

## CLARK'S AXIOM: SOMETHING NEW?

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In the 1963 Wheaton Lectures, Gordon Haddon Clark presented his axiom: The Bible is the Word of God. At about this time many began to see a change in his position. Some were shocked because he acknowledged no truths not deducible from the Scriptures, whereas prior to the Wheaton Lectures he supposedly did. Voicing his objection Ronald H. Nash writes:

Clark's second theory of knowledge appears for the first time in his Wheaton Lectures which are contained in Part One of this volume. Professor Clark may deny that he has changed his mind or he may argue that his later view is contained implicitly in his earlier position but I shall contend near the end of this chapter that the two views are quite incompatible.<sup>1</sup>

According to Carl F. H. Henry there has been no fundamental change in Clark's philosophy: "While Clark has not altered the basic positions affirmed in *A Christian View of Men and Things*,<sup>2</sup> he has subsequently elaborated his view."<sup>3</sup> Gordon R. Lewis, whose summary of Clark's apologetic system won Clark's commendation as the best summary of his position he had ever read, does not mention the possibility of any fundamental revisions.<sup>4</sup> Clark himself sees no basic change over the years:

Indeed, if I have learned anything at all during a lifetime of philosophy, it is the exceedingly great difficulty in learning anything at all. And if anyone detects some change of view between my first and last publications, it is a greater emphasis on ignorance.<sup>5</sup>

The "exceedingly great difficulty" to which Clark is alluding is not due to the skepticism to which all learning that begins with man inevitably leads but to that of adding new truths to the Scriptural knowledge we already possess. Even if we accept the plenary verbal inspiration of the autographs we are a long way from having arranged the true propositions

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<sup>1</sup> *The Philosophy of Gordon Haddon Clark: A Festschrift* (ed. R. H. Nash; Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1968) 125.

<sup>2</sup> G. H. Clark, *A Christian View of Men and Things* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1952).

<sup>3</sup> C. F. H. Henry in *Festschrift* 18.

<sup>4</sup> G. R. Lewis, *Testing Christianity's Truth Claims* (Chicago: Moody, 1976) 100-124. Lewis' evaluation of Clark's philosophy does not measure up to his exposition of it. In G. H. Clark, *Clark Speaks from the Grave* (Jefferson: Trinity Foundation, 1986) 31-49, Clark points out several ways in which Lewis manifests a fundamental misunderstanding of his position.

<sup>5</sup> G. H. Clark in *Festschrift* 413-414.

into axioms and theorems. In short, we shall probably never achieve in this world the kind of certainty for which we ought to strive—that is, complete axiomatization. We shall have to be satisfied with partial knowledge. In fact we ought to be grateful for it because secular learning gives no truths at all—that is, truths in the sense in which Clark uses the term.

Clark did not alter his basic principles after *Men and Things*. He only seemed to do so because as he elaborated his position he also refined it, achieving greater simplicity and clarity than before. The unity stood out so starkly then that it was impossible to escape the fact that for him no truth is possible that has not been given in the Scriptures or is deducible from them. In addition to greater simplicity and clarity, there is evidence pointing to a serious effort on Clark's part to dispel any misunderstanding with respect to his attitude toward science and his true position on the relationship between science and theology. The purpose of this paper is not to argue that Clark's controlling principles remain the same—although I think they do—but rather to examine what may have triggered Clark's new tack and how its effects are manifested in the *Festschrift* and elsewhere.<sup>6</sup> Let me begin by looking at Clark's comments on Karl Barth's handling of Heinrich Scholz's scientific norms because I believe Clark's effort to understand and offer constructive solutions to what he regarded as serious problems in Barth's point of view inspired the new approach.

To clarify his position on the relationship between science and theology, Barth quotes Scholz's six norms of science and then discusses them. If Clark had been choosing contemporary scientific norms he would not have selected those of Scholz. In Clark's opinion E. Mach, H. Poincaré, P. Bridgman, H. Feigl, and the logical positivists' discussions of verifiability and articles in the *International Encyclopedia of Unified Science* would have been preferable.<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless Clark lists Scholz's norms, summarizes Barth's comments as fairly as he can, and then proposes solutions that he hopes Barth and those of similar persuasion might be willing to consider. Let me list the norms to provide a framework for this discussion: (1) proposition postulate—freedom from contradiction; (2) coherence postulate—unity in the objective sphere; (3) controllability postulate—criteria for testing; (4) congruity postulate—regard to what is physically and biologically impossible; (5) independence postulate—freedom from prejudice; (6) axiomatization—supreme claim that can be made on any science.<sup>8</sup>

Clark manifests a sympathetic attitude when he describes Barth's hesitancy to adopt the first norm, the law of contradiction. One of Barth's reasons is that Exodus 19–20 appears to be inconsistent with Jeremiah 31.<sup>9</sup> Clark interprets Barth as follows:

<sup>6</sup> E.g. G. H. Clark, *Karl Barth's Theological Method* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1963).

