because they are logically necessary inferences from propositions explicit in, or deduced from, CR. Further, consistent with theological stipulation, deductions add nothing to CR and, as such, can be accepted as revealed on theological as well as logical grounds. Deduction only makes explicit that which, from an epistemic point of view, is implicit in CR. Further, assuming CR is logically consistent, any deduced propositions will not irresolvably conflict with each other or with any propositions explicit in CR. Finally, soundness and validity are co-extensive in the case of deduction from divine revelation. All valid inferences from CR are sound inferences because the premises used to deduce propositions from CR are always true. Soundness is simply validity with true premises. In the case of divine revelation, the truth of the premises is assured because these premises correspond to explicitly revealed propositions which, of necessity, are true. Thus, valid deduction from CR guarantees the soundness of any deduced conclusion.

Induction

Given that explicit and deduced propositions may be uncontroversially taken to be revealed, the primary problem addressed in this thesis is that Christians claim that CR contains propositions other than those explicit in or deduced from CR. Equivalently, explicit and deduced propositions account for only some of the propositions that Christians take to be revealed. Hence, in order to I/V the whole body of revealed propositions, strategies other than observation and deduction are required. In particular, I have investigated the use of induction in attempting to I/V propositions, and the operation of abduction by both hypothesis and Inference to Best Explanation (IBE) on induction for the same purpose.

I have shown that induction cannot I/V propositions for three reasons. First, induction is not truth preserving, yet truth is a necessary condition for a proposition to be revealed. Induced propositions may or may not be true, and so may or may not be revealed.

Moreover, in the case of divine revelation, there is no way to test whether an induced proposition is true or not because no legitimate further information other than that from which a proposition is induced in the first place is available. Finally, even if an induced proposition could be determined to be true, truth is only a necessary not a sufficient condition for a proposition to be revealed. Thus, establishing the truth of an induced proposition does not by itself verify that proposition.

Second, propositions induced from CR typically conflict with each other (for example, see Table 2 in Chapter 4). These conflicts arise because different inductive orderings of CR can be used to conclude inductively both p and one or more *not-p*. By licencing these multiple inductive orderings of CR, induction enables conflicting propositions to claim revealed status. Equivalently, induction gives rise to underdetermination by CR of competing propositions claiming revealed status. Yet, assuming the logical consistency of divine revelation, revealed propositions cannot conflict with other revealed propositions. Hence, to the extent that induction yields conflicting propositions induction cannot be a valid means of verifying revealed propositions.

Similarly, induction typically returns propositions that conflict with deduced propositions. Yet, again, this situation cannot be the case if divine revelation is logically consistent. Interestingly, it is also sometimes the case that a preferred induced proposition conflicts with a deduced proposition but a non-preferred induced proposition does not. In cases such as these, the non-preferred induced proposition has *prima facie* a stronger putative claim to being revealed than the preferred proposition. Put differently, on the weight of evidence neither preferred nor non-preferred induced propositions can claim to be revealed. However, because consistency with deduced propositions is a necessary (but not sufficient) condition for revealed propositions, such consistency might be used to differentiate competing induced propositions that are candidates for being revealed.

Nevertheless, even where consistency favours the candidacy of one proposition over others, such consistency does not mean the favoured proposition is verified.

Third, where induction returns conflicting propositions, induction itself does not indicate which of a conflicting set of propositions (if any) is revealed. In particular, inductive strength does not differentiate revealed from non-revealed propositions. This situation arises because inductive strength can only suggest that one proposition is more or less probably revealed than another. This probabilistic finding might be deemed appropriate if the purpose of induction is to identify candidate propositions that *might be* in CR. However, if induction is construed as a method for I/Ving propositions *actually* in CR, then probability is not good enough. A proposition is either revealed or not revealed, not probably so. Hence, determining the revealed status of a proposition is not a matter of assigning probabilities. I/Ving propositions means determining with certainty that a proposition is revealed.

The not-truth-preserving, conflict producing and probabilistic nature of induction means that induction cannot verify propositions. Thus, induction is *prima facie* an incorrect method for I/Ving propositions. As I noted in the thesis, however, it is argued that induction is a correct method of verification, but that induction is wrongly applied in cases where non-preferred propositions are verified. The motivation for this argument is, presumably, to preserve induction as a method of verification; and so to preserve the revealed status of preferred propositions that can only be induced from CR. However, any number of theological disputes arise as protagonists for preferred propositions attempt to show that the inductive orderings supporting their propositions are methodologically correct and inductive orderings supporting conflicting propositions are methodologically incorrect. The problem with such disputations is that CR does not provide propositions pertaining to how induction should or should not be applied to CR. As a result, there is no *revealed* standard for the application of induction. In the absence of such a standard, one believer's misapplication of

induction becomes another believer's correct application – and the stalemate continues. So, even if induction is accepted theologically as a method for I/Ving propositions, in practice this method fails because the *application* of the method is not determined by CR.

Given the review above, I conclude that both the method and the application of the method of induction are problematic for verifying propositions. For these reasons, induction should not (normatively) be used in an attempt to verify propositions. Nevertheless, induction is (descriptively) widely used for just this purpose, giving rise to all the problems attendant to induction in the context of verification. Here abduction comes into play.

