

GORDON CLARK

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A chapter from his doctoral dissertation

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Gordon Haddon Clark (1902-1985) was the Chairman of the Philosophy Department at Butler University for 28 years.¹ He and Cornelius Van Til were the two greatest proponents of the presuppositional method of apologetics. In this chapter, Clark's apologetic views will be examined, and the strengths and weaknesses of these views will be discussed.

CLARK'S REJECTION OF TRADITIONAL APOLOGETICS

Gordon Clark rejected the idea that unaided human reason could arrive at truths about God. Due to this fact, he rejected traditional apologetics. Clark stated that "The cosmological argument for the existence of God, most fully developed by Thomas Aquinas, is a fallacy. It is not possible to begin with sensory experience and proceed by the formal laws of logic to God's existence as a conclusion."² After listing several reasons why he rejected the Thomistic arguments for God's existence, Clark added that even if the arguments were valid, they would only prove the existence of a lesser god. They would not prove the existence of the true God of the Bible.³

Clark not only despised the use of philosophical arguments to provide evidence for God's existence, but he also deplored the utilization of historical evidences in defense of Christianity. Clark reminded his readers that the facts of history do not come with their own built-in interpretation. He states that "Significance, interpretation, evaluation is not given in any fact; it is an intellectual judgment based on some non-sensory criterion."⁴

Clark declared that while the conclusions of science constantly change, Scriptural truth remains the same.⁵ Therefore, believers should not rely on observable facts to prove Christianity. Instead, Christians must presuppose the truth of God's Word and allow revelation to interpret the facts of history for them.⁶

The reason behind Clark's distaste for traditional apologetics was his belief that unaided human reason could never discover any truth, religious or secular. This, Clark believed, should convince one of his need to presuppose the truth of the Christian revelation.⁷ Without this presupposition, man cannot find truth. Clark emphasized this point at the conclusion of his textbook on the history of philosophy. He stated, "Does this mean that philosophers and cultural epochs are nothing but children who pay their fare to take another ride on the merry-go-round? Is this Nietzsche's eternal recurrence? Or, could it be that a choice must be made between skeptical futility and a word from God?"⁸

CLARK'S REJECTION OF EMPIRICISM

Empiricism is the attempt to find truth through the five senses. This school of thought believes "that all knowledge begins in sense experience."⁹

According to Clark, Thomas Aquinas was an empiricist. Aquinas believed that "all knowledge must be abstracted out of our sensations."¹⁰ Aquinas believed that each person begins life with his mind as a blank slate. He held that "everything that is in the mind was first in the senses, except the mind itself."¹¹ Although Aquinas believed that God created man's mind with the innate ability to know things and draw rational conclusions from sense data, Clark does not seem to do justice to this aspect of Aquinas' thought.¹² Instead, he merely attacks the idea that man could argue from sense data to the existence of God.

Clark turns next to William Paley. Paley argued from the evidence of design in the universe to the existence of an intelligent God as its Cause. Therefore, he, like Aquinas, began with sense experience and then argued to the existence of God. Clark agreed with the criticisms made by David Hume concerning the teleological argument (the argument for God's existence from design). Hume stated that experience cannot determine if there was one God or several gods who designed the world. Second, since the physical world is finite, nothing in man's experience tells him that its designer

must be infinite. And third, since human experience includes such things as natural disasters, might not the world's designer be an evil being?¹³

Clark pointed out that Hume himself was an empiricist. But Hume was consistent in his thinking. Therefore, he realized that the principle of cause and effect, the existence of external bodies, and the reality of internal selves could not be proven through sense data alone. Therefore, Hume admitted that his empiricism inevitably led to skepticism.¹⁴

Clark emphasized the point that there is a wide gap between basic sense experience and the propositional conclusions made by empiricists.¹⁵ Sense data (the facts of experience) do not come with their own built-in interpretation. Rational conclusions cannot come from sense experience alone. Empiricism, therefore, fails as a truth-finding method. Next, Gordon Clark turned his attention to rationalism.

CLARK'S REJECTION OF RATIONALISM

Rationalism is the attempt to find truth through reason alone. Though Clark admitted that Augustine was not a pure rationalist, he discussed his views of reason.¹⁶ At a time when Greek philosophy was dominated by skepticism, which argued against the possibility of attaining knowledge, Augustine attempted to find a base for knowledge that could not be denied.¹⁷ Augustine declared that "the skeptic must exist in order to doubt his own existence."¹⁸ Augustine therefore reasoned that even the skeptic should be certain of his existence. Augustine also showed that skeptics could not live like knowledge was impossible.¹⁸

Augustine also held that the laws of logic were universal, eternal, and unchanging truths. Since the human mind is limited and changing, it could not be the ultimate source of these eternal truths.