<sup>7</sup> Ibid. 53.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid. 55.

Barth's point is not merely that the Bible is inconsistent. He indeed holds that it is; he accepts only its main teaching and rejects the doctrine of infallible inspiration. But here he is talking about the theology, his own theology; and it is his own theology that he now says is illogical, unsystematic, and self-contradictory. The wording just quoted does not so much refer to the Biblical writers themselves as it refers to what the theologian can do with them.<sup>10</sup>

In fairness to Barth, Clark commends him for opposing twentieth-century irrationalism. Examples of this are an unexpected and brief praise of Hegel, opposition to the anti-intellectualism of the day and, finally, Barth's actual practice, which is often explicitly systematic.<sup>11</sup> After considering various possibilities Clark decides that Barth's hesitancy with respect to the law of contradiction is due to his desire to preserve essential Christian doctrines in the face of both modern scientism, which denies the possibility of miracles, and logical positivism, which looks upon all theological statements as nonsense. Why does Barth disparage logic if scientism needs refutation, Clark queries? Yet Barth accepts the first norm, the law of contradiction, in only a limited sense and rejects the last five *in toto*.<sup>12</sup>

Why does Barth believe theology must reject the second norm, which demands unity in the objective sphere, a legitimate requirement of any science? Postponing a more in-depth treatment of unity in theology to the sixth norm, Clark is content here with a brief defense of unity in general and a question as to whether, even for Barth, the divisions of theology are so unrelated that no unity may be found.

Barth cannot accept the controllability postulate, the third norm, which states that all propositions should be capable of testing by any reader or hearer who is sufficiently attentive. In Clark's opinion Barth rejects this norm because of the mistaken assumptions that all scientific truth is obtainable by laboratory experimentation and that theological truth is not to be discovered by just any reader or hearer but by devout men studying revelation.<sup>13</sup> While Clark concurs that science cannot be the standard for the Church, his solution of course would be to reject modern scientism altogether and adopt as the test for all truth the orthodox Protestant criterion—namely, the Bible.<sup>14</sup> Clark disagrees with Barth that only the regenerate can discover Christian truth. The ability to discover Scriptural truths usually depends more upon one's intellectual gifts than regeneration, although understanding without belief does the unregenerate no good from an eternal standpoint. Morality in the Christian sense is possible only for the regenerate. Clark sums up the difference:

<sup>10</sup> Ibid. 56.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid. 57-58.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid. 60.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid. 61.

"While no act of will can be moral in the unregenerate man, it does not follow that no intellectual argument can be valid."<sup>15</sup>

In considering the first norm, Barth is interested in how the law of contradiction pertains to contradictions within a given theology. With the fourth norm, the congruity postulate, which asserts that a science must have regard to what is physically and biologically possible, he looks at contradictions between theology and an external body of science. Clark asks:

Why does Barth object to this postulate? Can anyone defend the position that theology is at liberty to assert as true what science has shown to be impossible? This would be nothing other than the medieval theory of twofold truth and must be judged as disastrous. If the Virgin Birth and the Resurrection are in fact biologically impossible, any theology that wanted to assert them would have to reject the Congruity Postulate. But to believe true in theology what one believes false in science is the virulent irrationalism of self-contradiction.<sup>16</sup>

In defense of his position Barth claims that a Christian, in constructing a theology, should have no regard to what is physiologically or biologically possible. He need not acknowledge the current concept of science as authoritative in theology. Nor need he feel obliged, as a means of self-justification, to oppose to the current theory of science one more friendly to Christianity. Philosophers and theologians are brothers in a common quest for truth. Even though their methods are different they should respect each other and never presume that one method excludes the other. Clark wonders how Barth can make statements similar to the above when all that he said against modernism seemed to imply the contrary—namely, that it is impossible to rise from experience of the space-time world to an overarching structure in which God rules. Clark continues:

Here in opposing the Congruity Postulate Barth seems to think that science and theology can each go its own way without disturbing the other. He seems to ignore what other people find so obvious: that the contemporary scientism flatly contradicts Christianity. If the one is true, the other must be false.<sup>17</sup>

In Clark's opinion the Christian theologian is duty-bound to propose a theory of science that does not flatly contradict the Scriptures.

