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EPISTEMOLOGY AND PRESUPPOSITIONAL THOUGHT

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EPISTEMOLOGY AND PRESUPPOSITIONAL THOUGHT

by

Courtney Krause

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in partial fulfillment

of the requirements for University Honors Scholars

Southeastern University

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2019

Dedication

Dedicated to my uncle, Jeffery Krause. Thank you for inspiring me and challenging my thoughts.

You introduced me to Reformed theology, and my understanding of the God of Scripture will never be the same. I am more appreciative than I am able to express for your example to our family and your passion to teach the Word of God.

Acknowledgements

I must acknowledge and thank my Lord Jesus Christ. Thank you to my family and friends, who have contributed so much to my growth and understanding over the years. Thank you to my thesis advisor, Dr. Joseph Davis. The confidence and patience which you have instilled in me throughout this project has been priceless. I am truly grateful. Thank you to Professor Yoon Shin for each book you have allowed me to borrow from your library. Thank you to every teacher, coach, and professor who has influenced me to achieve excellence.

Abstract

This paper will present the coherency of Reformed Christian theism's presuppositional epistemology. It will argue for the biblical foundation of presupposing the existence and truth of God in every aspect of one's life. This presupposition will be presented as the necessary component for interpreting the revelation of God correctly and righteously. This presupposition is vital, as it acknowledges Christ as sovereign over the realm of thought. Indeed, from the Reformed Christian theistic perspective, understanding reason presuppositionally from Scripture is the only way to reason which is honoring to God. It claims any lack of acknowledgement of and submission to Jesus Christ, even in one's thought, as sinful repression of the truth. Hence, epistemology from the presuppositional perspective will be surveyed and presented as the coherent and biblical approach to the theory of knowledge, within this paper.

KEYWORDS: epistemology, presuppositional thought, Reformed Christian theism, knowledge, coherency

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Introduction

Upon beginning this work, there is the necessity of defining the terms at hand. First and foremost, the word *coherency* will be used in the sense of Biblical and logical consistency. In essence, *coherency* would mean that a certain doctrine or idea is both Biblically and logically consistent and does not have any point of contradiction within these areas. Secondly, the term *epistemology* refers to the theory of knowledge or how one knows what one knows. Thirdly, the term *presuppositional thought* refers to the Reformed method of assuming the truth, infallibility, and inerrancy of God's Word at the outset of every endeavor. This term can also be used to describe a "basic heart commitment" which governs a person's life and thought.¹ Fourthly, *Reformed Christian theism* specifically refers to the branch of theism which claims that the God of the Bible has revealed himself to mankind through his word (special revelation) and through nature (general revelation). He is the ultimate source of all things, including knowledge and reason. Therefore, he defines all things and all things are ultimately for his glory in *Reformed Christian theism*.

Fifthly, the term *a priori* is defined by John Frame as "Knowledge acquired prior to experience, used to interpret and evaluate experience."² The term *a posteriori* is defined by the same as "knowledge arising out of experience."³ Additionally, Frame defines the word *univocal* as placing oneself and one's logic as ultimate in one's thought and reasoning from this perspective.⁴ In contrast, the word *analogical* can be understood as "Thinking in subjection to God's revelation and therefore thinking God's thoughts after him."⁵ Ninthly, the term *revelation*

¹ John Frame, *Cornelius Van Til: An Analysis of His Thought* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 1995), 136.

² John Frame, "A Van Til Glossary," *IIM Magazine Online* 2, no. 35 (fall 2000): 1, accessed October 17, 2018.

³ *Ibid.*, 1.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 1.

refers to that which is revealed or made evident by an act from God to man. The idea of *absolute personality* can be known as the “basic characterization of God” as both absolute and personal (completely self-contained with the qualities of personhood).⁶ The term *transcendental argument* refers to the inquiry which attempts to discover what one must presuppose or assume about experience in order to acquire true knowledge.⁷ Finally, *the noetic effect of sin* is the effect of sin on the mind of man.⁸ Often this effect is seen in the sinner’s repression of the knowledge of God.⁹

The issue of coherency in Christian epistemology is frequently overlooked and dismissed as nonessential. Often Christians find themselves saying or thinking, “Even if it does not make sense, I must still believe it because I am a Christian.” Likewise, there is the common statement, “Well, this issue does not affect my salvation, so it really does not matter.” The blatant dismissal of logic in Christian epistemology has created a culture of blissful ignorance full of inhabitants who are content to live lives of hypocrisy. It is a tragedy that those who claim to possess the ultimate truth are often made the laughing stock within intellectual circles. The utter lack of reason within their theory of knowledge confounds the unbelieving intellectuals they are trying to convert. The hypocrisy of Christians who are content to live their lives thinking and acting in a way that is incoherent with God’s Word and his inherent laws of logic will continue to repulse these reasonable individuals. Therefore, my thesis statement is as follows: logical coherency in Christian epistemology can be attained within the presuppositional method of Reformed Christian theistic thought because it presupposes a Christian theistic worldview that is based on

⁶ Ibid., 1.

⁷ Frame, *Cornelius Van Til: An Analysis of His Thought*, 133.

⁸ Frame, “A Van Til Glossary,” 4.

⁹ Ibid., 4.

the infallible Word of God. The purpose of this paper is an expanded literature review of topics within Reformed presuppositional epistemology and epistemology in general.

Why are so many Christians content to live in a state of logical confliction? This observation of the feeble state of common Christian thought has sparked several more questions:

- What is coherency in Christian epistemology and who defines it?
- Is there such a thing as complete coherency?
- What makes Reformed Christian theistic thought more coherent than other perspectives?
- How does coherent epistemology influence every area of a person's life?

These questions have inspired the project at hand. While there may not be an exact answer presented for each of these questions within this paper, the topics which associate them with the field of epistemology will be addressed.

Review of Literature

Reformed thought starts with the presupposition that God is the beginning of knowledge. Proverbs 9:10 states “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight.”¹⁰ Therefore, all truth must inherently stem from this ultimate truth. In his book *Always Ready*, Greg Bahnsen presents the realm of knowledge or epistemology as being under the Lordship of Jesus Christ.¹¹ He presupposes the truth of Scripture as God’s Word and refutes all aspects of a neutral stance in epistemology. All things, even truth, are under the authority of Jesus Christ and it is sinful and unbiblical for the Christian to attempt reasoning outside of him.

Bahnsen stresses that the fear of the Lord is the *beginning* of knowledge.¹² Therefore, for one to begin their reasoning outside of God necessarily requires that God can be reasoned to. In other words, it requires that God would not be ultimate in and of himself. There would be other absolutes, like reason in this case, that could be found outside of God which would be equal to or greater than him. This, however, would create numerous biblical and logical inconsistencies. Consequently, in order for Reformed epistemology to be coherent it requires an intrinsic presuppositional stance. It also requires that those who approach it take this stance as well. Reformed thought refuses to submit to the illusion that there is such a thing as a neutral stance. Furthermore, as the author stresses, the Bible calls us to faithfully presuppose the God of Scripture in our knowledge and reason.

The famous debate between Dr. Bahnsen and Dr. Gordon Stein called “A Transcendental Argument for God’s Existence” further elaborates the presuppositional necessity of the approach

¹⁰ Prov. 9:10 (ESV) All further references will be from the ESV unless otherwise noted.

¹¹ Greg L. Bahnsen, *Always Ready: Directions for Defending the Faith*, ed. Robert R. Booth (Nacogdoches, TX: Covenant Media Press, 2011), 1-26.

¹² *Ibid.*, 1-26.

to Reformed thought.¹³ This debate was an attempt to answer the question of whether or not God exists. Bahnsen uses the transcendental argument for the existence of God, which is the argument that strives to prove God's existence through the logical impossibility of the opposite. In essence, this argument states that belief in the Christian God must be presupposed by every worldview even while those worldviews are attempting to argue against him. Using this approach, Bahnsen tears down Stein's argument and exposes its logical inconsistencies. Specifically, the very laws of nature, logic, and morality that Stein was using in his argument against God's existence cannot be supported by an atheistic worldview. Stein was unwittingly presupposing Christian theistic standards of nature, logic, and morality while simultaneously arguing against their authority. The effect of the debate displays that logical coherency can only be found in Christian theistic thought that is Scripturally based, as Bahnsen advocated and presupposed in his argumentation.

Dr. Randall Otto discusses the history of the presuppositional apologetic movement, the presuppositional epistemology, and the presuppositional argument as a whole in his article "Renewing Our Mind: Reformed Epistemology and the Task of Apologetics."¹⁴ The author compiled many of the most defining statements made by the originators of the movement; this includes thoughts from Calvin, Bavinck, Kuyper, Van Til, and others. He gives an overview of these statements and the influence they had on the presuppositional apologetic movement. He also addresses where each figure stood relative to the viewpoints of his culture. Otto then begins his presentation of the presuppositional understanding of epistemology and the nature of

¹³ Greg Bahnsen and Gordon Stein, "A Transcendental Argument for God's Existence," in *Christian Apologetics: An Anthology of Primary Sources*, ed. Khaldoun A. Sweis and Chad V. Meister (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), 139-67.