Abduction

Much of this thesis has been directed towards showing how abduction is used to supplement induction in order that preferred propositions are verified and the candidacy of competing propositions is terminated. Abduction supplements induction by specifying hypothetical conditions under which preferred induced propositions, and only preferred induced propositions, can be accepted as revealed. This process involves using hypotheses, from which non-preferred propositions cannot be deduced, to amplify CR in order to provide deductive support for preferred propositions. Despite the intent of abduction, however, abduction by hypothesis fails to I/V propositions because it cannot be demonstrated that hypotheses themselves are revealed. As is the case of induced propositions, abduction is not truth preserving, produces conflicting propositions, and provides no method for resolving conflicts over which abducted propositions are revealed.

Despite my last assertion, it is sometimes argued that IBE can be used to select not just the best explanation (hypothesis) but the revealed explanation (Wainright, 2016). The abductive logic underpinning this assertion is that the reason an explanation is taken to be 'best' is because it is a revealed explanation. However, abduction in the form of IBE fails to verify only one hypothesis from a conflicting set of hypotheses because CR provides no

criteria for 'best'. Further, for any given hypothesis there will typically if not always be criteria for 'best' that are consistent with CR that can be used to verify the hypothesis. For this reason, *any* given hypothesis, including a hypothesis that conflicts with some other hypothesis or hypotheses, can be determined by IBE to be the best (and, hence, revealed) hypothesis. Thus, abduction suffers a similar fate to any supposed correct application of induction. CR provides no unique criteria for determining what is a correct induction or the best abduction. Moreover, even if IBE happened to correctly identify a revealed hypothesis (assuming there is such a thing), IBE would not be able to demonstrate that this is the case in any situation where at least one competing hypothesis can also claim to be the best explanation. The two (or more) hypotheses would be inseparable on the basis of IBE.

In a final attempt to rescue abduction Christians have posited: (a) that under divinely guided abduction, CR is materially sufficient to verify doctrines, and/or (b) that abducted propositions are directly revealed. However, even assuming that under divinely guided abduction CR is materially sufficient, it turns out that demonstrating such sufficiency is no easier than demonstrating abducted propositions are revealed in the first place. Hence, the alleged material sufficiency of CR does not help the Christian establish that abducted doctrines are revealed. The appeal to direct revelation is also used in an attempt to verify hypotheses. The problem with such a move is that non-revealed hypotheses are phenomenologically indistinguishable from directly revealed propositions. Christians might claim that they can distinguish between these two types of propositions. However, without some objective criteria for distinguishing between the two types, non-revealed and revealed propositions are, again, indistinguishable.

In summary, I have shown in the thesis that only propositions explicit in, or deduced from, CR are demonstrably revealed. Propositions said to be revealed by virtue of the fact that they are induced from CR, have not been shown either by induction or abduction to be revealed. Further, given that only three modes of inference (deduction, induction and

abduction) are available, the possibilities for I/Ving induced within the method of theology propositions are exhausted. On the basis that all possibilities are exhausted, I claim not only that induced propositions *have not* been demonstrated to be revealed, but that these propositions *cannot* be demonstrated to be revealed. The problem of induction is not only unsolved, but is unsolvable.

Final Argument

Having established that induced and abduced propositions have not been, and cannot be, demonstrated to be revealed, I am now in a position to make my final argument. The conclusion of this argument is that propositions that cannot be demonstrated to be revealed i.e., induced and abduced propositions, are not revealed. My final argument proceeds as follows. In this argument P (as in P1) refers to a premise, C (as in C1) refers to a conclusion.

P1. p is divinely revealed iff God reveals p (*divine revelation*).

P2. If God reveals p , then God wants us to know p (*knowledge*).

P3. If God want us to know p , then God wants us to be certain that p is true (*certainty*).

P4. If God wants us to be certain that p is true, then God makes the revealed status of p demonstrable (*demonstrability*).

C1. If God reveals p , then God makes the revealed status of p demonstrable (from P2-P4).

C2. If God has not made the revealed status of p demonstrable, then God has not revealed p (from C1).

C3. If God has not revealed p , then p is not divinely revealed (from P1).

C4. If God has not made the revealed status of p demonstrable, then p is not divinely revealed (from C2 and C3).

P5. If p is an induced or abduced proposition, the revealed status of p is not demonstrable.

P6. If the revealed status of p is not demonstrable, God has not made the revealed status of p demonstrable.

C5. If p is an induced or abduced proposition, then p is not divinely revealed (from C4, P5 and P6).

The thrust of this final argument is that the purpose of divine revelation is knowledge, but that such knowledge is threatened if the truth of a proposition is not demonstrable. In Christianity, the test of truth is revelation and the revealed status of propositions is demonstrable by God making a proposition in question explicit in, or deducible from, CR. If, then, God has not made a proposition explicit in or deducible from CR it is not only deductively valid but theologically sound to conclude that God has not revealed the proposition and thus has not made the content of the proposition known.

Objections to the Final Argument

I will not attempt an exhaustive analysis of all objections that could be raised to my final argument. However, I do explore some key objections that directly relate to material covered earlier in the thesis.

