

Revelation and Reason

A Christological Reflection

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This chapter defends an account of reason consistent with that held by the Reformed orthodox thinkers of the seventeenth century and their successors such as Herman Bavinck. I will give a brief outline of this position and then turn to the main point of the discussion—some christological reasons for holding this view.

Sebastian Rehnman observes that John Owen is neither “a straightforward evidentialist nor a straightforward fideist.” For Owen, faith comes from God’s grace and is based on revelation or supernatural evidence. In that sense he is fideist. He writes that “we believe the Scripture to be the word of God with divine faith for its own sake only.” He explains that Christian faith rests on the authority and truthfulness of God’s revelation, and these features are grasped by faith, or by our minds in the exercise of faith. He asserts that “‘Thus saith the Lord’ is the reason why we ought to believe, and why we do so.”¹ This sounds to be straightforward fideism. Yet Owen also holds that Christian faith ought to have rational or cognitive support. So he is in a certain way an evidentialist. He says that “there are sundry cogent arguments, which are taken from external considerations of the Scripture, that evince it on rational grounds to be from God ... motives of credibility, or effectual persuasives to account and esteem it to be the word of God.”² These, he says, “may in their proper place be insisted on,” and they provide

1. John Owen, *The Reason of Faith*, ed. William H. Goold, vol. 4 of *The Works of John Owen* (London: Johnstone & Hunter, 1850–1855 [1677]), 70.

2. Owen, *Reason of Faith*, 20.

defenses against attacks on Scripture and may be “inducements into believing, or concomitant means of strengthening faith in them that do believe.”³ For Owen, “no one can come to faith merely by rational evidence, but rational evidence contributes significantly to whether or not one has faith.”⁴

Francis Turretin, probably the preeminent expositor of the position of Reformed orthodox on this question, similarly carefully prescribes the place of reason for theology.⁵ He claims that the Reformed position holds “a middle ground” neither confounding theology with philosophy “as the parts of a whole” nor setting them against each other.⁶ Reason has a role in theology, and so philosophy may aid theology but must not be viewed as part of theology. He carefully distinguishes between revelation as the “foundation of faith” and reason as the “instrument of faith.”⁷ Reason has “a ministerial and organic relation” to theology, and faith should use reason “as an instrument of application and mode of knowledge.”⁸ It has a role to “illustrate” and “collate” scriptural passages or arguments, to draw out “inferences,” and to help assess whether various positions agree or disagree with what has been revealed.⁹ He holds that reason, considered abstractly, is in perfect harmony with revelation, but that following the fall reason is corrupt, and unregenerate reason cannot grasp the truths of faith, and in fact it can be properly employed in reference of truths about God only by the regenerate.¹⁰

3. Owen, *Reason of Faith*, 71.

4. Sebastian Rehnman, “Graced Response: John Owen on Faith and Reason,” *Neue Zeitschrift Für Systematische Theologie Und Religionsphilosophie* 53, no. 4 (2011): 448.

5. Sebastian Rehnman, “Alleged Rationalism: Francis Turretin on Reason,” *CTJ* 37, no. 2 (November 2002): 259, suggests that he probably gives “the best statement” about the place of reason in theology in the Reformed orthodox.

6. Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1992–1997), 1:13.2. See Stephen J. Grabill, “Natural Law and the Noetic Effects of Sin: The Faculty of Reason in Francis Turretin’s Theological Anthropology,” *WTJ* 67, no. 2 (September 2005): 261–79.

7. Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, 1:8.7.

8. Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, 1:8.6, 12.15.

9. Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, 1:8.3.

10. Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, 1:8.4, 10.1. For discussion of the similar position held by Petrus van Mastricht and noting the views of Owen and Turretin, see Andrew Leslie, “The Reformation a Century Later: Did the Reformation Get Lost Two Generations Later?,” in *Celebrating the Reformation, Its*

This approach insists both that revelation must rule reason and that reason must be put to use to defend, analyze, and apply revelation. It places a tighter limitation on natural theology than did mainstream medieval theology. As Richard Muller explains, the Reformation applied its soteriology to its view of reason more fully than had medieval theology. “Whereas the medieval doctors had assumed that the fall affected primarily the will and its affections and not the reason, the Reformers assumed also the fallenness of the rational faculty.”¹¹ This means that for whatever extent the Reformed orthodox allow a natural theology, they will set stricter limits compared to the mainstream medieval view, which held that sin touches the will and desires more than cognition.