¹⁴ Randall Otto, "Renewing Our Mind: Reformed Epistemology and the Task of Apologetics," *Evangelical Quarterly* 88, no. 2 (April 2016): 111-125, accessed March 3, 2018.

knowing God. This ties into his argument for the validity of presuppositional apologetics as a whole. The author's main point is that one cannot know outside of God since God is the source of all revelation and knowledge. He incorporates the viewpoints of the aforementioned, most prominent thinkers in the field in order to come to this conclusion.

One of these thinkers, Cornelius Van Til, who is known as the father of modern presuppositional apologetics, also describes the necessity of presuppositional thought in the Reformed perspective.¹⁵ In "Authority and Reason," the last chapter within the work *Christian Apologetics*, Van Til discusses the necessity of the presuppositional apologetic method for the infallibility of Scripture and the logic of Christian thought.¹⁶ The author comes to the conclusion that consistent logical reasoning must presuppose the truth of the Bible through his inspection of some popular philosophical positions on what makes something authoritative. First, he argues and exposes the fact that every worldview and philosophical position carries its own presuppositions. After finding the results of each position inadequate on the basis that they logically violate their own subjective sources of authority, he turns to the Reformed position. This position assumes that God's Word is infallible and authoritative, and reasons from this presupposition. Van Til demonstrates, using examples in logic, that any reasoning which is not based from Scripture will necessarily violate itself. The author states that this is true because all wisdom, knowledge, and reason is from God. Therefore, reasoning toward God is logically impossible since every thought, even the thought of the atheist, is something that God has already thought of before and ordains. It is for these reasons that Van Til defends the authority

¹⁵ Cornelius Van Til, *Christian Apologetics*, ed. William Edgar (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing Company, 2003), 161-197.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 161-197.

and infallibility of Scripture and Reformed thought, and he proposes that any logical person ought to presuppose the Bible as the only objective source of truth from which to reason.

Furthermore, Van Til's book *An Introduction to Systematic Theology* goes into greater detail about the subjects of epistemology and systematic theology.¹⁷ In many ways, the author's ideas are repeated or reworded. Essentially, Van Til states here that God is incomprehensible to humanity but completely self-comprehensive. He is absolute rationality. Therefore, there is separation in the levels of knowledge between God and humanity. While God's knowledge is whole and self-contained, man's knowledge is merely an incomplete reinterpretation of God's original thoughts. Isaiah 55:8-9 states, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts."¹⁸ This verse clearly distinguishes the separation in the levels of knowledge between God and man. Man cannot exist or know outside of God. Therefore, all knowledge that man has is dependent upon the act of God's revelation to man. Humanity cannot know outside of God because God defines all things, including knowledge.

John Frame's work *Cornelius Van Til: An Analysis of His Thought* outlines Van Til's life, place in history, systematic theology, epistemology, and more.¹⁹ Frame excellently clarifies many of Van Til's main points from his previously mentioned works. He describes the ultimate standard of intelligibility in the transcendental argument that Van Til uses as the revelation of God. The author also goes into deeper detail about the transcendental argument as a whole and states that through the argument Christianity can be both proven and used to measure other

¹⁷ Cornelius Van Til, *An Introduction to Systematic Theology* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1974), 8-61.

¹⁸ Isa. 55:8-9

¹⁹ Frame, *Cornelius Van Til: An Analysis of His Thought*, v-viii.

proofs. Frame divides Van Til's doctrine into four main categories as follow: (1) the metaphysics of knowledge, (2) the ethics of knowledge, (3) the argument for Christianity, and (4) the critique of unbelief. Within these four categories, Frame highlights Van Til's emphasis on humanity's dependence on God for every aspect of its function.

Frame has also written *The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God: A Theology of Lordship*.²⁰ In this extensive work, the author details his biblical understanding of epistemology. He discusses how one knows God and how one is able to know anything at all. God is understood as absolute personhood and wholly other. Frame often references the triad of control, authority, and personal presence when surveying the lordship of Jesus Christ and the Trinity as a whole. The author presents God as one who is known to every person per Romans 1:21.²¹ Knowledge itself is not possible apart from God, the Creator of all knowledge. God is "unavoidably knowable."²² Frame discusses the limitations of the knowledge of humans, both believers and unbelievers. Additionally, he speaks of the covenantal aspect of knowing. The author addresses the justification of knowledge, and he surveys differing epistemological arguments. In a later portion of his book, Frame details various logical fallacies and how they naturally associate with epistemology. Finally, he outlines how apologetics and the theory of knowledge interact.

Now, the discussion can move into the infallibility of Scripture. In the second chapter of Van Til's work *A Christian Theory of Knowledge*, one of his most prominent pieces, he discusses the idea that the Scriptures are infallible and self-verifying.²³ The author holds to the

²⁰ John M. Frame, *The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God: A Theology of Lordship*, (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1987).

²¹ *Ibid.*, 18.

²² *Ibid.*, 19.

²³ Cornelius Van Til, *A Christian Theory of Knowledge*, (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1969), 25-40.

idea that Christians believe in a self-attesting and self-revealing God. Therefore, logically, the inspired word of God would be self-attesting by nature as well. The primary argument that is brought against Van Til's presuppositional understanding for the authority of Scripture is that, because his reasoning is circular, it is not logical. He addresses this argument by answering that no one, even the atheist, can reason without presupposing that the God of Scripture exists and has created an ordered universe. This, one can see, is cohesive with the transcendental argument used previously by Bahnsen.

In essence, the circular reasoning that Van Til employs is not illogical because no logic or reason can be found apart from presupposing the God of Scripture. All knowledge necessarily begins and ends in God. The author purports that because God knows comprehensively, but humans cannot know God comprehensively, there is no way that they could understand anything about the nature of God unless he himself revealed it. The claim that Scripture makes about itself, namely that it is the Word of God, is verified by what the triune God-head says about Scripture. This revelation about Scripture is revealed within Scripture. However, Van Til proposes that this kind of circular reasoning is not illogical but, rather, necessary. It only makes sense within the confines of a universe that is controlled and sustained by an omniscient and omnipotent God. The God of Scripture must necessarily be the only reliable witness to himself, since all that is known has been revealed by him in the first place.

Likewise, in the essay "The Old-New Reformed Epistemology," Dr. Oliphint discusses Alvin Plantinga's model of epistemology.²⁴ He lays out Plantinga's understanding of all Christian epistemology as revelatory. Oliphint displays the alignment of thought between Plantinga and Van Til in this area, as both argued for the revelatory model of Christian

²⁴ K. Scott Oliphint, "The Old-New Reformed Epistemology," in *Revelation and Reason: New Essays in Reformed Apologetics*, ed. K. Scott Oliphint and Lane G. Tipton (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2007), 207-219.

understanding. This model essentially proposes that man can have a true knowledge of reality because man has an inherent knowledge of God. Also, man's knowledge of himself is inextricably tied to God because man has been created in his image. The author explains that all of man's knowledge is based upon the revelation that God has given him. While all men have this knowledge of God and even logically reason upon the basic principles that God exists, they suppress the truth and deceive themselves. Oliphint concludes that coherent thought can only be found using Christian presuppositions. This is the only worldview that can, as Plantinga also argues, account for the idea of commonality in experience. Therefore, Christian epistemology must be revelatory by nature if it is to make any sense at all.

In the work *Calvin in Context*, Dr. David Steinmetz addresses Calvin's beliefs on the natural knowledge of God.²⁵ The author compares Calvin's exegesis of Romans 1:18-32 with those of Augustine, Denis, Melancthon, Bucer, and Bullinger. Using the interpretations of these theologians, Steinmetz was able to display the slight but important differences in Calvin's interpretation. Calvin's essential argument is that all humans know that God exists but, due to original sin, they misinterpret what he is like. While this statement is similar to those made by the previously stated theologians, the most notable difference is what men do with their knowledge of God. They misinterpret God's general revelation (revelation in nature).

Dr. R. Michael Allen discusses the history and the doctrine of the Reformed perspective on the Word of God his work *Reformed Theology*.²⁶ He begins by outlining Calvin's understanding of idolatry in order to demonstrate the concept of iconoclasm in Reformed theology. Essentially, Allen demonstrates that Reformed theology stresses the importance of

²⁵ David C. Steinmetz, "Calvin and the Natural Knowledge of God," in *Calvin in Context* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 23-29.