Hence, there must be an eternal and unchanging Mind as their source. Obviously, this eternal Mind is God.¹⁹

Clark critiqued the views of Anselm. Anselm was even more rationalistic in his thought than Augustine. He believed that the existence of God could be proven through reason alone. Anselm referred to God as the greatest conceivable Being. Therefore, if God does not exist, then one could conceive of a being greater than Him, a being that has the same attributes but does exist. But then this would be the greatest conceivable Being. Therefore, God (the greatest conceivable Being) must necessarily exist.²⁰ This is called the ontological argument for God's existence.

Clark wrote that Rene Descartes, also a rationalist, viewed sensation and experience as very deceptive. He attempted to find a single point of certainty by doubting everything until he found something he could not doubt. Through this process, he realized that the more he doubted, the more certain he became of the existence of himself, the doubter.²¹

Descartes borrowed Anselm's ontological argument for God's existence. Clark stated Descartes' version of this argument as follows: "God, by definition, is the being who possesses all perfections; existence is a perfection; therefore God exists."²²

Clark related that Spinoza also used the ontological argument for God's existence. But Spinoza's version of the argument did not conclude with the God of the Bible. Instead he "proved" the existence of a god who is the universe (the god of pantheism).²³ However, this raised questions as to rationalism's claim to prove the existence of God with certainty. For Spinoza's god and Descartes' God cannot both exist. Spinoza was also more consistent in his rationalism than was Descartes. Spinoza realized that if all knowledge could be found through reason alone, then supernatural revelation was without value.²⁴

Gordon Clark listed several problems with rationalism in his writings. He stated that rationalism has historically led to several contradictory conclusions (theism, pantheism, and atheism).²⁵ Also, Clark stated that "rationalism does not produce first principles out of something else: The first principles are innate . . . Every philosophy must have its first principles . . . Thus a presuppositionless description is impossible."²⁶ Although Clark made much use of reason in his own defense of the faith, he presupposed his first principles. He contended that without doing this, reason can never get off the ground.²⁷

CLARK'S REJECTION OF IRRATIONALISM

In discussing the history of philosophy, Clark states that "Hume had reduced empiricism to skepticism."²⁸ Immanuel Kant's views left man with a knowledge of "things-as-they-appear-to-us," but with no real knowledge of "things-in-themselves."²⁹ Clark emphasized this point with the following words: "In his view the uninformed sense data are entirely incoherent. Order is introduced into them by the mind alone, and what the real world might be like remains unknowable. The whole Postkantian development from Jacobi to Hegel convicts Kant of skepticism."³⁰

Clark added that though Hegel effectively critiqued Kant, Hegelianism also failed to justify knowledge.³¹ In Hegel's theory of the unfolding of history, truth was seen as relative. What was true yesterday is not necessarily true today.³² In short, the greatest minds the world has ever known have failed to escape skepticism. The philosophy of man cannot even prove that man can know anything. Empiricism and rationalism have both failed. This has caused some thinkers to accept irrationalism as the method of finding meaning to life. One such thinker was Soren Kierkegaard.

Kierkegaard denied the effectiveness of both reason and sense experience in finding truth. He believed that a man must stop reasoning. Only through a blind leap of faith can man find true meaning in life. An individual's subjective passion is of more importance than objective truth. Kierkegaard believed that the doctrines of Christianity were absurd and contradictory. Still, he chose to believe against all reason.³³

Clark rejected the irrationalism of Kierkegaard even though it had become so widespread among modern thinkers, both secular and religious. Clark stated of Kierkegaard, "The fatal flaw is his rejection of logic. When once a man commits himself to contradictions, his language, and therefore his recommendations to other people, become meaningless."³⁴

As shown above, Gordon Clark rejected empiricism, rationalism, and irrationalism. He taught that they all eventually reduce to skepticism. Man has failed to find truth through these methodologies. Therefore, man, according to Clark, must make a choice between skepticism and a word from God.³⁵ Clark's method of finding truth is called presuppositionalism or dogmatism.