When Clark was preparing the 1963 Wheaton Lectures and his work on Barth he thought it an especially propitious time to hope for a reinterpretation of science because most of the scientific community had rejected nineteenth-century scientism and its twentieth-century continuation. K. Pearson, a fair representative of the nineteenth-century view, "not only claimed that 'the scientific method is the sole gateway to the whole region of knowledge' but that its results are 'absolute judgments,'"<sup>18</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Clark in *Festschrift* 75.

<sup>16</sup> Clark, *Theological Method* 62–63.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.* 64.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.* 65 from *Grammar of Science* 24, 6.

and A. J. Carlson, his twentieth-century counterpart, "held that the method of science is 'the rejection *in toto* of all non-observational and non-experimental authority in the field of experience.'"<sup>19</sup> According to Clark the Newtonian laws that were thought to be descriptions of how the world really works have been replaced in the minds of many by the theory of operationalism:

This type of thought denies that the laws of science describe the processes of the real world: Scientific concepts, instead of being transcripts of "antecedent being," are plans for future laboratory procedure. They are directions for the use of apparatus in the production of some desired result.<sup>20</sup>

Clark concludes his discussion of the fourth norm with this question: "How then can science declare what was physically or biologically impossible in the past or future, if it cannot do so for the present?"<sup>21</sup>

The fifth norm, which is freedom from any sort of prejudice, Clark rejects as irrelevant. On Clark's view a prejudice is a presupposition—usually one that is held without one's realizing it. Since neither science nor theology nor any theory or person is free of presuppositions, to recommend that one be without them is pointless. Clark—and presumably Barth too—realizes this and would like people to choose their presuppositions wisely. Hence Barth rejects Scholz's fifth norm.

The sixth and last norm, to which Barth gives no name, Clark calls axiomatization, which is "simply the perfecting and exhibiting of the logical consistency of a system of thought."<sup>22</sup> Since Barth did not like systematization we may infer that he had still less use for axiomatization. Barth cannot admit even the possibility that the norms of theology control the other sciences because "to put itself in a systematic relationship with other sciences, theology would have to regard its own special existence as fundamentally necessary. That is exactly what it cannot do."<sup>23</sup> Clark disagrees with Barth:

To the modern mind Barth is right; but a more skeptical view of the amount of truth obtainable by experimentation, with the help of operationalism, might bring the idea of subordination back again within the limits of possibility.<sup>24</sup>

Clark refuses to accept a logical chasm between science and theology and, as he mentions repeatedly, calls for a revision of the popular philosophy of science that takes every scientific theory at face value.

Rejecting Barth's three conclusions, Clark terminates his chapter on "Dogmatic Method" with his own final statements:

<sup>19</sup> Ibid. 65 from *Science* 73 (1931) 217-225.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid. 66.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid. 95.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid. 67-68.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid. 68.

First, rationality, which is indispensable to all exchange of ideas, requires a unification of the sciences. Second, since modern scientism cannot supply it [*sic*] own norms, theology should redefine science and rule as queen. Third and last, these two conclusions necessitate attention to axiomatization, permit a direct confrontation with the outside world, and among other things require a great trust in the law of contradiction.<sup>25</sup>

Despite vigorous criticism of Barth's position on the relationship between science and theology, Clark's attitude toward him is sympathetic, probably because of Barth's devastating refutation of modernism and his insistence on revelation as his axiom, not to mention his lifelong devotion to the search for truth. Clark also treats gently Barth's close encounter with a twofold truth theory when he writes: "Thus the reader receives the doubtless *unintended impression* of a theory of twofold truth."<sup>26</sup> That Clark made every effort to see things from Barth's perspective is clear from the following:

It must be confessed that there are two directions from which one may approach Barth. If one comes to Barth from the position of liberalism—and this is how Barth himself developed his theology—he seems to have made a brilliant rediscovery of the Reformation. But if one comes to Barth with a mind full of Charles Hodge, the Westminster Confession, and John Calvin, that is, if one evaluates Barth from the standpoint of Reformed theology, he seems to have generated some insoluble problems by having missed the clear distinctions of the Reformers.<sup>27</sup>