²⁶ R. Michael Allen, "Word of God," in *Reformed Theology* (London: T&T Clark International, 2010), 11-33.

constantly examining one's actions and views in relation to what God says. God is the absolute reference point. The author then goes on to discuss the self-revelation of God and his revelation in Scripture. Here, he cites Carl Barth, who speaks about the Reformed theory of epistemology. Barth basically states that all of one's knowledge, even one's self-knowledge, is from God. Jesus communicates and reveals God to humanity. At this point, Allen goes into the nature of salvation as rooted in Christ alone. He reminds the reader that one's knowledge about God from Christ must be put into practice in order for one to be saved. The author reviews the history of the Reformed understanding of the Word of God, an understanding that was not broadly agreed upon until the *Westminster Confessions*. In these *Confessions*, Allen's principle of critical traditioning, or constant reflection on what God says, is expressed. One must use Scripture as the objective rule and standard when examining doctrine or praxis.

In "The Bible Contradicts Itself. It's Just a Fairy Tale.," the first chapter within the work *Reason to Believe*, R.C. Sproul discusses the reliability of Scripture and lays out the premises for its infallibility.²⁷ The author addresses common questions and arguments against the authority of Scripture such as confictions with science, textual contradictions, historical accuracy, and more. In each case, Sproul presents the reality of the misunderstandings that people bring to the Bible, and how these misunderstandings show that the fault is not in the Biblical text. Rather, the fault is to be placed in the interpretation of the subjective individual based on their presuppositions. Additionally, for a modern definitive stance on Scripture, The International Council on Biblical Inerrancy lays out five summary statements regarding the term inerrancy, along with nineteen articles of affirmation and denial.²⁸ It is important to note that infallibility does differ from

²⁷ R. C. Sproul, "The Bible Contradicts Itself. It's Just a Fairy Tale," In *Reason to Believe* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1978), 19-34.

²⁸ International Council on Biblical Inerrancy, "The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy," *The Master's Seminary Journal* 25, no. 1 (2014): 1-10, accessed February 9, 2018.

inerrancy, but they are interrelated. “The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy” provides the reader with a comprehensive understanding of the Council’s theological stance on Biblical inerrancy.

Now the conversation can once more move to the topic of epistemology in practice and the Christian apologetic. In the work *Mere Apologetics: How to Help Seekers & Skeptics Find Faith* by Alister McGrath, the author outlines an exegetical approach to apologetics and the argument for the rationality of the Christian faith.²⁹ He examines the theological aspects of apologetics in the Bible through exegesis of particular passages. McGrath argues that the existence of God is reasonable even if one does not have “absolute proof.”³⁰ The author stresses the reasonable evidences of Christianity which come in many forms (historical, philosophical, or other). The apologist can rationally look to these evidences in the security that there is reason and merit in the doctrine of the Christian faith. McGrath takes a mild transcendental approach to apologetics in that meaning in the universe cannot be explained through atheistic thought. Like Bahnsen, he speaks of a sort of regeneration of the mind of man through the light of Christ shining “upon our intellects.”³¹ The author details eight apologetic arguments as follow: (1) creation, (2) fine-tuning, (3) the structure of the physical world, (4) morality, (5) desire, (6) beauty, (7) relationality, and (8) eternity. He takes scientific arguments into account as well. McGrath is careful not to reduce the God of Scripture to a mere means of defeating arguments. His approach is very much exegetical and experiential in nature. The author is certain to include excellent sections describing how one could practice application of his apologetics.

²⁹ Alister McGrath, *Mere Apologetics: How to Help Seekers & Skeptics Find Faith* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2012).

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 76.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 91.

In *The Transcendental Perspective of Westminster's Apologetic*, Robert Knudsen describes the presuppositional approach to apologetics that Westminster as an institution upholds.³² Its apologetic has originated from the thought of Kuyper and was instituted under Van Til. He speaks of the presuppositional epistemology of Van Til. The author goes on to mention the preaching aspect of apologetics. Apologetics ought to have an effect which witnesses to unbelievers and simultaneously defends the faith. Knudsen suggests the presuppositional method of apologetics as “based radically on the message of the Scriptures.”³³ The author points out that one ought to notice that Westminster’s apologetic firmly rejects fideism. Knudsen moves on to present the criticisms of presuppositional apologetics. However, it is made clear that the presuppositional apologetic of Christianity is the only argument which allows one to faithfully and coherently account for one’s experiences. The author stresses the importance of endurance in assuming one’s presuppositional approach and remaining consistent throughout one’s transcendental argument.

Knudsen’s theology is more clearly displayed within his chapter “The Nature of Regeneration” which discusses the regeneration of man.³⁴ He describes regeneration as a new birth in Christ. Regeneration enables one to be able to receive salvation. God’s call never returns void in those whom he chooses to redeem; it is “always effectual.”³⁵ The author notes that this concept of the perfect effect of God’s call agrees with the position of Barth. Knudsen focuses greatly on the Word of God and its function in the regeneration of man. He states that the Holy Spirit must also be brought into focus when addressing regeneration, due to the sinful nature of

³² Robert D. Knudsen, *The Transcendental Perspective of Westminster's Apologetic* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Theological Seminary, 1986).

³³ *Ibid.*, 231.

³⁴ Robert D. Knudsen, “The Nature of Regeneration,” in *Christian Faith and Modern Theology* (New York: Channel Press, 1964), 307-321.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 312.

man which affects man's heart and mind. If one is truly dead in their sins, the Holy Spirit is necessary for the saving work of restoring one's mind. It is only through this work of regeneration by the Spirit that one can correctly respond to the effectual call of God in faith. Faith is only possible through the saving act of God within the heart and mind of man. He makes it clear that this power of God in the choice and act of regenerating is not based on any "merit of the believer," but based on the grace and choice of God.³⁶

Finally, the discussion can move to the warrant (rational justification) for Reformed epistemology and presuppositional thought in one's praxis and life. Alvin Plantinga in his book *Knowledge and Christian Belief*, introduces his A/C model for the warrant of Christian belief.³⁷ The A/C model, or Aquinas/Calvin model, proposes that people are born with an innate knowledge of God and, therefore, have a warrant for believing in him. Plantinga addresses the arguments of Freud and Marx, namely that religious belief is the result of cognitive illusion. However, the author shows that through his model belief in God can make warranted (rational) sense. He comes to this conclusion by examining the principle of basicness. If one reasons within the Christian worldview, then knowledge of God is presupposed as something that is basic in all people. Therefore, the act and lifestyle of belief in him would be logical and rational. Plantinga's A/C model essentially displays the rationality of Christian theistic thought and response when a Christian theistic universe is presupposed.

In the work *Jerusalem and Athens: Critical Discussions on the Philosophy and Apologetics of Cornelius Van Til*, Van Til responds to several challenges to Reformed

³⁶ Ibid., 319.

³⁷ Alvin Plantinga, "Warranted Belief in God," in *Knowledge and Christian Belief* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2015), 30-44.

epistemology and presuppositional thought.³⁸ In one chapter of particular interest to me, Dr. Herman Dooyeweerd responds to former statements made by Van Til in reference to some of Dooyeweerd's works and statements. It is made evident that the two thinkers disagree on when the presupposition of the truth of Christ should be implemented.³⁹ Dr. Dooyeweerd seems to believe that there can be some type of cooperative understanding in human thought and experience without initially presupposing Christ from the very outset. Van Til starkly disagrees and points out this conflict between their two understandings. He maintains that Dooyeweerd is logically inconsistent in his presentation. One must presuppose Christ as the first step in Christian theistic thought.

In the article "Calvinism as Metaphysics," Dr. Marilynne Robinson proposes Calvin's thought as a metaphysics.⁴⁰ She explains that Calvin's doctrine engages in all of the areas that make something metaphysical in nature. The author's definition of metaphysics is taken from the *Oxford English Dictionary* which defines the word as "The branch of philosophy that deals with the first principles of things, including abstract concepts such as being, knowing, identity, time, and space."⁴¹ In other words, Reformed presuppositional epistemology engages coherently in each of these areas. Robinson proceeds to the examination of Calvin's doctrine, from his epistemology to his ethics, with a focus on its coherent metaphysical nature. This examination is extensive but conclusive in regard to the affirmation of the coherency of Calvin's thought.

³⁸ E. R. Geehan, ed., *Jerusalem and Athens: Critical Discussions on the Philosophy and Apologetics of Cornelius Van Til* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1971).

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 98-99.

⁴⁰ Marilynne Robinson, "Calvinism as Metaphysics," *Toronto Journal of Theology* 25, no. 2 (2009): 175-186, accessed March 28, 2018.

⁴¹ *Oxford English Dictionary*, 3rd ed., s.v. "metaphysics," accessed March 28, 2018.