Premise 1 (P1) of the argument seems unproblematic. No proposition can be *divinely* revealed unless *God* has revealed that proposition. Equivalently, if anyone other than God reveals p , p is not divinely revealed assuming, as is the case in Christianity, that God alone is responsible for all divinely revealed propositions. Premise 2 (P2) also seems unproblematic. The purpose of divine revelation is to make known things that are otherwise unknowable. Further, unlike ordinary (human) revelation, God does not accidentally or incidentally reveal that which He does not want us to know. Given that the only way to

know what God has revealed is if God has intentionally revealed 'it', it is reasonable to conclude that if God reveals p , He wants us to know p .

The rationale for Premise 3 (P3) is that God does not want us to be uncertain about the truth of p , because such uncertainty threatens belief in, and thus knowledge of, p . In other words, imparting knowledge is the purpose of revelation, but this purpose is undermined if there is uncertainty about the truth status of p . Second, a proposition has to be true to be revealed. So, if a believer is uncertain of the truth of a proposition, they must be uncertain about the revealed status of the proposition, which again would defeat the purpose of revelation in the first place. Presumably God wants us to be certain that what he has revealed is revealed so that we can assign due weight to his revelation.

Against P3 it might be argued that God could allow some uncertainty about the truth of p , perhaps in order for his creatures to wrestle with the truth, and thus come to a settled opinion about the truth of a proposition partly on the strength of their own analyses. However, to do so would be to invite errors with respect to the truth of a proposition. A reasonable believer uncertain of the truth of a revealed proposition might erroneously conclude that the proposition is false and thus not revealed. Surely God would not wish this outcome. Here the Catholic or Orthodox could argue that the church as a whole would not make a mistake about the truth, and thus the revealed status, of an 'uncertain' proposition. However, I showed in Chapter 5 that even collective faith, authority and tradition do not lead to certainly correct judgments concerning the revealed status, and thus the truth, of disputed propositions.

Premise 4 (P4) is based on the rationale that if God makes the revealed status of p demonstrable (i.e., explicit in or deducible from CR) we can be certain that God is the source of p , and thus certain that p is revealed, and thus certain that p is true. Conversely, if the revealed status of p is not demonstrable, as is the case with induced and abduced propositions, the truth of p remains uncertain. Against P4 it might be argued that God has

means, other than making the revealed status of propositions demonstrable, by which the truth of induced and abduced propositions may be made certain. However, I have shown in the thesis that faith, authority, and tradition do not make the revealed status and so the truth of induced propositions certain. Similarly, alleged divinely guided abduction and direct revelation do not make the revealed status, and so the truth, of abduced propositions certain. There could, of course, be some other way that the revealed status and, hence, the truth of induced and abduced propositions can be established. However, I suggest that my analyses to the contrary are exhaustive.

Conclusions C1 to C4 follow straightforwardly from P1 to P4. With respect to Premise 5 (P5), I have shown that the revealed status of induced and abduced propositions is not demonstrable. The material covered in Chapters 1 to 10 of the thesis is, in effect, to support of this one premise. For this reason, the premise is sound, and I have dealt with objections to the premise throughout the thesis. Premise 6 (P6) is straightforward. If the revealed status of a proposition is not demonstrable then no person, God included, has made the revealed status of the proposition demonstrable. C5, the desired conclusion, then follows straightforwardly from C4, P5 and P6.

For the reasons outlined, I conclude that the argument is theologically sound as well as being logically valid. Hence, the conclusion can be accepted as true.

Evaluation of the Argument

Assuming the argument is valid and sound, my strongest claim that propositions not demonstrably revealed are not revealed holds. Some Christians should not be surprised by this claim. For example, the Westminster Confession (Jeremiah, 1646/2010) stipulates that all that is required for salvation is either explicit in or deducible from CR. Yet, at the same time, the Westminster Confession affirms many propositions that are induced from CR, including propositions dealt with in this thesis. For this reason, even those Christians who

should not be surprised, might be surprised by the claim that those propositions not demonstrably revealed are not revealed. Other Christians would be expected to be surprised. In fact, many Christians have rejected the claim that certain unverified propositions are not revealed (Hess & Allen, 2008; Madrid, 2012). However, a good part of this thesis has been devoted to showing that attempts to include unverified propositions in CR (e.g., by appeal to faith, authority, tradition, material sufficiency and/or direct revelation) fail to secure the revealed status of propositions. For this reason, my claim is undefeated.

The implications for Christianity of this undefeated claim are profound. If the set of revealed propositions is co-extensive with the set of demonstrably revealed propositions, then the remaining propositions are not revealed. If not revealed, these propositions must be constructed by someone else other than God, presumably Christians. Yet, Christians are adamant that theirs is not a humanly constructed religion. On the basis of argument and example presented in this thesis, at best Christians are unable to substantiate this assertion. At worst the claim may not be substantiated because it is false. If false, then Christians are following a religion at least partly of their own making. Theologically, this is idolatry. More positively, Christianity does seem to be burdened by the constant defence of propositions (such as JiG, *Retribution* and *Hell*) that, on my account, are not revealed. If, on reflection, Christians concluded that these propositions are not revealed, their burden of defence would be considerably lightened. This thought will be pursued further in the next chapter.