CLARK'S VIEW: DOGMATISM

When one finds that Clark saw all of secular philosophy as unable to justify knowledge, one might assume that Clark was himself a skeptic. But this was not the case. Skeptical futility is not the only option left. Clark referred to his view of finding truth as dogmatism. Clark argued that if all other philosophical systems cannot give meaning to life, then dogmatism is worth a try. Clark recommended that one dogmatically presuppose the truth of the teachings of Scripture.³⁶

Clark's view may seem to some to be fideism. But this is not so (according to Clark). For everyone, no matter what their philosophical system may be, must presuppose something.³⁷ The rationalist must presuppose his first principles. Otherwise, he must look for reasons for everything. This would result in an infinite regress, and there would be no real base for knowledge.³⁸

The empiricist must assume certain concepts which he cannot prove through sense experience. Such concepts as time, space, equality, causality, and motion are not derived from sense experience. They are brought into one's sense experience in the beginning to aid one in drawing conclusions from the sense data.³⁹ Logical Positivism is an extreme empirical view. One of its first principles is that truth can only be found through the five senses. However, this first principle refutes itself since it cannot itself be proven through the five senses.⁴⁰

Clark argued that since rationalism and empiricism have failed to make life meaningful, Christian presuppositions should be utilized. For Christian presuppositions do give meaning to life.⁴¹ Clark argued that "Christian Theism is self-consistent and that several other philosophies are inconsistent, skeptical, and therefore erroneous."⁴² Clark added that Christianity "gives meaning to life and morality, and that it supports the existence of truth and the possibility of knowledge."⁴³

One can see Clark's point more clearly by examining his critique of Kant. In Kant's thinking, there existed no order in sense data. Instead the mind introduces this order into the sense data. Therefore, Kant's view collapses into skepticism since one can only know things-as-they-appear-to-us and not things-as-they-are. One cannot know the real world. One can only know the world as it appears to him.⁴⁴

Clark's response to Kant's dilemma is as follows. Clark presupposes the truth of the revelation found in Scripture. Therefore, Clark presupposes that "God has fashioned both the mind and the world so that they harmonize."⁴⁵ If one presupposes the truth of Christianity, then the order that the mind innately reads into the real world is the order which really exists in the real world.

Having discussed Clark's view of obtaining knowledge, one must now consider how Clark defended Christianity. Clark did this by convincing the nonbeliever that he is contradicting himself.⁴⁶ Clark was willing to use logic (the law of noncontradiction) to refute the belief systems of others. He did not feel that he was being inconsistent with his presuppositionalism or dogmatism. For Clark believed that God is Logic. In other words, logic is God-thinking. It flows naturally from God's Being.⁴⁷ In fact, Clark even translated John 1:1 as, "In the beginning was Logic, and Logic was with God, and Logic was God."⁴⁸

The problem with rationalism is that it lacks sufficient first principles. But, according to Clark, once one presupposes the truth of the Bible, one can use reason to tear down the views of others. Clark spoke of reason in the following manner:

Therefore I wish to suggest that we neither abandon reason nor use it unaided; but on pain of skepticism acknowledge a verbal, propositional revelation of fixed truth from God. Only by accepting rationally comprehensible information on God's authority can we hope to have a sound philosophy and a true religion.⁴⁹

Clark not only defended the faith by tearing down other belief systems through use of the law of contradiction, but he (after presupposing the truth of Christianity) also was willing to confirm the truth of Christianity in two ways. First, Clark showed that it alone is self-consistent. And second, he appealed to its ability to provide man with meaning to life, moral values, and the genuine possibility of attaining true knowledge.⁵⁰ Since all other philosophies have failed to obtain knowledge, one must choose between skepticism and presupposing Christian revelation.⁵¹

Still, Clark seemed to revert back to fideism. This was due to his hyper-Calvinistic theology. He firmly believed that one really cannot convince another of the truth of Christianity, for God alone sovereignly bestows faith upon an individual.⁵² When answering the question of why one person presupposes the Bible to be true and not the Muslim Koran, he simply replied that "God causes the one to believe."⁵³

CLARK'S SOLUTION TO THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

In his writings, Gordon Clark attempted to answer the question,

"How can the existence of God be harmonized with the existence of evil?"⁵⁴ If God is all-good, He would want to destroy evil. If God is all-powerful, He is able to destroy evil. But evil still exists. It seems that God cannot be both all-good and all-powerful. However, Christianity teaches that He is both. This is the problem of evil.⁵⁵

Zoroastrianism attempts to resolve the problem by teaching that there are two gods. One is good while the other is evil. Neither of the two gods is infinite since they have both failed to destroy the opposing god. Plato's views also result in an unresolved dualism. In his thought, God is not the creator of all things. There exists eternal and chaotic space which the Demiurge cannot control.⁵⁶

According to Clark, even Augustine's answer to the dilemma was inadequate. Clark stated that Augustine taught that evil is metaphysically unreal. It does not exist. Therefore, all that God created is good since evil is non-being.⁵⁷ (Whether or not Clark treated Augustine's view fairly will be discussed at a later point in this chapter.)