Francis Schaeffer discusses the subjectivity of American culture in contrast to the objectivity of the presuppositional stance in his work *A Christian Manifesto*.⁴² The author begins by describing the statements of past American political leaders such as Oliver Wendell Holmes, Frederick Moore Vinson, and William Bentley Ball. They are in agreement that the laws of America are continually moving toward relativism and away from absolutism. In other words, America is continually moving away from the fixed and objective rule of the Constitution. Schaeffer explains that the foundations of our government, science, and philosophy are founded on objective Christian principles. To continually move away from this absolute point of reference (the Constitution) is suicidal. This is why American culture is rapidly declining. In the same way, Christians cannot move away from their absolute point of reference, God. Schaeffer proposes that Christians must do more in the future to recognize when their culture is shifting its worldview. Christians must be consistent in thought and non-conforming in their presuppositional stance.

The work *Francis A. Schaeffer: Trilogy*, is a compilation of Schaeffer's books *The God Who is There*, *Escape from Reason*, and *He is There and He is Not Silent*.⁴³ These books overview much of Schaeffer's theology. Book one discusses recent and current culture, how theology ought to interact with culture, and how Christians ought to live and evangelize within the current cultural climate. Book two outlines the moral decline of man throughout history. Schaeffer surveys and breaks down different time periods in order to demonstrate the shift of perspective within them. The perspective of reason and morality has been continually changing and eroding. The author surveys the effects of this erosion in the arts and media of current

⁴² Francis A Schaeffer, "The Destruction of Faith and Freedom," in *A Christian Manifesto* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2005), 41-51.

⁴³ Francis A. Schaeffer, *Francis A. Schaeffer Trilogy* (Westchester, IL: Crossway Books, 1990).

culture as well. Finally, he implements the consequences of the shift in rationality for the practice of the Christian.

In this last chapter of book two, Schaeffer addresses epistemology. He contrasts the differences between worldly epistemology, which begins with oneself, and Christian epistemology, which begins with God and his Word. The author writes about the depravity of fallen man and the corruption caused by rebellion against God. God is presented as the true source of knowledge which he reveals to man. Book three presents four logical necessities for God in the world. These four necessities are as follow: (1) the metaphysical necessity, (2) the moral necessity, (3) the epistemological necessity- the problem, and (4) the epistemological necessity- the answer. These dilemmas present the warrant for belief in the existence of God and his apparent revelation.

The work *Concluding Unscientific Postscript to the Philosophical Fragments* by Soren Kierkegaard was also surveyed for this paper.⁴⁴ Kierkegaard's work is an attack on Hegel and Hegelianism. For Hegel, objective rationality is ultimate truth. Kierkegaard, however, rejects the concept of objective rationality as problematic. The author states that Hegelianism does not allow for personal transformation, among other issues. Kierkegaard's thesis is that all truth is subjective. Indeed, one's own subjective experience is considered one's own truth. One's own truth is the only truth that one could know. Every person operates within their own reality. Everything outside of a person's experience or reality is abstract. Nothing is real or true apart from one's own thoughts and decisions. One's decisions even create truth. Kierkegaard maintains that faith in God is necessary in the final stage of one's existence in order to attain ultimate truth. This author's perspective certainly differs from that of Van Til and Bahnsen.

⁴⁴ Soren Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript to the Philosophical Fragments*, trans. David F. Swenson and Walter Lowrie (Princeton University Press, 1941).

In *Calvin's Institutes: A New Compend*, John Calvin outlines how coherent Christian epistemology ought to affect one's life.⁴⁵ He specifies four main points for how the Christian life should be characterized. The first point is the Christian pursuit of religion. The second point is the self-denial of the Christian. The third point is the Christian's focus on their future life in heaven. Finally, the fourth point is following the rules for Christian living that are stated in God's Word. Calvin describes the importance of each of these points and the role they play in the cohesive Christian life. Presuppositional epistemology can be seen each of these aspects.

Dr. Matthew Rose outlines the beliefs of Karl Barth as they relate to Christian epistemology and ethics in his work *Ethics with Barth: God, Metaphysics and Morals*.⁴⁶ The author discusses Barth's perspective on how Christians should live or their ethics. Rose then discusses the epistemology of the Christian as being completely rooted in God alone and the necessity of presupposing him in Christian reasoning. Barth proposes that since all that can be known stems from the revelation of God, nothing makes sense outside of His system of knowledge. The author then surveys Barth's understanding of the omnipotence of God in relation to human free-will. Barth claims that it is only within the sphere of God's omnipotence that humans can experience true freedom. The power of God frees humans from their enslavement to sin. Rose concludes with an overview of the being of man. Man is what he is based on God alone. Barth determines that it is only through God that man can see God and himself with any clarity and, furthermore, make coherent choices.

⁴⁵ John Calvin, "The Christian Life," in *Calvin's Institutes: A New Compend*, ed. Hugh T. Kerr (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1989), 91-99.

⁴⁶ Matthew Rose, "The Sovereign Good," in *Ethics with Barth: God, Metaphysics and Morals*, ed. John Webster, George Hunsinger, and Hans-Anton Drewes (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2010), 91-111.

Methodology

These topics were surveyed and researched using multiple mediums. Primarily, print sources were used from the Southeastern University Steelman Library. This includes books which were both primary and secondary sources. Additionally, books were utilized from the library of Professor Yoon Shin, who is a faculty member at Southeastern University. There are also several online sources which have been cited in the previous chapter. These online sources include peer-reviewed journal articles, documents, or publications. The online sources, in particular, will not be cited in great depth or at all for the remainder of this project. Although these journals are not included in the central argument of the paper, they serve to broaden the research at hand in different dimensions. They have allowed for a varied perspective and a more thorough understanding of the subject matter.

There are several ideas which have sprung from this project which could provide opportunities for future study. The first topic for potential future study could be the way in which postmodernism and Reformed epistemology interact. It would be interesting to examine these two fields in order to discover how they relate and differ from one another with more clarity. The second topic which is worth future consideration is the comparison between Reformed epistemology and the epistemologies of other religions. This study would be of particular import for apologetic purposes. The third path with potential for future study would be the comparison of presuppositional epistemology with other epistemologies within the Christian sphere. The fourth study with potential could be an examination of whether or not Reformed Christian theism is biblically wholistic in nature. For there are some arguments against it which claim that it fails in this aspect in a vital way. Finally, a fifth study which could be pursued would be an intensive reworking of Reformed theology in practice as it applies to the church of today. Reformed

theology may be built upon generations of biblical scholars, but it requires work if it desires to be applicable in practice to present and future generations of the church.

There are certainly areas of weakness within this work. Primarily, its brevity does not allow for a full analysis of every argument or critique which is leveled at the topic of presuppositional epistemology. While a few objections and critiques will be mentioned later in this project, they unfortunately do not allow for a complete account of opposing opinions. This study thoroughly looks into presuppositional epistemology, but even this aspect could benefit from a more comprehensive analysis. This, of course, would require many more pages. Therefore, the work's brevity is its primary limitation.

Ultimacy and Basic Principles

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things. Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.

-Romans 1:18-25⁴⁷

The most prominent voice on the topic of epistemological coherency through Reformed Christian theism is Cornelius Van Til. In his work *An Introduction to Systematic Theology*, he goes into great detail about the intricacies of the topic at hand. Van Til begins with the nature of the a priori element of Christian logic and epistemology. The basic a priori element or “principium essendi of knowledge” is God himself.⁴⁸ Van Til supports Herman Bavinck in the proposition that “God existed from all eternity as a self-contained and self-sufficient being.”⁴⁹ Through the Christian worldview, the non-existence of God is a logical impossibility.⁵⁰ Additionally, there is the essential principle that man cannot comprehend God.⁵¹

Due to the self-contained nature of God, there is a gap between human beings (as those who are created) and God (as the Creator). Therefore, it is logically impossible for humans to understand God comprehensively.⁵² Van Til maintains that “God is the one and only ultimate

⁴⁷ Rom. 1:18-25

⁴⁸ Van Til, *An Introduction to Systematic Theology*, 9.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 9.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 9-10.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 10.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 10.

Fact.”⁵³ God is complete in and of himself. He is complete rationality, complete comprehension, and complete truth. He is absolutely absolute and perfect in and of himself. He is ultimate in every way.⁵⁴

Often, however, the reasoning of the world requires that the system and idea of logic itself is the only ultimate fact.⁵⁵ The world holds to the a priori of one’s own logic (or, furthermore, one’s own self) as ultimate, reasoning univocally.⁵⁶ In contrast, Reformed Christian theism reasons analogically, holding to God as ultimate.⁵⁷ Logic (and specifically its law of contradiction) is only an expression of the “internal coherence of God’s nature.”⁵⁸ Therefore, logic itself cannot be ultimate from this perspective. Van Til sums up this argument and reiterates his stance on epistemology in general in the following statements:

Christians believe in two levels of existence, the level of God’s existence as self-contained and the level of man’s existence as derived from the level of God’s existence. For this reason, Christians must also believe in two levels of knowledge, the level of God’s knowledge which is absolutely comprehensive and self-contained, and the level of man’s knowledge which is not comprehensive but is derivative and re-interpretative. Hence, we say that as Christians we believe that man’s knowledge is analogical of God’s knowledge.⁵⁹

In other words, just as man’s existence is dependent on God, so also his knowledge is dependent on God. God is the ultimate actor. Through his act of creation man exists, and through his act of revelation man knows.⁶⁰ Therefore, the foundation of Van Til’s epistemology requires a presuppositional perspective in every aspect.