It may be, of course, that my final argument does not hold and that some propositions not demonstrably revealed are revealed. Yet, I have shown that, even if this is the case, Christians have no means of showing which undemonstrated propositions are revealed. Hence, at best, Christians are left with an unsubstantiated claim that certain undemonstrated propositions are revealed. This claim would not seem to advance the cause of defending the revealed status of the propositions concerned very much at all. Certainly,

even a not very sceptical sceptic would be well within their epistemic rights to disregard the claim that unverified propositions are revealed.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I reviewed the findings of the thesis with respect to the verification of propositions. Specifically, the limitations of induction and abduction with respect to verification have been noted. I then made my final argument and concluded from that argument that undemonstrated, and thus unverified, propositions are not revealed. I also dealt with prospective objections to the final argument. Given these analyses, I assert that the conclusion of my final argument, and the findings and conclusions of the thesis as a whole, are well founded. In the next and last chapter of the thesis, I explore some implications of my final argument and conclude the thesis as a whole.

Chapter 13

Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter is to frame some implications and applications of my final argument and, having done so, to conclude the chapter and the thesis as a whole. These implications and applications represent directions for future research, and also demonstrate that the verification of revelation is important for more than theological or philosophical reasons. Many, if not all, of the implications and applications in this chapter do hold negative consequences for Christianity. However, with respect to each I attempt to strike a positive note, arguing that my thesis presents opportunities for Christianity to potentially adjust its commitments to certain propositions being revealed, thus lessening its epistemic and apologetic burden.

Implications

In this thesis I made and defended three claims. The first claim is that important propositions Christians say are revealed have not been demonstrated to be revealed (the “have not” claim). The second claim is that, by virtue of exhausting all possibilities, these propositions cannot be demonstrated to be revealed (the “cannot” claim). The third and strongest claim is that propositions that cannot be demonstrated to be revealed are not revealed (the “are not” claim). At minimum, the “have not” claim implies that Christians could be mistaken about the size of the corpus of divinely revealed propositions.

Propositions that have not been demonstrated (and thus verified) to be revealed are possibly not revealed. The “cannot” claim implies that if Christians have made a mistake about the size of the corpus revealed that this mistake cannot be positively identified or rectified. The corpus of putatively revealed propositions that cannot be verified may contain any number of non-revealed propositions, and these non-revealed propositions are indistinguishable

from revealed propositions that cannot be verified (should these latter propositions exist). Yet, if my third claim is right, then there are no such things as revealed propositions that cannot be verified. If so, then the only propositions contained in the set of unverified and unverifiable propositions are non-revealed propositions.

At best, then, Christianity may be confusing revealed and non-revealed propositions. At worst, they are. Moreover, neither faith, authority, tradition, material sufficiency, nor direct revelation rescue Christianity from this situation. Thus, where propositions are unverified by observation or inference from CR, Christians have no other way of distinguishing revealed from non-revealed propositions. For this reason, as a religion claiming to *know* what is revealed and what is not, Christianity is clearly compromised. Despite the gravity of this conclusion, some might think that this thesis represents a rather narrow academic pursuit with respect to the logic of divine revelation. In this chapter, I present reasons why this is not so. The thesis and its conclusions have wide implications for both believers and non-believers.

The integrating theme underpinning these implications is that overestimating the number of propositions revealed provides a lens for understanding important matters pertaining to belief and non-belief. Specifically, I examine the implications of this overestimation for divine revelation, deviation from the faith (heresy and apostasy), non-believers in Christianity, religious violence, theological disputation (including disputations leading to church and denominational divisions), and the doubting believer. These examples are not exhaustive. However, they are sufficient to demonstrate that the issue of overestimating the size of CR holds theological, social, and pastoral implications well beyond the core academic issue of verifying propositions alleged to be in CR.

Divine Revelation Revisited

Christians believe that they are in possession of divine revelation which they have the authority to explicate under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Christians also believe that they have the ability to distinguish revealed truths from non-revealed truths and from falsehoods. In Catholicism, for example, the Magisterium of the Church is said to preserve and teach divine truths which God has infallibly revealed. Protestant churches, similarly, start with the assumption that their own particular doctrines have been discerned as revealed truths. Assuming my strongest claim holds, however, Christians are in part mistaken that they are in possession of divinely revealed truths. Christians are in possession of revealed truths to the extent that what they believe to be revealed truths correspond to propositions explicit in or deduced from CR. However, they are not in possession of divine revelation with respect to induced or abduced propositions.

Overestimating the volume of CR is, in effect, adding to CR, which is theologically unlicensed. A common accusation directed at Christian cults e.g., Jehovah's Witnesses and Mormons, is that they have added to CR. Within orthodox Christianity, the same accusation is made by, say, Catholics of the Orthodox or Protestants. However, if my analysis is correct, then every branch of orthodox Christianity adds to revelation. On the other hand, those with a more restricted view of CR e.g., Unitarians who do not believe that the Trinity is revealed, may in fact have estimated the scope of revelation correctly on any particular matter.

The Westminster Confession states that: "The *whole* counsel of God, concerning *all* things necessary for his own glory, man's salvation, faith, and life, is either expressly set down in scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from scripture: unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelations of the Spirit or traditions of men" (Jeremiah, 1646/2010, p. 6). The claim of the *Confession*, then, is that everything required for salvation has been revealed, and nothing should be *added to* this

revelation. Only logical deduction *from* the propositions of Scripture is permitted. In contrast, according to my final argument, Christians have not adhered to the Westminster Confession. The “traditions of men” *have* been used to supplement CR. CR has been augmented. Sound exegesis has not been followed because induction and abduction have been used not to explicate CR but to amplify it.