Why did Clark's reflections on Barth's attitude toward theology and science trigger a shift of emphasis—a different tack—and what were its manifestations? Clark's wrestling with the many ambiguities in Barth's manner of expression must have made him wonder whether he, too, had failed to achieve the perspicacity he sought. He must have realized also that if such a devout, gifted and dedicated Christian theologian as Karl Barth had been confused by contemporary scientism, there were doubtless others who were equally perplexed and possibly as deserving of gentle treatment. Since the theory of science that gave Barth so much trouble flatly contradicts Christianity and still holds sway among some popularizers and their audiences, it is easy to understand Clark's apologetic concern in this area. Nevertheless Clark's efforts to point out flaws in scientism appear to have backfired, causing many to think he had little use for science in general. What could he do? What did he do? Because of the popular misunderstanding of the purpose of science, which is not to give absolute judgments about the whole region of knowledge as A. J. Carlson claimed, it was important to continue the attack on scientism. But this time Clark strives to make it clear that he opposes false theories of science and not true science. While he admires true science as much as ever, he expresses his esteem for it more often than in the past. He

<sup>25</sup> Ibid. 75.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid. 97 (*italics mine*).

<sup>27</sup> Ibid. 159.

manifests a sympathetic understanding of the reader's difficulties by patiently repeating his unusual definitions. An optimistic tone and a more pronounced attention to priorities are two other manifestations of Clark's new tack.

One cause of the widespread misunderstanding of Clark's attitude toward science is the frequency with which he refers to the study of philosophy as an act of worship. Does he mean that other intellectual endeavors undertaken by Christians for the glory of God are not also acts of worship? Of course not. Some have thought so, however. I think Nash's parenthetical words in the following statement were meant to help correct this common misconception of Clark's attitude toward all intellectual endeavor in general and science in particular: "Therefore, for the Christian, the study of philosophy (as well as the study of science) should never be regarded as a secular pursuit."<sup>28</sup>

Clark's analysis of Barth's reaction to Scholz's norms should convince any reader that, far from disparaging true science, Clark admired its methods and desired something equally excellent for theology. This may have been one of his reasons for selecting the term "axiom" with its mathematical connotations rather than "first principle" for his Wheaton Lectures. The single axiom was also the logical conclusion to his philosophy after years of refinement. It embraces more than many seem to realize:

It [the axiom] is fruitful because there is embedded in it the law of contradiction, plus the nature of God, . . . plus the thousands of propositions thus declared true. . . . The form of deduction can be maintained. . . . The truths of Scripture can be arranged in patterns of logical subordination.<sup>29</sup>

The fact that deduction can be maintained—something a less fruitful single first principle could not have done—is important. In the following passage Clark explains why he thinks so highly of deduction:

Yet there is no method of understanding superior to deduction. For some restricted purposes, particularly for elementary religious needs, a knowledge that something is so is sufficient. But a greater degree of faith, belief, knowledge, and understanding requires a grasp of why something is so. And since God's revelation is rather ample, it would seem that he wishes us to have an ample understanding. Axiomatization, deduction, systematization are therefore considered desirable.<sup>30</sup>

Besides clarifying his attitude toward science and the kind of accuracy he coveted for theology, which—thanks to deduction—has something in common with science, Clark elaborates his epistemological realism. The failure to understand the difference between a theory of knowledge that holds that "the mind can actually possess the truth, the real truth" and an empirical one that "holds that the mind has only an image, a picture,

<sup>28</sup> R. H. Nash in *Festschrift* 5.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.* 88.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.* 89.

a representation, an analogy of the truth, but does not have the truth itself"<sup>31</sup> is behind Gordon Lewis' lack of success in understanding some of what he described so accurately. Lewis seemed to think Clark would challenge his contention that scientific laws are more accurate than common opinions, but Clark replies:

No one should contest Lewis's assertion that the laws of science are more accurate than common opinions. The laws of science are mathematical equations and therefore completely accurate. Common opinions are ordinary English and are usually very inaccurate. We ordinarily say, the stone is falling. We do not usually say the stone and the earth are approaching each other at a certain rate. But the apologetic question is not the accuracy of an equation, but its truth. Falsehood can be completely accurate. English can be accurate: It is always possible, but extremely awkward, to state an equation in English. But the question is, Do these accurate equations correctly describe how things move?<sup>32</sup>