Clark pointed out that Augustine added to his response the doctrine of human free will. Though God is all-powerful, He has sovereignly chosen to give mankind free will. God allows man to make his own choices. Mankind has chosen evil. Therefore, all that God created is good. Evil can be blamed not on God, but on the abuse of free will by man.⁵⁸

But Clark rejected this view of free will. Clark believed that the Bible does not teach that man is free to choose that which is right as opposed to that which is wrong. Clark stated that "free will is not only futile, but false. Certainly, if the Bible is the Word of God, free will is false; for the Bible consistently denies free will."⁵⁹

Though Clark rejected the doctrine of free will, he believed man has free agency. "Free will means there is no determining factor operating on the will, not even God. Free will means that either of two incompatible actions are equally possible." ⁶⁰ This Clark rejected. On the other hand, "Free agency goes with the view that all choices are inevitable. The liberty that the Westminster Confession ascribes to the will is a liberty from compulsion, coercion, or force of inanimate objects; it is not a liberty from the power of God." ⁶¹ Clark argued that a man can still be responsible for his actions even without the freedom to do other than he has done. Clark stated that, "a man is responsible if he must answer for what he does . . . a person is responsible if he can be justly rewarded or punished for his deeds. This implies, of course, that he must be answerable to someone." ⁶²

Clark then asked the question, "Is it just then for God to punish a man for deeds that God Himself 'determined before to be done?'" ⁶³ He answered in the affirmative. He stated that, "Whatever God does is just." ⁶⁴ Man is responsible to God; but God is responsible to no one.

Clark openly admitted that his view makes God the cause of sin. For, in his thinking, "God is the sole ultimate cause of everything." ⁶⁵ But, while God is the ultimate cause of sin, He is not the author of sin. The author is the immediate cause of an action. Man is the immediate cause of his sin. But he was not free to do otherwise. For God is the ultimate cause of sin. ⁶⁶

Clark stated that, "God's causing a man to sin is not sin. There is no law, superior to God, which forbids him to decree sinful acts. Sin presupposes a law, for sin is lawlessness." ⁶⁷ Clark explained that "God is above law" because "the laws that God imposes on men do not apply to the divine nature." ⁶⁸

Clark stated:

Man is responsible because God calls him to account; man is responsible because the supreme power can punish him for disobedience. God, on the contrary, cannot be responsible for the plain reason that there is no power superior to him; no greater being can hold him accountable; no one can punish him; there is no one to whom God is responsible; there are no laws which he could disobey.

The sinner therefore, and not God, is responsible; the sinner alone is the author of sin. Man has no free will, for salvation is purely of grace; and God is sovereign. ⁶⁹

This was Clark's proposed solution to the problem of evil. God is in fact the ultimate cause of sin. But He is not evil, for He committed no sin. And He is not responsible for sin, for there is no one to whom He is responsible. God is just, for whatever He does is just. Therefore, the creature has no right to stand in judgment over his Creator.

STRENGTHS OF CLARK'S PRESUPPOSITIONALISM

Gordon Clark, as this study shows, was a very original thinker. Even if one disagrees with much of what he has written, he has made a tremendous contribution to Christian thought that should not be overlooked. There are several strengths which are evident in the thought of Gordon Clark.

His rejection of pure rationalism. Clark is absolutely correct when he points out the major deficiency of rationalism. That is, rationalism cannot even get started until certain unproven assumptions are made. Reason cannot prove everything. This would result in an infinite regress, and nothing would be proven. First principles must be presupposed. They are not logically necessary (they cannot be proven with rational certainty).

His rejection of pure empiricism. Clark is right when he points out problems with extreme empiricism. Sense data and the facts of history do not come with their own built-in interpretations. They must be interpreted within the context of a person's world view. Empirical data alone cannot give us rational conclusions.

His rejection of irrationalism. Clark should be commended for his lack of patience for irrationalism. Once a person denies the law of contradiction, then the opposite of whatever that person teaches can be equally true with those teachings. But

all human thought and communication comes to a halt if one allows such an absurd premise. A person who holds to irrationalism cannot even express his view without assuming the truth of the law of contradiction.