As a theological position that asserts the primacy of Scripture, this position has been based in biblical revelation and grounded in theological reason. After a couple of necessary definitions, I will show how a classic Christology, developed from Scripture, supports the Reformed position. My discussion comes under two simple headings: “revelation in Christ chastens reason” and “revelation in Christ establishes reason”; under each heading I explore several complementary aspects of revelation in Christ as they cast light on the place of reason.

DEFINING REASON AND REVELATION

This discussion does not need to settle on a precise view of reason. It will be enough to take reason as the capacity to self-consciously understand and to apply such understanding to respond appropriately to ourselves and our environment. To be rational is to be someone who is accountable to have reasons for what one understands and what one does, and who is responsible for and able to test those reasons. Rationality cannot be reduced to a particular set of rules, not least because one element of rational thought is the task of determining which set of rules are best applied for a particular case.¹² Reasoning is not strictly

Legacy and Continuing Relevance, ed. Mark D. Thompson, C. Bale, and Ed Loane (London: Apollos, 2017), 297–304.

11. Richard A. Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics: The Rise and Development of Reformed Orthodoxy, ca. 1520 to ca. 1725*, vol. 3, *The Divine Essence and Attributes* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), 108.

12. See Harold I. Brown, “Rationality,” in *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy*, 2nd ed., ed. Ted Honderich (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), www.oxford

separable from other human activities such as trusting or feeling, even though it is somewhat distinguishable from them.¹³

Revelation is God's work to bring people to know him. It consists of all that God does that he intends to terminate in human knowledge of himself. It includes both general and special revelation, namely, the objective revelation of God in prophetic words, theophanies, and deeds, all three as they occur climactically in Christ and the apostolic gospel and the teachings that come from him and have him as their content. It includes the written Scriptures, which flow from this revelatory work and the work of the Spirit, by which believers receive objective revelation and so come to enjoy communion with God. For this discussion I will consider revelation in Christ. I will do so because while Christ is not the only locus of revelation, he is the focus of revelation and the substance of Christian revelation. If we are going to think *in concreto* about revelation and reason, then to think in close engagement with Christology is appropriate.

REVELATION IN CHRIST CHASTENS REASON

THE INCARNATION DEMONSTRATES THE FAILURE OF HUMAN RESOURCES, INCLUDING RATIONAL RESOURCES

Why the incarnation? Anselm's answer is that only in the incarnation could the debt of honor due to God be repaid in such a way that humanity could be redeemed and not destroyed.¹⁴ That is, the redemption of humanity requires someone who can make a sufficient payment to God, "but the obligation rests with man, and no one else, to make the payment."¹⁵ His solution, or rather God's solution, is that the God-Man pays

reference.com.ezproxy.sl.nsw.gov.au/view/10.1093/acref/9780199264797.001.0001/acref-9780199264797-e-2127.

13. Alan G. Padgett, "Faith Seeking Understanding: Collegiality and Difference in Theology and Philosophy," in *Faith and Reason: Three Views*, ed. S. Wilkens (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2014), 89–91. Donald G. Bloesch, *A Theology of Word and Spirit: Authority and Method in Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2005), 37, defines reason as "any human cognitive faculty or capability" and so includes "mystical intuition" as much as "philosophical insight and intellectual comprehension." My usage is somewhat tighter than that.

14. Anselm, *Cur Deus Homo* 2.5–15, in *The Major Works: Anselm of Canterbury*, ed. Brian Davies and Gillian R. Evans (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 318–25.