⁵³ Ibid., 10.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 10.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 11.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 11.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 11.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 11.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 12.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 12.

In his discussion of Van Til's epistemology, John Frame stresses the principle of absolute personality. Frame recognizes that absolute personality is the defining principle that can both bring the issue of the one-and-many into coherence and also more fully summarize Van Til's previously stated principle of the self-contained fullness of God.⁶¹ Van Til determines that God is both absolute and a person, a statement with which Frame agrees.⁶² Therefore, "God is an 'absolute person.'"⁶³ God himself is not an abstract principle in essence, but an absolute person in essence.⁶⁴ Within this essence (or being) is three persons, referred to as the Trinity. These persons are one in being. In other words, each of the persons "exhaust the divine essence."⁶⁵ There is unity in the plurality of the God-head.

Frame explains that the absolute sovereignty of God and the absolute personality of God are inextricably intertwined from Van Til's perspective.⁶⁶ God's absolute personality is what makes his absolute sovereignty effective, and vice versa.⁶⁷ If God was exclusively sovereign, his essence would be composed of abstract, impersonal principles with no power to do or accomplish anything.⁶⁸ If, on the other hand, God was exclusively personal, his essence would not be ultimate and he would be under the authority of some impersonal principles which expressed ultimacy.⁶⁹ However, it is the absolute sovereignty and the absolute personality of God intertwined which effectively function to identify God as truly ultimate.⁷⁰ He is not subject

⁶¹ Frame, *Cornelius Van Til: An Analysis of His Thought*, 60.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 58-61.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 68.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 68.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 68.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 60.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 60.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 60.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 60.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 60.

to any impersonal principles but only to himself, while, simultaneously, he is able to “make choices and carry them out” without hindrance.⁷¹

This relationship between absolute sovereignty and absolute personality is directly related to the conversation about epistemology because it has to do with the idea of ultimate rationality and ultimacy in general.⁷² Van Til, as previously mentioned, addresses this topic from the outset of his reasoning. Frame here also begins with the topic at the outset of his section on the metaphysics of knowledge. There can be no intelligibility within the Reformed Christian theistic argument if the foundation of its epistemology is not recognized as God. Van Til accurately describes and details God as the ultimate one, while Frame intricately speaks of the nature of God’s ultimacy within Van Til’s perspective. Their thoughts provide an excellent basis for beginning to understand presuppositional epistemology as a whole.

⁷¹ Ibid., 60.

⁷² Ibid., 61.

Other Ultimates and the Transcendental Argument

We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ.
-2 Corinthians 10:5⁷³

Blatantly, both Van Til and Frame approach the subject of epistemology from a presuppositional stance. Both agree in their indication that the only way to achieve coherent epistemology is through presupposing the God of Scripture as ultimate. However, there are perspectives which many individuals (Christian and non-Christian alike) hold to which presuppose something other than God as ultimate. Frame and Van Til claim that everyone has presuppositions and that there is no true objectivity which can be attained in a person's thoughts.⁷⁴ Every person is subjective and biased in their reasoning. One's presuppositions affect not only one's mind, but also one's heart and actions.⁷⁵ Presuppositions go deeper than the thought realm and into someone's "basic heart commitment."⁷⁶

This basic heart commitment can also be described as an "ultimate commitment."⁷⁷ In other words, one's presuppositions are what one chooses to live their life for and think their thoughts about.⁷⁸ It is one's deepest motivation, and it can be the justification for one's actions.⁷⁹ The basic heart commitment can range between anything from God for Christians to "another god, themselves, pleasure, money, rationality, or whatever" for non-Christians.⁸⁰ Whatever someone determines to be ultimate in their life will be their own, personal truth.⁸¹ They will live

⁷³ 2 Cor. 10:5

⁷⁴ Ibid., 136.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 136.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 136.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 136.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 136.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 136.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 136.

⁸¹ Ibid., 136.

by and for their truth, no matter how subjective or self-serving it may be.⁸² From their perspective there is no objective source of truth, but truth is something they create for themselves.

From these assertions, one can see how logical conflictions may arise from subjective presuppositions. Suppose, for instance, that there is a little girl named Sally. Sally holds to the presupposition that ice cream is ultimate due to the pleasure her brain experiences when she eats ice cream. Sally decides that she cannot go a single day without eating ice cream and she will do anything to get it. One day, she goes to get an ice cream cone out of the refrigerator but there are none left. At first, she panics and does not know what to do. Soon, however, she comes up with a plan. Her only truth is that she must have ice cream. So, Sally walks over to the corner shop, grabs an ice cream cone from the freezer, runs back home, and eats the ice cream.

According to the principles of the world, there is no reason why Sally should be reprimanded or in trouble for what she did. She was simply, consistently living out her personal standard of truth. Her actions were justified by her ultimate commitment and presupposition. However, in society children are reprimanded for stealing and taught that it is wrong. Parents are living under and parenting their children with the assumption that there are moral absolutes such as the following: stealing is wrong. Adults in general are able to operate day to day because of their presupposition of such moral absolutes. However, these same individuals will often deny that God exists in casual conversation. They operate as if an ordered universe with the expectations of such moral absolutes exists, but they deny the only presupposition that can account for moral absolutes at all.

⁸² Ibid., 136.

Without presupposing the God of Scripture as truth, one has no objective point outside of oneself to reason from. Thus, all of one's reason, knowledge, and epistemology becomes vain and illogical due to the subjectivity of its nature. Indeed, there ought not be any laws against stealing or even murder from this perspective. There is no objective source of accountability to which people must answer for their thoughts and actions. Therefore, everyone should live by their own truth and their own definition of logic. Indeed, even laws of logic are individualistically subjective from this standpoint. If this is how people were allowed to live, daily life as we know it would be inconceivable. However, society, even a society which blatantly denies God's existence, functions as if it presupposes his sovereignty. Individuals, even those who deny God's existence, function the same way. This is the essence of the transcendental argument.

As Frame states, "Van Til's point here is that, in assuming the intelligibility of the world, the unbeliever implicitly concedes the existence of the God he explicitly denies."⁸³ Clearly, coherent epistemology cannot function without the presupposition of the God of Scripture. The basic issue with other ultimates in one's reason is that, without God as one's single ultimate, there can be no reason at all. Laws of logic cannot be accounted for without the presupposition that there is an objective source that secures and fixes them in reality. Therefore, all true reality and reason stems from the presupposition that God exists and is self-fulfilled in every way. The basis of the unbeliever's epistemology is both incoherent and different from the believer's epistemology because the first does not recognize the separation in the levels of knowledge between God and man, and because this lack of separation leads to the possibility of other ultimates within the unbeliever's reason.⁸⁴

⁸³ Ibid., 136.

⁸⁴ Van Til, *An Introduction to Systematic Theology*, 24.

Revelation and True Knowledge

For I want you to know how great a struggle I have for you and for those at Laodicea and for all who have not seen me face to face, that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, to reach all the riches of full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of God's mystery, which is Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.
-Colossians 2:1-3⁸⁵

The conversation pertaining to the separation of knowledge between God and man begs the following question: Can one know truly? As has been previously surveyed, one cannot comprehend God. However, all of man's knowledge is a re-interpretation of the thoughts that God reveals to him. Van Til says, "As Christians, then, we believe that human knowledge of the world and God is (a) not exhaustive and yet (b) true. We are *created* in God's image, and therefore our knowledge cannot be exhaustive; we are created in *God's* image, and therefore our knowledge is true."⁸⁶ In this statement, Van Til again points out the separation in the levels of knowledge between God and man as the crucial element to man's incomprehensibility of God. Additionally, he addresses the question at hand.⁸⁷ He asserts that, indeed, man can attain true knowledge because that knowledge is based on the true revelation of God.⁸⁸ God is ultimate truth; therefore, his revelation is true and it is possible for man to attain true knowledge that is not comprehensive.⁸⁹

According to Greg Bahnsen, this true knowledge can only be found in the person of Jesus Christ through the revelation of the Holy Spirit.⁹⁰ Colossians 2:6-8 says, "Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, rooted and built up in him and established in the

⁸⁵ Col. 2:1-3

⁸⁶ Van Til, *An Introduction to Systematic Theology*, 24.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 24.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 24.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 24.