Why are scientific laws accurate but not true while common opinions are usually inaccurate but often true? One reason is that language is less precise than mathematics. Another, which pertains more directly to the difference between empiricism and realism, is that scientific equations depend ultimately upon observation. Data assembled in this fashion, no matter how carefully controlled, can never be true in the sense Clark uses the term—that is, the information can never be comprised of immutable, eternal and universal truths. Consequently one cannot hope to answer by this method such ultimate questions of nature as how things move, a question that has perplexed philosophers and scientists from the beginning of history and that is basic to all the physical sciences.<sup>33</sup> On the other hand, common opinions are often true. All truth comes from God, for "Christ is the light that lighteth every man." In an important passage on intellectual intuition Clark points out that our relationship to the mind of God is much more intimate than most people realize,<sup>34</sup> for "in him we live, and move, and have our being" (Acts 17:28). If it were not for the noetic effects of sin we should not need the Scriptures to test the truth of our opinions. "The problem," says Clark, "is to elaborate a method by which the two classes [false and true opinions] can be distinguished."<sup>35</sup> Setting forth such a method as "an hypothesis for consideration" was the subject of the Wheaton Lectures.

Clark had already adopted operationalism, the view mentioned earlier in connection with Scholz's fourth norm, when he wrote the above paragraph in reply to Lewis. Some have thought his choice of operationalism a bit premature. But, surely, having a clear-cut view of science and ceasing to oscillate between two incompatible views of science helped him

<sup>31</sup> Ibid. 440.

<sup>32</sup> Clark, *Clark Speaks* 34-35.

<sup>33</sup> See G. H. Clark, *The Philosophy of Science and Belief in God* (Nutley: Craig, 1964).

<sup>34</sup> Clark in *Festschrift* 406.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid. 91.



to attain the greater simplicity, clarity and force he sought in 1963 and after. This desire alone suffices to explain why Clark ceased to waver between a descriptive theory of science and an operational one. But why did he choose operationalism? I think it was because of his agreement with the argument of the great mathematician, Henri Poincaré, concerning mechanical models. Of Poincaré he has this to say:

Henri Poincaré explained the point in simple language when discussing Lord Kelvin's reliance on mechanical models. It is always possible, he grants, to construct a mechanical model of a natural phenomenon; the trouble is that it is always possible to construct an indefinite number of models of the same phenomenon. Hence no one of them can be seriously taken as the description of what actually happens. Operationalism carries the argument forward and reduces scientific laws to directions for laboratory procedure.<sup>36</sup>

With the adoption of operationalism Clark begins to exhibit—at least temporarily—an optimism not generally associated with him, an optimism that led him to hope there might be some way to bring physics—and zoology too as he says in another place—under the authority of the Scriptures:

If God orders the world, and if the world is as God orders it to be, then the science of physics, whether operational or descriptive of nature, must be subsumed under theology in an ideally unified system.<sup>37</sup>

The above passage suggests that when the controlling principle of physics is deduced from the Scriptures, we shall know whether its purpose is operational or descriptive of nature and physics will find its proper place in a Christian philosophy. It also suggests that, although Clark's choice is operationalism, he still concedes that a descriptive view of science remains a possibility.

While in the past Clark had expected his readers to keep constantly in mind his uncommon definitions, he now realizes that most readers need to be reminded frequently that the object of knowledge is truth and that truth is revealed, immutable and eternal in opposition to other kinds of knowledge, which he describes as everyday, popular, or ordinary.

Clark's new tack manifests also a desire to focus on what is most essential. For example, he concludes his second Wheaton Lecture with a short but epistemologically enlightening section entitled "Trivial Technicalities."<sup>38</sup> Is the title meant to tell us that when we systematize what we have learned we may find it not nearly so important and deserving of time and space as we had originally thought? This new sense of urgency or rethinking of his priorities is also seen in the way Clark answers Nash concerning Kant's *a priori* categories. Nash wonders why Clark never produced his own list since he obviously did not like Kant's. Clark

<sup>36</sup> Clark, *Theological Method* 66.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid. 68.