15. Anselm, *Cur Deus Homo* 2.6, p. 320.

the price to restore God's honor. So, God comes from beyond and saves from within. The incarnation through virgin conception underscores the inadequacy of all human resources for our communion with God. Redemption requires a whole new start, the second Adam, who comes from outside us to be one of us. God does not build on what we are able to do. No, the incarnation is God doing for us what we are *unable* to do for ourselves.

What Anselm argued with regard to our debt paid in our stead can also be said about the gift of revelation. Knowledge of God had to be provided to us, mediated by and accommodated to our fallen humanity, ~~but cannot~~ ^{could not} arise from our fallen state. The very fact of the incarnation underlines the failure of our resources.

HUMANITY UNDERSTOOD IN THE LIGHT OF REDEMPTION IN CHRIST IS SHOWN TO NOT KNOW GOD

Consider the Pauline theme that people do “not know God” (Gal 4:8; 1 Thess 4:5; 2 Thess 1:8). Romans 1:21–25 is a dark portrait of humanity suppressing the knowledge of God, refusing to glorify or thank him and turning to idolatry. Paul spells out the implications of human thought and knowledge: they “became futile in their thinking, and their senseless minds were darkened,” they became “fools” and “exchanged the truth about God for a lie” (1:21, 22, 25). Paul describes gentiles “in the futility of their minds ... darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of their ignorance and hardness of heart” (Eph 4:17–18).

This description includes Jews as much as gentiles. A key argument in Romans is that Jews as much as gentiles are not only guilty but also fail to know God. In Romans 2 Paul takes Israel's claims to know and turns them back as accusations. The claims in view are all about knowledge — to “know his will and determine what is best” from the law, to be “a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness, a corrector of the foolish, a teacher of children, having in the law the embodiment of knowledge and truth” (2:18–19). Paul challenges his Jewish interlocutor: “You, then, that teach others, will you not teach yourself? While you preach against stealing, do you steal? You that forbid adultery, do you commit adultery? You that abhor idols, do you rob temples? You

that boast in the law, do you dishonor God by breaking the law?” (Rom 2:21–23). He is pointing to moral failures that belie the claim to *know* God and his will. So the series of texts in Romans 3:10–18 are applied to Jews and gentiles: “There is no one who is righteous ... no one who has understanding ... no one who seeks God. ... There is no fear of God before their eyes” (3:11, 18).¹⁶ Paul takes the prophetic condemnations of the blindness of idolatry and totalizes them both, applying them to all Jews and gentiles, and radicalizes them, leaving not a hint of true knowledge of God.

How did Paul come to this conviction? I suggest that it was along the same path by which he came to the conviction that no one could be justified apart from Christ. That the crucified Jesus of Nazareth was the risen Messiah showed that salvation requires the death of the Messiah; and if that was so, then no one was able to justify themselves. In the same way, knowledge of God comes only from the revelation of God in Christ. Just as Israel cannot justify itself, so it is blind and idolatrous. He must have first discovered this in himself when he was struck blind by his encounter with Christ before he had his eyes opened and was sent to bring God’s name to the gentiles and Israel (Acts 9:15). He told Agrippa that after a vision of “light from heaven, brighter than the sun” his task was to open eyes and turn people “from darkness to light” (26:13, 18).¹⁷ Paul realized, in light of revelation in Christ, that human reason, our capacity to know, understand, and interpret, does not establish us in knowledge of God.

THE THEOLOGY OF THE CROSS SHOWS THE FAILURE OF HUMAN REASON

I turn, then, to Martin Luther, who perhaps more than anyone grasped the implication of this Pauline theme and the christological focus of

16. This verdict is repeated in Rom 11:8–10, where Paul applies other Old Testament texts (Isa 29:10; Deut 29:4; Ps 69:22–23 [LXX]). Even when Moses is read there is a veil over the minds of Israel because their minds are hardened (2 Cor 3:13–15).