One obvious response Christians may make is that they have developed their understanding of CR over time and I have confused this developing understanding with the amplification of CR. In other words, I have confused developmental explication with unauthorised amplification. In the fifth century, for example, Vincent of Lérins wrote, in *Commonitory*, that there *should* be progress within the church with respect to the understanding of revelation “on condition that it be real progress, not alteration of the faith” (cited in Svigel, 2012. p.125). The whole Church, then, ought to make progress in understanding CR but only consistent with “the same doctrine, in the same sense, and in the same meaning” (cited in Svigel, 2012. p.125). Thus, the First Vatican Council (Council Fathers, 1868/2019, Sess. 4., Ch. 4., para. 14), citing the *Commonitory*, stated that the meaning of sacred dogmas is to be perpetually retained and that there should never be deviation from that meaning on the grounds of a more profound understanding.

Based on my final argument, however, the church has gone beyond the mandate of both Vincent and the Vatican. The church has made false progress, has altered the faith, has not made doctrine in the same sense and the same meaning as original doctrine; all in the name of a more profound understanding of CR. As such, following Newman’s (1845/2014) categories, there has been deviation not just development. This deviation is not just a problem for the Catholic Church but for every division and denomination of Christianity, including the Reformed tradition from where the Westminster Confession arises. Christians, might argue that they have licence to go beyond deduction as any inductions on their part

are guaranteed by some means to be infallible. However, I have shown in Chapter 5 that neither faith, authority nor tradition guarantee the infallibility of induction.

Propositional statements in CR, so it is agreed across Christianity, cannot imply two or more contradictory “truths” at the same time. CR does not contain any logical contradictions. Christians, however, effectively create logical contradictions in CR through the differential use of induction. Moreover, defending contradictory propositions supposedly emanating from CR is the material of innumerable theological debates, and accompanying accusations of heresy and apostasy (see the discussion that follows). These contradictions and resultant disputations are unnecessary. If CR is not contradictory, then limiting CR to propositions arrived at by observation and deduction would avoid all disputation beyond arguments about textual indeterminacy. Certainly, textual indeterminacy is implicated in many theological disputes. Yet, beyond these textual disputes lie many other disputes that are based on competing inductions and not on any particular disagreements over the literal meaning of texts. It is not unreasonable to suggest that Christianity would be a far more peaceful and agreeable religion without induction as a method facilitating dispute.

Christianity, so it is alleged, *begins* with Scripture and its self-authenticating claim of inspiration. If so, CR ought to be foundational for the entirety of a Christian’s philosophical and theological dealings. Instead, with respect to many propositions, a coherentist approach is taken to CR using induction supplemented by abduction where necessary. When this approach is taken, Christians effectively make Scripture the end rather than the beginning of theology. In other words, Christians start with belief and move to the Bible (evidence), rather than the other way around. In doing so, belief dictates CR rather than CR dictating belief as is the case with explicit and deduced propositions.

Heretics and Apostates

Heresy may be defined as: (a) the denial or doubt of some truth which must be believed by virtue of it being revealed and/or (b) a doctrinal belief held in opposition to a revealed truth. To become a heretic, then, one must deny, question or oppose a revealed truth. Such denial, questioning or opposition, typically if not always leads to conflict with religious authority. Heresy implies an opinion at variance with the authorised teachings of the church, especially when such opinion promotes separation from the main body of faithful believers (called *schism*). In the Christian context, heretics do not include people of other faiths, but only self-professed Christians who deviate from orthodox teaching. Heresy, thus, represents a departure from the orthodox content of faith, while still identifying with the Christian faith as a whole.

Heresy is distinguished from apostasy, which denotes abandonment of the Christian religion as a whole and not just a denial of some doctrine of the religion. An apostate is not a heretic because the heretic remains a self-professed Christian, whereas the apostate does not. Since apostolic times, apostasy has been viewed as among the gravest of sins and, as such, worthy of the strictest punishments. Under the Christian Roman Empire, for example, apostasy was punishable by deprivation of civil rights, including the power to bequeath or inherit property (Van Hove, 1907/2020). During the late Middle Ages, apostates were subject to trial and often brutal punishment by Inquisition.

Throughout the history of the Christian church, conscientious objectors have been both literally and figuratively tried as heretics and apostates. The ground for such trial is that heretics and apostates challenge or abandon divine revelation. Yet, the charge of heresy dissipates if the doctrines which heretics reject are not revealed, or if heretics adopt doctrines contrary to doctrines not revealed. Somewhat differently, in cases where apostates abandon the whole Christian faith on the basis that *certain* putatively revealed propositions prove to be untenable for them, such apostasy may possibly be excused, or even rectified, if

the propositions concerned turn out not to be revealed. The point here is that the list of Christian heretics and apostates (past, present and future) may be considerably shortened if, in fact, the propositions rejected by heretics and apostates turn out not to be revealed. This point is not a trivial one as many heretics and apostates have lost their lives (and supposedly the eternal security of their souls) for not adhering to propositions whose revealed status is on my count questionable. However, if induced beliefs are not revealed, the moral danger of a person not believing those propositions is removed. Equivalently, non-belief in propositions not revealed is not a soul-threatening error and so can be treated as such by Christians.