⁹⁰ Greg L. Bahnsen, *Always Ready: Directions for Defending the Faith*, edited by Robert R. Booth (Nacogdoches, TX: Covenant Media Press, 2011), 16.

faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving. See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ.”⁹¹ Utilizing this passage, Bahnsen demonstrates that Paul was teaching those he was writing to that they must continually mature in Christ in the same way which they received him: through faith.⁹² The Holy Spirit reveals Christ and true knowledge to the one who believes, and he enables the believer to have faith. Bahnsen maintains that the believer does not have the intellectual ability to receive faith or truth apart from the revelation of God and the illumination of the mind by the Holy Spirit.⁹³ It is only through God’s divine act of revelation and illumination that the human mind can attain the true knowledge which is deposited in the person of Jesus Christ.⁹⁴

Grasping such knowledge is impossible through the power of human intellect due to the concept of the noetic effect of sin which will now be examined. Christians believe that the human mind derives all of its knowledge from the revelation of God (which means they are able to attain true knowledge) but, at the same time, every mind is “ethically depraved” apart from God.⁹⁵ This belief in the perverse nature of human reason stems from the concept of the noetic effect of sin, or the effect of sin upon the mind of man. Van Til reminds his readers of the verse which states, “And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked...”⁹⁶ When one is “dead,” one is completely dead. This includes one’s mental faculties.

⁹¹ Col. 2:6-8

⁹² Bahnsen, 15-16.

⁹³ Ibid., 16.

⁹⁴ Col. 2:3

⁹⁵ Van Til, *An Introduction to Systematic Theology*, 25.

⁹⁶ Eph. 2:1-2a

The “unregenerate consciousness,” or the mind of the unbeliever, does possess the ability to know truly.⁹⁷ After all, even the knowledge of the unbeliever is still dependent upon the true revelation of God, seen in creation. However, the unregenerate man is incapable of knowing as he *ought* to know.⁹⁸ Because his presuppositions are incorrect, his re-interpretation of God’s revelation will be misunderstood.⁹⁹ Separate from the illumination of the Holy Spirit, humans “by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.”¹⁰⁰ This choice to reject God as ultimate places the unbeliever in a position of enmity with God, and he falls into an “absolute ethical antithesis” to him.¹⁰¹ So, natural man has true knowledge due to the general revelation of God, but he misinterprets that knowledge due to his rejection of God’s ultimacy. Because a person’s basic presupposition is incorrect, their relation to everything that stems from this presupposition is also incorrect. Though they truly know, they cannot truly interpret or truly relate their knowledge as they ought.¹⁰² Therefore, in a sense, their knowledge can be considered “dead,” as knowledge without proper understanding or interpretation is meaningless.

On the other hand, Van Til describes the “regenerate consciousness” as characterized by two qualities.¹⁰³ Namely, that this consciousness is (1) restored and (2) supplemented “in principle or standing only.”¹⁰⁴ That is to say that the mind of the regenerate man is considered restored by God; however, in reality his restoration is not complete.¹⁰⁵ While his whole self is considered spotless before God because of the work of Jesus, the believer will still struggle with

⁹⁷ Van Til, *An Introduction to Systematic Theology*, 26.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 26.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 26.

¹⁰⁰ Rom. 1:18

¹⁰¹ Van Til, *An Introduction to Systematic Theology*, 26.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 26.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 28.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 28.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 28.

sin and must strive towards the perfection of his faith through Christ.¹⁰⁶ Secondly, the regenerate man has a supplemented consciousness.¹⁰⁷ This means that the Holy Spirit works through the Christian's thoughts and actions to enable him to think and act rightly and truly.¹⁰⁸ The regenerate man can perceive things truly and act accordingly only because of God's work in him.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 28.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 28.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 28.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 28.

The Epistemological Antithesis

Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds. They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart. They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity. But that is not the way you learned Christ!— assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus, to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

-Ephesians 4:17-24¹¹⁰

From the presuppositional perspective there is no neutrality or middle ground when it comes to the thoughts of mankind. Romans 4:4b states, “Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.”¹¹¹ Clearly, the Bible makes a distinction between the thoughts of the regenerate person and those of the unbeliever. Bahnsen speaks about this principle as he discusses the attempts of unbelievers to create an illusion of neutrality in reason and argumentation.¹¹² However, in order to be coherent in one’s reason, one must not allow the “line” between the believer and the unbeliever to be obscured.¹¹³ If this line is obscured, one denies the presupposition of the ultimacy of the God of Scripture as discussed previously. The believer will succumb to futility in their thinking and argumentation at the abandonment of this essential crux.¹¹⁴ The believer would lose their objective point from which to reason and to establish the laws of logic and reason.

Furthermore, it is absolutely essential that the believer recognizes and maintains the epistemological antithesis between themselves and the unbeliever.¹¹⁵ The distinction between the

¹¹⁰ Eph. 4:17-18

¹¹¹ Rom. 4:4b

¹¹² Bahnsen, 7.

¹¹³ Ibid., 7.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 8.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 7.

thoughts of the believer and the unbeliever is not merely a line which differentiates, it is an utter antithesis. The two individuals stand on opposing sides. The unbeliever has made himself an “enemy of God,” they have “futility” in their mind, they have a “darkened” understanding, and they have “alienated” themselves from the life of God.¹¹⁶ While the believer is to be a “new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.”¹¹⁷ Believers are called to be “renewed” in the spirit of their minds and to put off their former way of thinking and acting.¹¹⁸ On the believing side, reason and knowledge stem from the presupposition of the Ultimate God. On the unbelieving side, reason and knowledge stem from some subjective authority that they hold to as ultimate. This statement from Bahnsen reiterates and clarifies the antithesis:

The contrast, the antithesis, the choice is clear: either be set apart by God’s truthful word or be alienated from the life of God. Either have ‘the mind of Christ’ (1 Cor. 2:16) or the ‘vain mind of the Gentiles’ (Eph. 4:17). Either ‘bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ’ (2 Cor. 10:5) or continue as ‘enemies in your mind’ (Col. 1:21). Those who follow the intellectual principle of neutrality and the epistemological method of unbelieving scholarship do not honor the sovereign Lordship of God as they should; as a result their reasoning is made vain (Rom. 1:21).¹¹⁹

Bahnsen takes this point so far as to say that not only will attempting to find neutrality in reasoning prove useless for logical purposes to those who succumb to it, but it will also become sin and immorality for them.¹²⁰ When the reasoning believer tries to conform to the claim of neutrality in the realm of epistemology, they abandon the fact that their God must be the “beginning of knowledge.”¹²¹ They effectively deny his sovereignty in the realm knowledge, rebelling against him and making themselves a friend of the world. Through this act of rebellion

¹¹⁶ Rom. 4:4b, Eph. 4:17, 18, 18

¹¹⁷ Eph. 4:24

¹¹⁸ Eph. 4:23, 22

¹¹⁹ Bahnsen, 8.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 9.

¹²¹ Prov. 9:10

and refusal to recognize the authority of God in every aspect of their life, the regenerate person links arms with the world in its condition of apostasy and enmity against the Creator.¹²²

Therefore, it is absolutely necessary to maintain the antithesis between believing and unbelieving thought. Without this recognition of the total sovereignty of God, the Christian risks falling into logical disorder and sin.

Furthermore, true neutrality cannot exist. Every person possesses presuppositions of their own, whether or not they will admit it.¹²³ Everyone is a situated being within a situated context and perspective. It is utterly impossible for one to be neutral and subsequently define what neutrality is. One's perspective from one's context will determine the presuppositions which one possesses and brings to an argument. Therefore, any presuppositions which are not honoring the sovereignty of Christ will be in opposition to him. Any thought which is operating under the myth of neutrality is not recognizing the true Provider of knowledge as Lord.¹²⁴ Because this thought does not properly recognize its own origin, it is operating in rebellion and suppression of the truth. These are the thoughts and presuppositions of the world.¹²⁵ As has been established, such presuppositions are at an antithesis to the mind of God.

The enmity and the opposition of unregenerate thought is essential to the doctrine of presuppositional epistemology. The Christian must be uncompromising in their resolve to honor to Lordship of Jesus Christ in the realm of their thought and reason. Christ, after all, is the Lord of *all things*. Every thought must be taken captive beneath his authority and power. If the Christian chooses to attempt reasoning from a neutral perspective, they will be actively suppressing this truth about the authority of Jesus and joining the epistemological immorality of

¹²² Bahnsen, 9.

¹²³ Ibid., 13.

¹²⁴ Ibid., 13.