His knowledge of the history of philosophical thought. Rarely does one read the works of a Christian author who has the insights that Clark had. His knowledge of the thought of the great philosophical minds of the past should encourage all Christians to be more diligent in their own studies. Gordon Clark was a man who had something to say because he was a man who lived a disciplined life of study. Even if one disagrees with the thrust of Clark's thought, one must never dismiss the insights he shared with others concerning the history of philosophy.

His recognition of the fact that all people have hidden presuppositions. Too often Christians pretend that they have no biases whatsoever, but this is not the case. Every person, believer and nonbeliever alike, has presuppositions that are often hidden. Clark was right in his view that apologetics is more accurately the seeking of confirmation for our presuppositions than it is the unbiased search for truth.

His use of the law of noncontradiction. Clark was justified in his usage of the law of noncontradiction. If two opposite concepts can both be true at the same time and in the same sense, then all knowledge and communication become impossible. Any world view that either is a contradiction or generates contradictions is not worth believing.

He is very consistent in his Calvinism. Too often Christians claim to be Calvinists but actually deny or redefine several of the five main points of Calvinism. Clark is not only a strong defender of all five points, but he also consistently holds to the implications of these points. His rejection of human free will and his view of God as the ultimate cause of evil are unpopular concepts, even among Calvinists. Clark is to be credited with having the courage to believe that which is consistent with his system of thought.

He is right to seek confirmation for his Christian presuppositions. Many presuppositionalists are content in merely assuming the truth of Christianity. But Clark realizes that, after pre-supposing biblical truth, one must still seek justification for this assumption. Clark does this by showing that Christianity does what all secular philosophies have failed to do. They failed to give meaning to life, justify moral values, and find truth.

He is right that man must choose. Clark recognizes that since all secular philosophies have failed to justify their truth claims, man must make a choice. A person can choose to continue to live with contradictory views. Or a person can choose skepticism and suspend all judgment (except his judgment to be skeptical). Clark even remarks that, for some, suicide is their choice.⁷⁰ But Clark pleads with his readers to choose Christianity. If secular philosophies have failed to find truth and give meaning to life, then why not choose Christianity? Whatever the case, man must choose.

THE WEAKNESSES OF CLARK'S PRESUPPOSITIONALISM

His denial of the basic reliability of sense perception. Though Clark is correct when he states that concepts such as moral values, causality, time, and space cannot be derived from sense data alone, he goes too far when he speaks of the "futility of sensation."⁷¹ With Clark's distrust for sense experience, how can he presuppose the truth of the Bible? For he must first use his sense of sight to read the Bible to find out what it is he is going to presuppose. In fact, the Bible itself seems to teach the basic reliability of sense perception. The Mosaic Law places great emphasis on eyewitness testimony, and the eyewitness accounts of Christ's post-resurrection appearances are presented as evidence for the truth of Christ's claims.

His denial of Thomistic first principles. While refuting rationalism, Clark stated that it needed first principles. For justification must stop somewhere. He pointed out that since first principles could not be proven through reason alone, rationalism fails to find truth without appealing to something other than reason. The first principles are not logically necessary. In this he is correct. However, Clark accepts the law of contradiction (what Thomists call the law of noncontradiction), though he says it is not logically necessary. He points out that if we do not accept this law, all knowledge and communication would cease. However, this is the same type of argument that Aquinas (and Aristotle long before him) used for his remaining first principles. Besides the principle of noncontradiction, Aquinas utilized the principles of identity, excluded middle, causality, and finality.⁷² Aristotle and Aquinas argued that these principles "cannot actually be denied without absurdity."⁷³ In other words, they are actually undeniable (though not logically necessary). But this is very similar to what Clark claims for one of his first principles, the law of contradiction. If Clark is justified in using this principle, then the other Thomistic first principles of knowledge may likewise be justified. If one accepts the principle of causality (every effect has an adequate cause), then one can reason from the effect (the finite world) to its cause (the infinite Creator). This would deal Clark's entire system a lethal blow since it would justify the use of traditional

arguments for God's existence. This would eliminate presuppositional apologetics as the only way for a Christian to defend his faith.

His downplaying of historical evidences for the Christian Faith. Clark rightly criticized deriving knowledge from sense data alone. Because of this, he minimized historical evidences. For facts of history, like sense data, do not come with their own built-in interpretations. However, if one accepts Thomistic first principles (because they are actually undeniable), then one can attempt to make sense of the facts of history. If a man claimed to be God and rose from the dead to prove His claim true, then one is not justified in explaining this resurrection in purely naturalistic terms. For every event must have an adequate cause. And no naturalistic explanation has succeeded to account for the resurrection.⁷⁴ Only a supernatural cause is sufficient in this case.