To be fair, over time Christians have retracted, or are apparently in the process of retracting, the alleged revealed status of more than one proposition. Retracting the revealed status of a proposition is not the same thing as retracting a proposition that is still considered to be revealed. The latter, of course, is disqualified. If a proposition is revealed it must be held as truth. However, if the revealed status of a proposition is retracted, then one is at liberty to hold that the proposition is not, or at least may not be, true. Some examples of propositions formerly held to be revealed whose truth is now disputed by at least *some* Christians include:

- (a) the earth was created in six literal days (commonly now held not to be revealed by Christians, see Booth, 2003; Lennox, 2011);
- (b) women are not permitted to be ministers (still held by some branches of Christianity e.g., Catholics and Orthodox; but disputed in practice by many Protestants e.g., the Salvation Army, Quakers, and various Methodist, Episcopalian, and non-denominational churches);
- (c) homosexuality is morally wrong (many Christians voted *for* homosexual marriage in the recent plebiscites held in Ireland and Australia, see Livsey &

Ball, 2017; implying that these Christians do not perceive homosexuality itself to be morally wrong), and

- (d) specific mental and physical illnesses or conditions are caused by sin i.e., specific illnesses or conditions have a spiritual as opposed to psychological or physical cause (Covey, 2005).

It may be that over time Christians will retract the revealed status of other propositions. If my final argument is right, then the revealed status of the whole corpus of induced propositions is open to retraction, potentially making accusations of heresy and apostasy far less frequent and saving both heretics and apostates, and Christianity as a whole, much trouble and heartache. Nevertheless, contracting beliefs is more complicated in the case of religious belief than it is in the case of ordinary belief contraction. In the case of ordinary belief contraction, a belief is likely to be abandoned if it encounters sufficient recalcitrant evidence. I have shown, however, that in cases where a proposition is believed to be revealed, any amount of recalcitrant evidence may not be enough to dislodge the belief that the proposition is revealed. This situation is the case because: (a) in the revealed religious context, belief – even, or perhaps especially, belief in the face of recalcitrant evidence – is construed as a virtue, and (b) protective doctrines, which are ‘just’ theological hypotheses, licence the revision of evidence in favour of propositions believed to be revealed as demonstrated in the thesis.

For this reason, it may take an authoritative declaration, or something approximating a universal consensus amongst believers, for a believer to change their mind on the revealed status of a proposition. This is not to say that some Christians do not come to independent negative judgements of the revealed status of propositions, especially those propositions facing recalcitrant evidence. However, it does mean that in many cases evidence alone will not be enough to force belief contraction in the context of revealed religion. This conclusion

helps explain, in part, the entrenchment of religious beliefs in general, and beliefs about revealed propositions in particular.

Atheists, Agnostics and Other Religions

Atheists, agnostics and believers from other religions often reject Christianity on the basis not only that God does not exist but that, even if God does exist, many propositions in which the Christian tradition demands belief (e.g., Jesus is God, God required human sacrifice in order to forgive sins, and God will condemn potentially billions of people to hell) are objectionable on logical, ethical or other grounds (for a recent discussion see Oppy, 2013). Belief in these propositions is not negotiable as they supposedly represent truths revealed by God, which Christians are thus obliged to believe. For the same reason, belief in these propositions is a prerequisite for both membership in the church and (so it is said) entrance into heaven. Revealed propositions cannot be retracted because they come from God, and can never be altered because God never changes.

The effect of these observations is that there is no room for any flexibility with respect to divinely revealed propositions. Thus, objections to Christianity based on these propositions can never be removed because the propositions themselves can never be retracted or modified. Under my final argument, however, the number of revealed propositions is greatly reduced, which means that the atheist, agnostic or religious believer from outside Christianity may in fact have fewer objections to Christianity than appears to be the case. Conversely, if Christians did not hold as revealed as many contentious propositions as they currently do, the scope for agreement with those outside the faith would presumably increase. Christians then, for example, could allow that others dispute the divinity of Christ, the nature of the atonement, and the population of hell without allowing these disputes to shut down ongoing discourse. Of course, disputants of Christianity may still find any number of explicit or deduced propositions with which to disagree. However,

at least induced propositions can be taken off the table as matters not negotiable for the Christian.

Further, if certain induced propositions that are objectionable to others are not revealed, Christians need not find it necessary to attempt to convince those who find the propositions in question to be objectionable to adopt such propositions. It seems to me that much apologetic and evangelistic energy is wasted in the attempt to convince atheists and other non-believers of the reasonableness of propositions they find objectionable. If these objectionable propositions are not revealed, however, then the apologetic and evangelistic burden of Christianity is much reduced. Christians may also find themselves appreciating the faithfulness of adherents to other religions who hold beliefs contrary to induced Christian propositions, rather than labelling these other believers as misguided. The theme underlying these suggestions is that recognising the problem of induction, and so the possibility that propositions thought to be revealed may not be so, could allow Christians to hold to their beliefs while still being comfortable with atheistic non-belief, agnostic ambivalence to belief, and alternative religious beliefs.