17. See further the discussion of the gospel itself as a “revelation” in Klyne Snodgrass, “The Gospel in Romans: A Theology of Revelation,” in *Gospel in Paul: Studies on Corinthians, Galatians and Romans for Richard N. Longenecker* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1994), 288–314.

revelation. His “theology of the cross” insisted that God’s wisdom and power contradict human norms of wisdom and power.¹⁸ A theologian of glory assumes that God’s ways fit our expectations and that his wisdom and power impress us, on our terms. Luther objects that such a person “does not deserve to be called a theologian.”¹⁹ In contrast, a theologian of the cross has discovered, by God’s grace, that God saves through the suffering and death of Christ on the cross. The theology of the cross has soteriological roots and is intimately linked to Luther’s view of justification by faith. It builds from the fact that God justifies the ungodly (Rom 4:5). Righteousness *coram Deo* (before God) subverts our presumed understanding of righteousness *coram hominibus* (before man).

Robert Kolb describes Luther’s theology as “a new conceptual framework for thinking about God and the human creature.”²⁰ Luther applied this trenchantly to the claims of reason, declaring it a “blind, wild fool,” “the devil’s whore,” and “the devil’s bride.” He wrote that “faith slaughters reason” since reason demands that God comply with its standards and expectations and that God refuses to do so. Gerhard Forde summarizes: “Theologians of glory operate on the assumption that creation and history are transparent to the human intellect, that one can see through what is made and what happens so as to peer into the ‘invisible things of God.’”²¹ The theology of the cross says that reason not only fails to grasp revelation, but it refuses and opposes revelation in Christ. It sets up its own categories and standards and demands that God’s truth should fit those to be counted as true. But God will not comply.

18. See Robert Kolb, “Luther in an Age of Confessionalization,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Martin Luther*, ed. Donald K. McKim (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 223. Alister E. McGrath, *The Genesis of Doctrine: A Study in the Foundation of Doctrinal Criticism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 25, appeals to Luther’s theology of the cross to argue that Christian theology should know that “experience and reality are, at least potentially, to be radically opposed.”

19. Martin Luther, *Heidelberg Disputation* 19; LW 31:40.

20. Robert Kolb, “Luther on the Theology of the Cross,” *Lutheran Quarterly* 16, no. 1 (2002): 443–44.

21. Gerhard Forde, *On Being a Theologian of the Cross: Reflections on Luther’s Heidelberg Disputation, 1518* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 72–73.

THE CHALCEDONIAN FORMULATION IS NOT RATIONALLY COMPREHENSIBLE

The content of orthodox Christology also demonstrates the inability of reason to comprehend revelation. John Hick sparked much of the modern debate about the rationality of the incarnation with his words in *The Myth of God Incarnate*, “to say, without explanation, that the historical Jesus of Nazareth was also God is as devoid of meaning as to say that this circle drawn with a pencil on paper is also a square.”²² James Anderson has argued persuasively that classical Christology is not irrational but is genuinely paradoxical; its affirmations appear to be logically contradictory, and every attempt to show that there is no real contradiction ends up moving away from classical Christology.²³ Attempts to remove such paradoxes to produce a rationally consistent Christology always fall short of Chalcedonian orthodoxy.²⁴

22. John Hick, “Jesus and the World Religions,” in *The Myth of God Incarnate* (London: SCM, 1977), 178. Hick has since clarified that he recognizes that the concepts of humanity and deity are so open that it is possible to “adjust them in relation to each other to make a literal understanding of the incarnation possible.” His question is “whether it is possible to do so in a way that satisfies the religious concerns which give point to the doctrine.” John Hick, *The Metaphor of God Incarnate: Christology in a Pluralistic Age*, 2nd ed. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2006), 4.

23. James Anderson, *Paradox in Christian Theology: An Analysis of Its Presence, Character, and Epistemic Status* (London: Paternoster, 2007), 60–106.