¹²⁵ Ibid., 13.

the unbeliever. Additionally, the concept of neutral thought is really a myth. Every person is created and situated within a particular context. To assume that neutrality is possible for a created being is arrogant and genuinely ridiculous.

Objections to Presuppositional Knowledge and Revelation

But in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame.

-1 Peter 3:15-16¹²⁶

Bahnsen speaks of three critiques or objections to the necessary concept of revelation in presuppositional epistemology and to the whole doctrine of presuppositional epistemology itself.¹²⁷ These objections are as follow: (1) it is claimed that the doctrine is absolutistic or dogmatic, (2) it is claimed that the doctrine is impossible because it supposedly maintains that unbelievers cannot know anything because they do not presuppose the truth of God and his Scripture, and (3) it is claimed that the doctrine does not leave any room for “common ground” between the believer and the unbeliever.¹²⁸ Bahnsen deals with the first objection by saying (about the doctrine of Reformed presuppositional epistemology), “It appears dogmatic and absolutistic because, it is dogmatic and absolutistic. The Christian should not be ashamed of this fact.”¹²⁹ What he means is that this doctrine stands in stark contrast to the way that the world is accustomed to reasoning.¹³⁰ The world reasons from a standpoint of attempted neutrality in every thought.¹³¹ Naturally then, the perspective of reasoning from a presupposition, apart from which no truth can be found, appears not only opposite but rather hostile to the notions of popular culture. The necessity of presupposing the God of Scripture as truth in one’s approach to the realm of knowledge (and in every aspect of one’s life) is a bold front. However, ought scholars

¹²⁶ 1 Peter 3:15-16

¹²⁷ Bahnsen, 29.

¹²⁸ Ibid., 30-31.

¹²⁹ Ibid., 31.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 31.

¹³¹ Ibid., 31.

object to presuppositional thought simply because it is not the popular way of reasoning? The doctrine at hand is not illogical when properly examined. Therefore, its dogmatic and absolutistic standpoint ought not be cause for objection.

To reiterate, the second objection claims that presuppositional epistemology maintains that unbelievers could not be said to know anything, “even the most elementary facts of experience or truths of science.”¹³² Those who argue from this position assume that (from the Reformed perspective) unbelievers must be viewed as entirely ignorant, almost reduced to some kind of base animal trapped within their utter inability to comprehend even the elementary facts of life. Of course, history and reality demonstrate the complete ignorance of the unbeliever as necessarily incorrect, as even those who do not confess Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior have the capacity to understand both simple realities and incredibly intricate concepts in many fields. However, this claim against presuppositionalism exhibits a lack of true understanding about the doctrine and the outlook of Reformed epistemology.

Reformed scholars, in fact, do not look at unbelievers as ignorant or base in their capacity to understand. Rather, they look at unbelievers as rebellious against the presuppositions which are within them.¹³³ Due to general revelation, every human has knowledge of God (though not salvific knowledge) which they may choose to suppress and reject in unrighteousness. Therefore, as one created in the image of God, every human has presuppositions about God. These presuppositions based in the knowledge of God from general revelation, then, become condemnatory to the unbeliever. From the Reformed perspective, it is essential that the unbeliever is not deficient of their mental capacity. As Bahnsen states, “If the unbeliever were a

¹³² Bahnsen, 31.

¹³³ Ibid., 38.

total idiot, he would be free from guilt.”¹³⁴ However, the unbeliever’s ability to understand and subsequent willful repression of the truth incriminates them. According to presuppositional epistemology, the revelation of God, the presupposition of his existence, and the awareness of his glory enriching creation are “inescapable.”¹³⁵

The unbeliever may frequently espouse their blatant disregard of the existence of God (and their knowledge of him), but they function under the presuppositions that he exists and has created an ordered universe. For even the laws of logic by which they reason cannot function outside of God’s ordered universe. Therefore, the unbeliever is inconsistent in their reasoning.¹³⁶ This inconsistency is due to general revelation which allows them to function intellectually, even with an unregenerate consciousness.¹³⁷ Bahnsen adequately iterates this as follows:

Hence we can say that men *both* know and do not know God; they *know* him in judgment and in virtue of natural revelation, but they do *not* know Him in blessing unless it is in virtue of supernatural revelation and saving grace. Though hampered by his moral condition, the unbeliever’s scholarship is not completely defunct. He can attain knowledge despite himself. *In principle* his unbelief would preclude understanding of anything, for (as Augustine said) one must believe in order to understand. However, *in practice* the unbeliever is restrained from a consistent, self-destructive following of his unbelieving profession.¹³⁸

So, because the unbeliever is inconsistent and subconsciously violates his own claims to reality, he is able to reason with merit. He subconsciously reasons from the presuppositions which he rejects. If he followed the course of his claims in a consistent manner, he would find himself intellectually bankrupt. However, presuppositional epistemology maintains the position that the unbelieving scholar and person is capable of knowing.

¹³⁴ Ibid., 38.

¹³⁵ Ibid., 37.

¹³⁶ Ibid., 39.

¹³⁷ Ibid., 38.

¹³⁸ Ibid., 38.

The way that Bahnsen clearly differentiates between general and special revelation is noteworthy.¹³⁹ As spoken of previously, God must regenerate the mind of man by the Holy Spirit working through the special revelation of God in his Scripture in order for man to correctly interpret reality. General revelation, therefore, has two basic functions. It is essential in order for man to know. It is simultaneously condemnatory for man. For as one knows, one becomes accountable for one's knowledge. So, it is obvious that the doctrine of Reformed epistemology must require knowledge for the mind of the unbeliever in its perspective, both for accountability of rebellion and sin and for general knowledge. Therefore, the second claim leveled against presuppositionalism has been rendered inadequate.

The third claim brought against Reformed presuppositional epistemology is that there is no common ground between the believer and the unbeliever from this perspective.¹⁴⁰ Bahnsen states that, while there is no room for *neutral* ground between the believer and the unbeliever, they do have *common* ground.¹⁴¹ The sovereignty and authority of the Lord in the realm of thought (and in every realm) prohibits such neutrality.¹⁴² However, the sovereignty and authority of the Lord is also the source for common ground between the two parties.¹⁴³ God is sovereign over all ground, both literal and figurative.¹⁴⁴ "All men have in common the world created by God, controlled by God, and constantly revealing God."¹⁴⁵ Therefore, the presupposition of the sovereignty of the Lord, even in epistemology, is necessary in order to find commonality in the presuppositional perspective.¹⁴⁶

¹³⁹ Ibid., 38.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 41.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 43.

¹⁴² Ibid., 43.

¹⁴³ Ibid., 43.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 43.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 43.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 43.

It is necessary that believers approach thought from true presuppositions and maintain that neutrality is immoral and incoherent. If believers succumb to the pretended neutral ground of the world's reasoning, they are denying the perfect authority of Christ over all things. If Christ is not over all things, there is no guaranteed commonality between the believer and the unbeliever after all.¹⁴⁷ For, from an unneutral stance, all ground belongs to the Lord and can be a point of contact between the believer and the unbeliever. But from a neutral stance, all ground is subject to unknown authority and is, therefore, completely unviable as a point of contact.¹⁴⁸ For if all things are not from the same source, there is no reason that they would share any commonality at all. So, the presuppositional perspective necessitates a point of contact between believer and unbeliever, which it directly links to the issue of neutrality.¹⁴⁹

Finally, each claim opposed to the Reformed presuppositional epistemology has proved futile. In fact, the examinations of these claims only serve to strengthen presuppositionalism's argument and potency. The result of this study of the relevance of the concept of revelation within the doctrine at hand has come to a coherent conclusion. All of the riches of true knowledge are found within Christ. His authority is displayed in every aspect of creation, both physical and ideological. The revelation of his character exists plainly in the ordered universe through general revelation. This revelation is necessary and condemnatory. His revelation is inescapable in every way. It is even displayed as man looks at his own reflection and sees the very image of God reflected to him. Special revelation involves the Holy Spirit working to regenerate the mind of man through Scripture. This revelation is necessary for salvation and true knowledge of who God is. It is only through an act of the Holy Spirit that regeneration is

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 43.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 43.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 43.

possible. It is not by any work of man, but the choice of God that he is regenerated. Therefore, there is a difference between the consciousness of the believer and the unbeliever. God, however, makes his revelation evident to all, so that every person is without excuse.