Crusades, Inquisitions and Witch Hunts

In *The fixation of belief* Peirce (1877) said:

Our beliefs guide our desires and shape our actions. The Assassins, or followers of the Old Man of the Mountain, used to rush into death at his least command, because they believed that obedience to him would insure everlasting felicity. Had they doubted this, they would not have acted as they did. So, it is with every belief, according to its degree. The feeling of believing is a more or less sure indication of there being established in our nature some habit which will determine our actions. (pp. 5-6)

In the name of defending religious belief, including the belief that certain propositions are revealed, Christians have engaged in any number of unfortunate acts including crusades, inquisitions and witch hunts both literal and figurative. To be fair, acts

of this sort are not limited to Christians. However, Christianity certainly has been, and continues to be, a religion that is prepared to defend revealed propositions with violence to various degrees. For example, in the defence of revelation Christians have, in recent times, sometimes disgraced themselves with respect to their treatment of and/or attitudes towards homosexuals, immigrants illegal and otherwise, persons of colour, women, and the poor. Christian behaviour at abortion clinics motivated by the belief that *the infant in utero is a human being* is a revealed proposition is also a stark example of how the defence of divine revelation leads Christians to attitudes and behaviours that look decidedly unlike those of Christ.

If, however, the corpus of revealed propositions is smaller than typically conceived, Christians might find much less to fight about than they current do. This conclusion does not mean that Christians should not seek to defend that which they believe is revealed. However, the possibility that Christians can be wrong about the scope of that which is revealed could give Christians pause for thought. This pause may inspire a less acrimonious approach by some Christians to those who may otherwise be labelled by those Christians in ways that reduce their dignity and worth as human beings.

It might seem a little far-fetched that in the defence or alleged fulfilment of revealed propositions Christianity could again be involved in the modern-day equivalent of a crusade, inquisition or witch-hunt. Yet only two decades ago the thought that a religious *Jihad* in defence of the putatively revealed proposition (for fundamentalist Muslims) that *holy war against infidels is a religious duty* would have seemed perhaps equally far-fetched. My assertion is that all might benefit, religious believers included, if in any and every religion, believers felt they had less to defend or fulfil. Induced propositions in all religions would be a good place to start lessening the burden of such defence and fulfilment.

Theological Disputes

Christians divide regularly, deeply and bitterly over any number of theological matters despite the divine command to be unified (e.g., 1 Corinthians 1:10; Ephesians 4:3). Framing a satisfactory explanation for this propensity to divide has been attempted by many. Explanations include:

- (a) different sources of authority e.g., faith, tradition, or reason;
- (b) different metaphors for God e.g., Creator, Judge, Saviour, and Lover (McFague, 1982);
- (c) different bases for morality e.g., care/harm, liberty/oppression, fairness/cheating, loyalty/betrayal, authority/subversion, and sanctity/degradation (Haidt, 2012);
- (d) different ideologies e.g., feminist, indigenous, and Marxist; and
- (e) different psychological approaches to religion e.g., extrinsic, intrinsic and quest (Batson & Ventis, 1982).

I do not dispute these explanations *per se*. However, the underlying methodology that allows the expression of any given authority, metaphor, morality, ideology or psychology is induction. Induction is the *enabler* of different authorities, metaphors, moralities, ideologies and psychologies. With induction as its handmaiden, every perspective is able to claim support from CR, and thus is able to claim that its central tenants are revealed even if none of those tenants are demonstrably revealed.

Biblical inerrancy has been mooted as one solution to the problem of pervasive interpretive pluralism (Smith, 2012) that underpins theological disputes. For example, the Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy (International Council on Biblical Inerrancy, 1978) *denies* (its own language) that:

- (a) “human language is inadequate as a vehicle for divine revelation” (Article 4);

- (b) “inerrancy is negated by Biblical phenomena such as a lack of modern technical precision, irregularities of grammar or spelling, observational descriptions of nature, the reporting of falsehoods, the use of hyperbole and round numbers, the topical arrangement of material, variant selections of material in parallel accounts, or the use of free citations” (Article 13); and
- (c) “the legitimacy of any treatment of the text (the Bible) or quest for sources lying behind the text that leads to relativising, dehistoricising, or discounting its teaching, or rejecting its claims to authorship” (Article 18).

My final argument suggests, however, that *even if* language is sufficient for revelation, various features of the text do not compromise revelation, and there is no attempt to relativise, dehistoricise or discount the Bible; induction as a theological method still makes the Bible “impossible” (Smith, 2012) i.e., impossible to interpret in one unique way. Under induction, the Bible is made errant even if it is otherwise inerrant. In other words, even if the Bible is inerrant, any given proposition derived by induction from the Bible may be errant and we are none the wiser if this is the case. Thus, under induction we can never be certain what is revealed. Given that the revealed status of propositions induced from even an infallible Bible is questionable, it is not any great wonder that theological disputes persist even, perhaps especially, amongst those who claim the Bible to be inerrant.

Theological disputes, then, are not to be sourced only to linguistic difficulties, but also to the method of induction. This statement does not mean that there not important disputes over the meaning of certain biblical texts. However, it does mean that even if all these textual disputes were somehow resolved, induction would still fuel any number of ongoing theological disputes. A basic problem then is methodological not textual.