24. Anderson reviews several recent attempts to produce a rationally coherent Christology and shows that they fail to retain all the important elements of classical orthodoxy. We could add to his discussion William Lane Craig’s “modified Apollinarianism,” which seeks to provide a rational coherence for Christology by holding that “the Logos already possessed in His pre-incarnate state all the properties necessary for being a human self,” apart from possessing a body. So, “in Christ the one self-conscious subject who is the Logos possessed divine and human natures which were both complete.” See J. P. Moreland and William L. Craig, *Philosophical Foundations for a Christian Worldview* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2003), 606–13, and William L. Craig “The Coherence of the Incarnation,” *Ankara Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 50, no. 2 (2009): 195, <http://dergiler.ankara.edu.tr/dergiler/37/1146/13444.pdf>. See also the critique by Richard A. Ostella, “The Revived Apollinarianism of Moreland and Craig in *Philosophical Foundations for a Christian Worldview* (IVP, 2003),” presented to Evangelical Theological Society Midwest, March 28, 2014, available at www.westminsterreformedchurch.org/True%20Humanity%20and%20Deity%20of%20Christ/ETS2014FinalDraft.Apollinarianism.pdf. Richard Swinburne, “The Coherence of the Chalcedonian Definition of the Incarnation,” in *The Metaphysics of the Incarnation*, ed. Anna Marmodoro and Jonathan Hill (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 153–67, suggests a similar solution, appealing to Freud’s view that “a person can have two systems of belief

Norman Geisler and W. D. Watkins seem at first glance to hold a position that rebuts Anderson's claim. They argue that it "would be contradictory to affirm of any person either of the following at the same time and in the same sense: one person yet two persons, or one nature yet two natures," but it is not contradictory "to affirm one person in two natures" because, by distinguishing between persons and natures, classic Christology avoids claiming that one entity is both human and divine at the same time in the same respect.²⁵ Having argued that the claim is rationally coherent, they add the caveat that "we are unable to conceive ... how ... the two natures are united in the one person of Christ. ... We can ... know that to affirm two natures in one person is not contradictory. But none of these contentions entail that we know exactly how the natures are conjoined."²⁶ "The incarnation is not fully comprehensible nor fully explainable by finite beings."²⁷ This is precisely the way in which the material claims of classical Christology chasten reason. Reason seeks to understand and explain, yet it cannot understand or explain Christ.

Anderson argues for a "rational affirmation of paradoxical theology" because we should "anticipate paradox in some of our theological knowledge" since God is "incomprehensible."²⁸ We expect true statements about God and his relation to humanity to contain apparent contradictions. Anderson argues that the paradoxes in certain Christian doctrines, "rather than threatening the rationality of Christian belief in these doctrines, actually helps to explain their rationality."²⁹

In a similar vein, Sarah Coakley identifies an "oddness" in the Chalcedonian definition that she compares to a riddle in which "we express

to some extent independent of each other," though Swinburne also refers to his proposal as a "two minds" view.

25. Norman L. Geisler and W. D. Watkins, "The Incarnation and Logic: Their Compatibility Defended," *Trinity Journal* 6 (1985): 194.

26. Geisler and Watkins, "Incarnation and Logic," 195.

27. Geisler and Watkins, "Incarnation and Logic," 196.

28. Anderson, *Paradox in Christian Theology*, 218, 237–41.

29. Anderson, *Paradox in Christian Theology*, 242. He asserts that paradox should be allowed in Christian thought only when the elements of the paradox are warranted by God's revelation and cannot be understood nonparadoxically, and "if the appearance of contradiction can be plausibly attributed to divine incomprehensibility," 266.

and do not express a thing, see and do not see a thing.”³⁰ She argues that while Chalcedon intends to be referential and to describe “the ontological reality” of the incarnation, it is deliberately not striving for precision of language and in that sense is not “literal”:³¹ “It does not ... intend to provide a full systematic account of Christology, and even less a complete and precise metaphysics of Christ’s makeup. Rather, it sets a ‘boundary’ on what can, and cannot, be said ... and then leaves us at that ‘boundary,’ understood as the place now to which those salvific acts must be brought to avoid doctrinal error, but without any supposition that this linguistic regulation thereby *explains* or *grasps* the reality towards which it points.”³² Anderson and Coakely both affirm that christological formulations show the incapacity of reason to grasp the revelation of God in Christ. Yet neither of them suggest that Christology is irrational. That directs us to the second element of the discussion. Revelation in Christ chastens reason but then establishes it.