He gives no credit to probability arguments. Clark points out that other systems of philosophy do not have a starting point based on certainty. They must presuppose their first principles. However, Clark's own first principles are also not based on certainty; they too must be presupposed. It seems that Clark is judging his own philosophical system in a more lenient fashion than he does other schools of thought. It is true that Clark finds confirmation for the Christian presupposition that is lacking in other presuppositions. Still, this is after the fact. And, as Clark admits, this confirmation itself only makes Christianity more probable than other views; it does not establish its certainty. It seems that more credit should be given to arguments for first principles based upon a high degree of probability. Why should an argument be rejected when its premises and conclusion are very probable, while opposing views are unlikely?

Other philosophers have settled for less than certainty but still have solid systems of thought. Some might argue from premises that they believe are "beyond all reasonable doubt." Norman Geisler, following in the tradition of Thomas Aquinas, uses the principle of "actual undeniability."⁷⁵ Some things cannot be denied without contradiction and therefore must be true. For instance, if I deny my existence I must first exist to make the denial. For nothing is nothing. Nothing cannot deny anything. Only an existent being can deny something. Therefore, it is actually undeniable that I exist.⁷⁶

Charles Hodge (1797-1878) based his philosophical arguments on what he believed were "self-evident truths." Though these truths could be denied by others, their denial is "forced and temporary."

Once a philosopher finishes lecturing or debating, he returns to the real world and no longer denies self-evident truths such as his existence, the existence of others, and the reality of moral values.⁷⁷ He can deny moral values in the lecture hall, but once he is at home, he calls the police when he is robbed.

It seems then that Clark is mistaken. Christians can discover truths that are either "self-evident" or "actually undeniable." They can then dialogue with nonbelievers using these premises as common ground. Clark was wrong not to give proper due to first principles based upon a high degree of probability. This leaves the door open for traditional apologetics.

His attacks on traditional apologetics. Clark's attack on traditional apologetics is unfounded. This can be shown from his treatment of the Thomistic cosmological argument for God's existence. Aquinas argued that all existent beings which could possibly not exist need a cause or ground for their continuing in existence. In other words, all dependent existence must rely for its continued existence on a totally independent Being, a Being which is uncaused and self-existent.⁷⁸

Clark comments that Aquinas has not ruled out the possibility of an infinite regress of dependent beings.⁷⁹ However, Clark is mistaken. For Aquinas is not arguing indefinitely into the past. He is arguing for the current existence of a totally independent Being. Aquinas is arguing for the cause of the continued and present existence of dependent beings, not just the cause for the beginning of their existence.⁸⁰ Aquinas is pointing out that if one takes away the independent Being, then there is nothing to sustain the existence of all dependent beings. Every dependent being relies directly on the independent Being for preserving it in existence. The causality is simultaneous, just as a person's face simultaneously causes the existence of its reflection in a mirror. At the exact moment the person moves his face, the reflection is gone.

Clark raises another objection against the Thomistic cosmological argument. He states that even if the argument is valid, it would not prove the existence of the God of the Bible. Clark seems to imply that unless we prove every attribute of God, then it is not the identical God.⁸¹ However, if Aquinas proves the existence of the Uncaused Cause of all else that exists, how could this possibly not be the God of the Bible? If Clark can refer to God as "Truth" and "Logic" and still be talking about the Triune God of the Bible, then Aquinas can identify God with the "Unmoved Mover."

Finally, Clark accuses Aquinas of using the word "exist" with two completely different meanings.⁸² When Aquinas speaks of God, he speaks of God existing infinitely. But when he speaks of man, he speaks of man existing finitely. God *is* existence; man merely *has* existence. Though Clark's critique may seem valid, it is not. Aquinas would define existence as "that which is" whether it referred to God or man. True, Aquinas would apply the term "existence" to God infinitely, but to man only finitely. Still, the fact remains that whether Aquinas speaks of God or man, the meaning of existence remains the same.