Critiques of Presuppositional Epistemology

*And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him, if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul became a minister.
-Colossians 1:21-23¹⁵⁰*

There are many critics of presuppositional epistemology. One of the most noteworthy voices among these is that of John Frame. In the work *Cornelius Van Til: An Analysis of His Thought*, Frame carefully and excellently explains Van Til's presuppositional doctrine.¹⁵¹ The author is extremely thorough in his evaluation of Van Til's position which he consistently compares to the positions of other prominent scholars. Overall, Frame agrees with Van Til's position and cites him as one of the most prominent theological influences in his life and perhaps the most influential thinker of the twentieth century.¹⁵² Throughout his work, the author truly analyzes the figure's doctrine. He consistently examines it in order to showcase the coherency of Van Til's fundamental doctrines. Frame does, however, differ with Van Til on points which are less fundamental. The author's conclusion states, "In my view, the most important parts of Van Til's system are biblical and should be maintained in any future apologetic. But some of his formulations are confusing and not biblically warranted. In my view, these are less central to Van Til's system."¹⁵³

¹⁵⁰ Col. 1:21-23

¹⁵¹ Frame, *Cornelius Van Til: An Analysis of His Thought*. Several of the following sources are analyses or critiques of the presuppositional epistemology of Cornelius Van Til, specifically. While his ideas do not represent the entirety of the subject at hand, he is considered the father of modern presuppositional epistemological thought. Therefore, his work can be considered as representing the major aspects of presuppositional epistemology as a whole.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, 3.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 7.

Frame also mentions the negative criticisms or “debunkers,” as he calls them, which Van Til’s presuppositional doctrine has faced.¹⁵⁴ These critics stood in stark opposition to the doctrine of Van Til. They include such scholars as Daane, Buswell, Montgomery, Pinnock, Robbins, and Crampton.¹⁵⁵ Additional critics include John Gerstner, R. C. Sproul, Arthur Lindsley, and G. C. Berkouwer.¹⁵⁶ However, these scholars differed from Van Til in a separate realm from the first group.¹⁵⁷ Nevertheless, they certainly disagree with him and present his ideas as “misleading.”¹⁵⁸

As far as Van Til’s epistemology is concerned, Frame highlights its analogical aspect.¹⁵⁹ He describes Van Til’s presuppositional doctrine as focusing on two areas as follows: (1) the distinction of the level of God’s knowledge and man’s knowledge and (2) the sovereignty of God.¹⁶⁰ Frame states that these two points can be summed up in Van Til’s use of the term “analogy.”¹⁶¹ God is the original source of knowledge, and all knowledge which man possesses is derivative of God’s knowledge.¹⁶² The thoughts of man are both created by God and under his sovereignty and “control.”¹⁶³ “God has absolute self-contained system within himself.”¹⁶⁴ While man attempts to construct his own system, he must always work to understand the perfect system of God. As he thinks God’s thoughts after him, man is subject to the ultimacy and authority of God and his system.¹⁶⁵ The knowledge of man is subject to the revelation of God in every way.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 4.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 4.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 4-5.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., 4.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 4.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 89.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 89.

¹⁶¹ Ibid., 89.

¹⁶² Ibid., 89.

¹⁶³ Ibid., 89.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., 89.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 89.

The author offers the thought that man's knowledge may be better understood, from Van Til's presuppositional perspective, as a reflection of the knowledge of God.¹⁶⁶ Through presupposing the God of Scripture, one is presupposing his perfect system of truth and knowledge.

In *Jerusalem and Athens: Critical Discussions on the Philosophy and Apologetics of Cornelius Van Til*, many critiques to Van Til's epistemology and general doctrine are brought forward by respected scholars.¹⁶⁷ Within this work, Herman Dooyeweerd presents a transcendent critique of theoretical thought as it relates to Van Til's presuppositional epistemology and revelation. He critiques several doctrines which are at the core of Van Til's epistemological thought. His essential critique, however, states that Van Til has developed a metaphysical theory of God's being instead of a biblical understanding of God's being.¹⁶⁸ He argues that Van Til has focused too much on one attribute of God's character, and that he has subsequently developed an entire metaphysics based on this attribute.¹⁶⁹ Because Van Til was focused on developing a consistent metaphysics, he missed the other attributes of the God of the Bible.¹⁷⁰ His emphasis on the omniscience of God has actually been an over-emphasis, which does not adequately take into account the other attributes of God. Van Til has developed a "metaphysical absolutization."¹⁷¹ Dooyeweerd explains that Van Til cannot biblically develop such a metaphysics if he is correctly examining the self-revelation of God in Scripture.¹⁷² In essence, the author critiques Van Til's presuppositional metaphysics as extremely absolutistic in regard to its understanding of God as exhaustively rational.¹⁷³

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., 93.

¹⁶⁷ Geehan, ed.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 88.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., 88.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., 88.

¹⁷¹ Ibid., 88.

¹⁷² Ibid., 88.

¹⁷³ Ibid., 88.

John Montgomery proposes a critique to Van Til's concept of the a priori.¹⁷⁴ The critique contains five major points of difference.¹⁷⁵ One of these points which is of particular interest for the topic of presuppositional epistemology is his fifth and final point. At this point, Montgomery states that Christian argumentation and apologetics as a whole ought not require the believer to constantly presuppose the truth of God and his existence in his work to persuade the lost.¹⁷⁶ Instead, Christians should focus on the unbeliever and "their needs."¹⁷⁷ This approach involves the apologist meeting the unbeliever where they are, in the starting point of "common rationality."¹⁷⁸ Montgomery argues that it is ridiculous to impose presuppositional expectations upon the unbeliever.¹⁷⁹ Therefore, the believer should not attempt persuasion through a presuppositional route at all, lest he push the unbeliever even further away.

Jerusalem and Athens also contains a critique from Robert Knudsen entitled, "Progressive and Regressive Tendencies in Christian Apologetics."¹⁸⁰ His work acts as an historical overview of the history of the Christian apologetic movement and its major figures. Knudsen also explains the apologetic ideology which originated from or characterized these figures. Upon his inauguration as Professor of Apologetics at Westminster Theological Seminary, Knudsen critiqued the transcendental perspective of the apologetic of the institution of Westminster specifically.¹⁸¹ This involved an historical overview of the apologetics of

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., 380.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., 390-391.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., 391.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., 391.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., 391.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., 391.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., 275-298. It ought to be understood that there are many critiques within this work which could not be examined due to the brevity of this paper. It is unfortunate that some of these relevant ideas from the scholars who contributed to *Jerusalem and Athens* have not been included.

¹⁸¹ Knudsen, *The Transcendental Perspective of Westminster's Apologetic*.

Westminster, including a study of the apologetic contributions of Kuyper and Van Til to the institution. Describing Westminster's apologetic, Knudsen states:

It is radical in its systematic formulation. For its presuppositions are not simply intellectually formulated principles, on the order, let us say, of theoretical axioms. Nor are they simply postulates, which may be drawn from theology as a scientific discipline. As Van Til sought already as a graduate student to challenge unbelief, he came with a radical Christian world view, in the spirit of Abraham Kuyper, and with the purpose of challenging unbelieving thought at its root. His thought was essentially this: Given anything that is meaningful-indeed, given anything at all--one can provide an account of the fact that it is possible only on the foundation of God's revelation in Jesus Christ, as witnessed by the Scriptures. What is (namely, being) is possible only on the presupposition of a full-orbed Christian theism. Any other starting point is inadequate; it will be unable to offer us a standpoint from which we can understand the world in its unity and diversity.¹⁸²

Therefore, the author agrees with the presuppositional stance of the epistemology and apologetic of Westminster. Throughout Knudsen's statement, it is evident that he values the doctrines which are associated with Kuyper, Van Til, and presuppositional epistemology as a whole. While there are many more critiques which ought to be examined regarding the subject of presuppositional epistemology, the brevity of this paper does not allow for their study.

¹⁸² Ibid., 227-228.

Conclusion

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight.
-Proverbs 9:10¹⁸³

Coherent epistemology can be understood through Reformed Christian theism's presuppositional epistemology. This perspective is biblical and logical in nature. The argument's central crux states that true epistemology can only be found through presupposing the truth of God's existence in every aspect of thought. God is the foundation and beginning of man's understanding and being. Therefore, refusing to acknowledge him as sovereign in every aspect, even in one's thought, is nothing short of sinful. The conscious act of repression of God's authority is tantamount to linking arms with the world in its rebellion against the truth of Jesus Christ. In order for one to maintain both coherency and truth, one must presuppose the truth of Jesus Christ from the outset of one's reason.

Throughout this work, epistemology and presuppositional thought have been discussed in great detail. Evidence for the thesis of this project has been presented. Whether or not this evidence has been persuasive is perhaps somewhat subjective. Many topics were surveyed within the extended literature review, in the second chapter of this paper. The topics which were relevant for the argument at hand, however, were drawn out within the analysis of data.¹⁸⁴ The thesis of this paper remains the same. This thesis is namely that coherent epistemology can be understood through Reformed Christian theism's presuppositional thought which presupposes the truth of biblical Christianity and the God of Scripture. This concludes the discussion of epistemology and presuppositional thought.

¹⁸³ Prov. 9:10

¹⁸⁴ The analysis of data extends from chapter four to chapter nine.

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