REVELATION IN CHRIST ESTABLISHES REASON

CHRIST IS THE INCARNATE LOGOS

The incarnation is the act in which the Logos takes on human nature. The term “Logos,” so prominent in early christological discussion, comes from John’s prologue, with its clear allusion to Genesis 1. The title alludes to the creative word and wisdom of God portrayed in the Old Testament (Pss 33:6, 9; 148:5; Prov 3:19; 8:30; Jer 10:12; Heb 11:3; 2 Pet 3:5).³³

The connection between God’s creative wisdom and the title of Logos was developed in the exegesis of Philo of Alexandria. It is not that Philo provides the most significant background to John’s prologue, but he provides an important precursor.³⁴ For Philo, *logos* named God’s own

30. Sarah Coakley, “What Chalcedon Solved and Didn’t Solve,” in *The Incarnation: An Interdisciplinary Symposium on the Incarnation of the Son of God*, ed. Stephen T. Davis, Daniel Kendall, and Gerald O’Collins (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 152–56; quote from Cora Diamond, *The Realistic Spirit: Wittgenstein, Philosophy, and the Mind* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995), 267.

31. Coakley, “What Chalcedon Solved and Didn’t Solve,” 156–59.

32. Coakley, “What Chalcedon Solved and Didn’t Solve,” 161.

33. Ben Witherington III, *John’s Wisdom: A Commentary on the Fourth Gospel* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1995), 52.

34. Craig A. Evans, *Word and Glory: On the Exegetical and Theological Background*

rationality, which was the template for the cosmos and also for the human mind. Because the human mind, the cosmos, and God all participated in the same *logos*, then it was possible for humans to understand the world and God, and this is the ontological foundation of every discipline and means that all knowledge is referred, finally, to God. The *logos* was inherently rational, so to say that God reveals himself by his word is not only to refer to God's self-expression or his covenantal word of promise but also to mean that God's self revelation is rational. Jiří Hoblík summarizes Philo's view: "The relationship between God and humankind is thus more than a relationship between creator and creation, for they are brought together by the agency of the Logos and the spirit, and their relationship is governed by the analogy between divine and human reason, which can be talked about only on the basis of the intermediary level that is rational faculty and that unconditional refers to its Creator."³⁵

Ben Witherington III suggests that one of the reasons John chose the title Logos is that it unites creation and salvation history.³⁶ It does so very explicitly by affirming the place of created human reason. The divine Logos, who is the source of all human enlightenment, has become flesh and entered into the human situation (John 1:1–14). Philo could never have affirmed this, but his thought provided the conceptual vocabulary that enabled John to not only affirm that the Creator has come to be a creature but that the one who has made the world understandable and has given humanity understanding is the agent of redemptive revelation in the incarnation.

THE CHALCEDONIAN REJECTION OF APOLLINARIANISM AFFIRMS THE PLACE OF HUMAN REASON

The possibility of human reason knowing God is affirmed by classic Christology in its rejection of Apollinarianism. Apollinarius of Laodicea (ca. 310–ca. 390) held that the Logos (and not human nature) provides the mind of Christ. So the debate his thought engendered was

of *John's Prologue* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993), 100–114; David T. Runia, *Philo in Early Christian Literature: A Survey* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 83.

35. Jiří Hoblík, "The Holy Logos in the Writings of Philo of Alexandria," *Communio Viatorum* 56, no. 3 (2014): 260.

36. Witherington, *John's Wisdom*, 53.

concerned with the relationship between the Logos and human mind and rationality.³⁷ In Apollinarius' account of salvation, "God predominates over Christ's human flesh; God acts in Christ as a single, divine agent, and the flesh is ... a passive instrument of the divine activity."³⁸ The result was that Christ is the mediator as a *mean*, a *tertium quid* neither wholly human nor wholly God but a mixture of God and humanity. Frances Young explains that "it is this new creation, the divine mixture, God and flesh perfected in one nature, that bring divinization and salvation."³⁹