The Troubled Believer

Peirce (1877, Section 3) said that doubt is: “an uneasy and dissatisfied state from which we struggle to free ourselves and pass into the state of belief.” No doubt, the believer in revelation who nevertheless doubts the status of a putatively revealed proposition will be in an uncomfortable state indeed. For the religious believer, any disruption to the habit of belief is likely to be felt intensely. The dissatisfaction for the doubting believer in the present case is that they may doubt that a proposition alleged to be revealed is revealed. The believer may perceive that there is insufficient evidence in CR to support the alleged revealed status of the proposition concerned, or that there is more or less equal evidence in CR for and against the status of the proposition. A supposedly revealed proposition which is doubtful, therefore, is one where evidence is insufficient, or sufficiently balanced, such that the believer is unable to come to a settled conclusion concerning the revealed status of the proposition.

It may be helpful here to distinguish between a believer that may be troubled over the truth of their beliefs and the believer that may be troubled over the revealed status of their beliefs. The believer who is troubled over the revealed status of a belief need not necessarily be troubled over the truth of that belief. I would argue, however, that even the believer who continues to affirm the truth of their beliefs may nevertheless be troubled that this truth is not *indisputable* if a proposition representing that belief has not been shown to be revealed. The motivation for many religious believers is not just being certain (at least psychologically) that a belief is true, but being certain (epistemically) that the truth of their beliefs cannot be threatened. A threat to the revealed status of a belief opens the *possibility* that the belief may be false, and thus may be found to be false by the believer at some point. This possibility alone is enough to trouble some believers.

According to Peirce, the *irritation* (uneasiness and dissatisfaction) of doubt initiates a struggle to attain a settled state of belief. The immediate object of this struggle is to settle

opinion, in this case divergent opinions that a proposition is revealed or not. Peirce makes the interesting observation that in seeking to settle opinion the believer seeks a belief that they shall *think* to be true even if this belief is not demonstrably true. Whatever the case, in the context of revealed propositions, I can help put the believer out of their misery. The status of propositions that are demonstrably revealed will presumably not be in dispute. Demonstrably revealed propositions are unproblematically taken as revealed. Doubts concerning the status of propositions will apply to those propositions that are not demonstrably revealed. However, under my final argument, propositions not demonstrably revealed are not revealed, and so the matter is settled. Thus, if my final argument is right, resolution of doubt concerning the revealed status of propositions may be much easier for the doubting believer to achieve than might be first thought.

Nevertheless, the believer might still be uncomfortable abandoning a previously held belief that a given proposition is revealed and, as a result, may “cling tenaciously, not merely to believing, but to believing just what (they) do believe.” (Peirce, 1877, Section 3). However, if the evidence against a proposition being revealed continues to sow doubt in the believer’s mind, they have under my scheme the option to abandon the belief without abandoning the more general proposition that some beliefs are revealed. This puts the religious believer in a much better position than feeling (if they do) that they must abandon belief in revelation altogether just because they doubt the status of any particular proposition or set of propositions said to be revealed. Abandoning belief that a particular proposition or set of propositions alleged to be revealed is/are revealed, does not entail abandoning the belief that any number of other propositions may nevertheless be revealed.

Summary of Chapter and Thesis

This conclusion ends my analysis of some implications of my final argument, and concludes the thesis as a whole. In this chapter, I have shown that my final argument, and

the thesis more generally, has important implications for many matters salient to the Christian faith. The thrust of these implications is that overestimating the volume of CR lies at the heart of many problems facing individual Christians, Christianity as a whole, and even former and non-believers. Reducing the volume of CR, in contrast, may save all concerned much trouble.

I do not, of course, expect that my argument alone will cause Christians to reduce the number of propositions they hold to be revealed. However, the findings of this thesis do provide scope for Christians to do so. In brief these findings are:

- (a) propositions explicit in and deduced from CR are revealed;
- (b) at best, propositions induced from CR are not demonstrably revealed, but arguably are not revealed at all;
- (c) all attempts to rescue induced propositions as revealed propositions fail. In particular, abduction in the guise of Christian doctrine does not show that induced propositions are revealed not least because abducted propositions themselves are demonstrably not revealed; and
- (d) given (a) to (c), it can be concluded that Christianity is a revealed religion only in part. The claim that Christianity as a whole is a revealed religion is not supported by the thesis.

Importantly, I have arrived at the conclusion that Christianity is only partly a revealed religion whilst remaining charitable to Christianity. Throughout this thesis I have been careful to take Christianity on its own terms. I have conceded that there is a God, that God reveals himself, that the content of this revelation is captured in Christianity's sacred text, and that Christians are free to interpret their sacred text in order to explicate CR in any way they choose. Further, I have also allowed that where inference fails faith, authority, tradition, divinely guided abduction, and/or direct revelation may save the revealed status of

propositions. Despite all these concessions, Christianity comes up short in terms of verifying many of its most cherished propositions. I can only conclude that this is a serious problem for Christianity. If, in the end, Christianity cannot demonstrate based on its own evidence and methods that various propositions are revealed then one can reasonably and without malice dismiss or remain agnostic concerning Christianity's claims to revealed knowledge. The criticism often, and perhaps not unjustifiably, levelled by Christians that only people *not* reasonably seeking to take Christianity on its own terms fail to see the light of revelation does not apply to this thesis. I assert, then, that the concessionary, open, epistemically naked sceptic can nevertheless reach the conclusion that Christianity is not, even with respect to some of its core beliefs, an entirely revealed religion.

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