Apparently, Clark misunderstands Aquinas' view of analogical language. Aquinas taught that we cannot have univocal (totally the same) knowledge of God. Still, our knowledge of God is not equivocal (totally different) since that would be no knowledge at all. Instead, according to Aquinas, our knowledge of God is analogical (similar). By this Aquinas did not mean that the concepts used of God and man have similar meanings. He meant that they have identical meanings, but that they must be applied only in a similar way. All limitations must be removed from a concept before it is applied to God. However, the concept itself continues to have the same meaning throughout.⁸³

Not only did Clark express distaste for the cosmological argument for God's existence, he also disliked the teleological argument (the argument from design).⁸⁴ He accepted Hume's criticism of this argument. Hume concluded that it proved the existence only of a finite god or gods, and that this god or gods may be evil (due to the evil in the world). However, if one argues for the existence of one infinite God through the cosmological argument, and then finishes the argument with the teleological premises, the argument from design will add the attribute of intelligence to the Uncaused Cause. The problem of evil could also be dealt with as a separate issue. In short, Clark's attempt to destroy traditional apologetics has failed.

His failure to refute the Islamic Faith. After destroying secular philosophy through the use of the law of contradiction, Clark does not apply this law to Islam. Instead, he merely states that God causes some to accept the Bible when answering the question, "Why does one man accept the Koran and another the Bible?"⁸⁵ Apparently, after all is said and done, Clark's system relies on God alone to cause the person to believe. One wonders why Clark went to such trouble to refute secular philosophies. Could not the same response be given to them?

His misrepresentation of Augustine and Aquinas. While dealing with the problem of evil, Clark accused Augustine of denying the reality of evil. He stated that Augustine taught that "all existing things are good" and that "evil therefore does not exist—it is metaphysically unreal."⁸⁶ Clark represented Augustine as reasoning that since evil does not exist, God cannot be the cause of evil.⁸⁷ In this way, Clark makes it sound as if Augustine is in agreement with the Christian Science view of evil as an illusion. Clark, is misrepresenting Augustine on this point.

Augustine did teach that God created everything that exists and that all that God created is good. However, evil is a perversion of that good brought about by the free choices of rational beings (fallen angels and men). Evil is a privation. It is a lack of a good that should be there.⁸⁸ An illustration of this would be rust. God did not create rust. Still it exists, but only as a corruption of something that God created (metal). Therefore, evil is real, but it must exist in some good thing that God created. All that God created is good. God did not create evil. He created the possibility of evil (free will). Fallen rational beings actualized evil by abusing a good thing (free will) God gave them.

Clark also misrepresents Aquinas by implying that Aquinas is a strict empiricist. It is true that Aquinas believed all knowledge comes through sense experience; he taught that God created man's mind with the innate ability to draw rational conclusions from sense data. Aquinas spoke of both the active mind (this innate ability to arrive at universals from particulars) and the receptive mind (the aspect of the mind which receives data from sense experience). Clark seems to view Aquinas as only holding to the existence of the receptive mind. He chooses to ignore Aquinas' teaching about the active mind (also called the agent intellect).⁸⁹

His proposed solution to the problem of evil. Clark's answer to the problem of evil is inadequate. He stated that God is not responsible for evil simply because there is no one above Him to whom He is responsible. Since Clark denied human free will (man could not choose to do otherwise), Clark made God the ultimate cause of evil.

The Augustinian approach, in the opinion of many Christian philosophers, is to be preferred. Augustine held that God gave man the freedom to disobey His commands. Therefore, God permitted sin; it was not part of His perfect will for man. A free will theodicy (attempting to propose a reason why God permitted evil) or a free will defense (attempting to merely show that it is not impossible for an all-good and all-powerful God to coexist with evil) is a much more plausible

solution to the problem of evil than the solution Clark proposed.²⁰ Of course, since Clark denied genuine free will, these options were not open to him.

He does not allow for the use of secular material during evangelism. Clark states, "in evangelistic work there can be no appeal to secular, non-Christian material."²¹ However, this is exactly what the apostle Paul did on Mars Hill. When speaking to Stoic and Epicurean philosophers, he quoted from the writings of two ancient Greek poets to find common ground with his hearers (Acts 17:16-34). If one must choose between the evangelistic approach of Gordon Clark and that of the apostle Paul, then one should choose Paul.

No Christian can show that every non-Christian system of thought is inconsistent. Clark claims that since every non-Christian philosophy has failed, people should presuppose the truth of the Christian world view. However, it is impossible for Clark, or any other person, to thoroughly examine every non-Christian system of thought.²² Even if it were possible for Clark to expose the contradictions in every non-Christian world view today, there is no guarantee that a totally consistent non-Christian world view will not be produced in the future.²³

CONCLUSION

Clark's presuppositional approach to apologetics, with minor adaptations, is a worthy apologetic. Uncovering contradictions in non-Christian belief systems is a necessary component in one's defense of the faith. However, Clark's presuppositional approach is not the only method Christians can use when defending the faith. Although Clark successfully demolishes several secular philosophies, traditional apologetics survives his assault.