<sup>38</sup> Clark in *Festschrift* 87-92.

explains that he never worked on the problem, but that if he ever did he would probably be satisfied with the forms of logic without the Kantian deductions.<sup>39</sup> Why did Clark deliberately avoid a topic so closely allied to his own specialty if it was not to have more time to devote to the search for truth? At the beginning of his third Wheaton Lecture he seems to wish to discourage excessive speculation on epistemology when he writes: "It may be difficult or even impossible to deduce from Scripture an enumeration of the *a priori* categories other than the law of contradiction."<sup>40</sup> The same concern for priorities is seen when, after complimenting G. I. Mavrodes for his mathematical elegance and admitting he has something to learn in this area, Clark excuses himself with these words: "Some machinery is necessary; and it is quite likely that in my *hurry to get somewhere* I have not sufficiently streamlined my engine."<sup>41</sup>

It is not surprising, therefore, to see that Clark continues to omit in his commentaries whatever he considers an unnecessary display of erudition. What he does seems justified since he wrote for serious Reformed laymen who wished to understand the meaning of the text without having to wade through interpretations they were not likely to remember or need. Sometimes of course it was necessary to study other interpretations, and when it was Clark gave them along with the arguments pro and con. Usually—probably always—there are insights in his commentaries that remind the reader of the new emphasis. Often they are older interpretations Clark would like to see reinstated, like Weymouth's rendering of "more permanent" for *bebaioteran* (2 Pet 1:19).<sup>42</sup> The theological treatises were also written for representative laymen, and footnotes, although often extremely erudite, are sparse. The history of the development of the doctrines in question is discussed with clarity. The insights are often expansions of ideas hinted at in *What Do Presbyterians Believe?*<sup>43</sup> Some are probably important enough to be studied in connection with the next revision of the Westminster Confession, such as the deduction of supralapsarianism from the Scriptures<sup>44</sup> and the desirability of omitting the term "substance" to describe the principle of individuation, a change for which he argues in another work.<sup>45</sup>

The Wheaton Lectures reflect the same priorities. Clark apparently hoped that he could leave as his legacy the barebones framework for a Christian philosophy. In order to concentrate on truth he doubtless omitted some of his most brilliant epistemological speculations. Ironically many of the critics who wrote for his *Festschrift* elected to discuss

<sup>39</sup> Ibid. 404.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid. 94.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid. 442 (italics mine).

<sup>42</sup> G. H. Clark, *II Peter: A Short Commentary* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1972) 28.

<sup>43</sup> G. H. Clark, *What Do Presbyterians Believe?* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1956).

<sup>44</sup> Ibid. 49–55; See also R. Nicole's comments in *Festschrift* 479–484.

<sup>45</sup> G. H. Clark, *The Trinity* (Jefferson: Trinity Foundation, 1985) 106.

epistemology and its metaphysical implications. Although we are the richer for his replies, Clark must have been disappointed that these scholars were in no hurry to begin work on what he regarded as their duty:

In my opinion a sinner, until he becomes a Christian, not only has a right but an obligation to decide what world-view to accept; and after he becomes a Christian he has an obligation, consistent with his academic ability and vocation, to elaborate a world-view as best he can.<sup>46</sup>

Although the historical study of epistemology helps one to understand why only the Scriptures can provide a basis for knowledge, it is pointless for Christian scholars to dwell on this discipline to the exclusion of history, politics, ethics, science, and theology or religion because the knowledge we can have of epistemology is limited and some of its questions may be unanswerable. We can rejoice, however, that

the axiom of verbal revelation, starting with propositional truth, is not embarrassed by the difficulty of developing perception out of a pre-perceptual state of mind, or of constructing concepts out of perceptual images. In particular it by-passes the impossibility of arriving at universal judgments on the basis of limited experience. The postulate of verbal revelation is an epistemological success because the revelation is itself knowledge.<sup>47</sup>

We are not obliged to be omniscient in order to know anything. The Christian view makes partial knowledge possible.

Gordon Clark's study of Karl Barth, particularly his treatment of the relationship between science and theology, led him to clarify his own position on this subject and to concentrate on presenting related truths and theories with greater clarity and simplicity than he had before his in-depth study of Barth. Thus Clark's axiom as a manifestation of his drive for greater clarity and simplicity is something new in the limited sense of a new tack. He also sought to convey a sense of urgency about getting on with the task of elaborating a Christian philosophy and of optimism with respect to the outcome.

<sup>46</sup> Clark in *Festschrift* 464.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.* 93-94.