ENDNOTES

- 1 Gordon H. Clark, Clark Speaks From the Grave (Jefferson: The Trinity Foundation, 1986), 2.
- 2 Gordon H. Clark, Religion, Reason and Revelation (Jefferson: The Trinity Foundation, 1986), 35.
- 3 Ibid., 37.
- 4 Clark, Clark Speaks From the Grave, 54.
- 5 Ibid., 55.
- 6 Ibid., 57.
- 7 Geisler, Apologetics, 37.
- 8 Gordon H. Clark, Thales to Dewey (Jefferson: The Trinity Foundation, 1989), 534.
- 9 Geisler and Feinberg, 431.
- 10 Gordon H. Clark, Three Types of Religious Philosophy (Jefferson: The Trinity Foundation, 1989), 60-61.
- 11 Geisler, Thomas Aquinas, 86.
- 12 Ibid.
- 13 Clark, Three Types of Religious Philosophy, 64-70.
- 14 Ibid., 71,76-78.
- 15 Ibid., 91.
- 16 Ibid., 27.
- 17 Ibid., 28-29.
- 18 Ibid., 31.
- 19 Ibid., 32.
- 20 Ibid., 33-35.
- 21 Clark, Religion, Reason and Revelation, 50-51.
- 22 Clark, Three Types of Religious Philosophy, 35.
- 23 Clark, Thales to Dewey, 332.
- 24 Clark, Religion, Reason and Revelation, 53.
- 25 Clark, Three Types of Religious Philosophy, 56.
- 26 Ibid., 117-118.
- 27 Ibid., 120.
- 28 Ibid., 93.
- 29 Clark, Religion, Reason and Revelation, 62.
- 30 Gordon H. Clark, A Christian View of Men and Things (Jefferson: The Trinity Foundation, 1991), 315-316.
- 31 Clark, Religion, Reason and Revelation, 63-68.
- 32 Ibid., 98.
- 33 Clark, Three Types of Religious Philosophy, 101-105.

34 Ibid., 114.
35 Clark, Thales to Dewey, 534.
36 Clark, Three Types of Religious Philosophy, 116.
37 Ibid., 118.
38 Ibid., 51-52.
39 Ibid., 70-91.
40 Ibid., 118-119.
41 Clark, A Christian View of Men and Things, 324.
42 Ibid.
43 Ibid.
44 Ibid., 315-316.
45 Ibid., 316.
46 Clark, Three Types of religious Philosophy, 140-142.
47 Sproul, Gerstner, and Lindsley, 76.
48 Ibid.
49 Clark, Religion, Reason and Revelation, 87.
50 Clark, A Christian View of Men and Things, 324.
51 Clark, Religion, Reason and Revelation, 109-110.
52 Clark, Three Types of Religious Philosophy, 138.
53 Ibid., 139.

54 Clark, Religion, Reason and Revelation, 195.
55 Ibid.
56 Ibid., 195-196.
57 Ibid., 196.
58 Ibid., 199.
59 Ibid., 206.
60 Ibid., 227.
61 Ibid.
62 Ibid., 231.
63 Ibid.
64 Ibid., 232-233.
65 Ibid., 237-238.
66 Ibid., 237-239.
67 Ibid., 239-240.
68 Ibid., 240.
69 Ibid., 241.

70 Clark, Thales to Dewey, 534.
71 Clark, Three Types of Religious Philosophy, 91.
72 Geisler, Thomas Aquinas, 72-74.
73 Ibid., 78-79.
74 Habermas, 26-33.
75 Geisler, Christian Apologetics, 143.
76 Ibid., 143-144.
77 Charles Hodge, Systematic Theology (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1989), vol. 1, 210.
78 Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologiae, 1a. 2,3.
79 Clark, Religion, Reason and Revelation, 36-37.
80 Craig, Apologetics, 63-65.
81 Clark, Religion, Reason and Revelation, 37-38.
82 Ibid., 38-39.
83 Geisler, Thomas Aquinas, 40.

84 Clark, Three Types of Religious Philosophy, 64-70.
85 Ibid., 139.
86 Clark, Religion, Reason and Revelation, 196.
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88 Augustine, The City of God, 22.1.

89 Geisler, Thomas Aquinas, 86.

90 Alvin C. Plantinga, God, Freedom, and Evil (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1974), 28-31.

91 Clark, Three Types of Religious Philosophy, 139.

92 Gordon R. Lewis, 119.

93 *Ibid.*, 119-120.