Apollinarius took this view because of his understanding of the makeup of a human person and also perhaps because of his view of Christ's heavenly body.⁴⁰ His Christology was also shaped by his view of sin as the triumph of the desires of the flesh over the mind.⁴¹ Redemption required that the rule of desire be reversed; he writes that "what was needed was unchangeable intellect that did not fall under the domination of the flesh."⁴² This is to claim that salvation is grounded in the divine Word and not the human mind. For him, Christ is not the God-man who works for our salvation from the inside, but Christ remains outside, in the likeness of humanity but not consubstantial with humanity. This view flows on to his theology of grace. As the Word divinizes flesh, so we come to salvation by divinization, which means the replacement and destruction of the human mind. True knowledge of God, in the Apollinarian scheme, must bypass human reason.⁴³

The reply of Gregory of Nazianzus was that Christ must have a human mind if he is to save us with our minds: "If anyone has put his

37. Robert L. Calhoun, *Scripture, Creed, Theology: Lectures on the History of Christian Doctrine in the First Centuries* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2011), 279–84.

38. Christopher A. Beeley, "The Early Christological Controversy: Apollinarius, Diodore, and Gregory Nazianzen," *Vigiliae Christianae* 65, no. 4 (2011): 382.

39. Frances M. Young and Andrew Teal, *From Nicaea to Chalcedon: A Guide to the Literature and Its Background*, 2nd ed. (London: SCM, 1983), 251.

40. Lewis Ayres, "Shine, Jesus, Shine: On Locating Apollinarianism," *Studia Patristica* 40 (2006): 143–58.

41. Beeley, "Early Christological Controversy," 384.

42. Apollinarius, *Fragment 76*, quoted in Beeley, "Early Christological Controversy," 385.

43. See C. FitzSimons Allison, *The Cruelty of Heresy: An Affirmation of Christian Orthodoxy* (Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse, 1994), 105–18.

trust in Him as a Man without a human mind, he is really bereft of mind, and quite unworthy of salvation. For *that which He has not assumed He has not healed; but that which is united to His Godhead is also saved*. ... But if He has a soul, and yet is without a mind, how is He man, for man is not a mindless animal?"⁴⁴ The Council of Chalcedon reached a sagacious and elegant solution to the problem of Christ and the human mind. It affirmed that the Lord Jesus Christ is "truly God and truly man, consisting also of a reasonable [or rational] soul and body." To affirm Christ's "rational soul" is crucial, for that is a soul *which* operates with human reason. Jesus is "of one substance with us as regards his manhood" and "like us in all respects, apart from sin." He has all the human capacities, to suffer and to reason as a human. So, in the series of privatives, the formula states that he has two natures "without confusion, without change, without division, without separation ... the characteristics of each nature being preserved."

Developments after Chalcedon helped to further clarify the relationship of humanity and divinity in the hypostatic union.⁴⁵ Leontius of Jerusalem (ca. 485–ca. 543), followed by John of Damascus (ca. 660–ca. 750), described Christ's humanity as anhypostatic and enhypostatic. That is, Christ is without a human personal center (avoiding the Nestorian view that there are two persons in Christ). Alone, this denial leaves us wondering about the true humanity in the incarnation. What do we make of a human who does not have a personal center? The positive statement of *enhypostasia* affirms that the humanity of Jesus has personal existence in union with the person of the Son.⁴⁶

44. Epistle 51 of St. Gregory the Theologian, "To Cledonius, against Apollinarius," www.monachos.net/content/patristics/texts/158-gregory-to-cledonius.

45. These debates continue, with modern thinkers expressing the view that Chalcedon fails to affirm genuine humanity for Christ; see Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Jesus—God and Man*, 2nd English ed., trans. Lewis L. Wilkins and Duane A. Priebe (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1977), 338–40; Karl Rahner, "Current Problems in Christology," in *Theological Investigations* (Baltimore: Helicon, 1965), 1:161. See also John P. Galvin, "From the Humanity of Christ to the Jesus of History: A Paradigm Shift in Catholic Christology," *TS* 55 (1994): 252–73; John McIntyre, *The Shape of Christology: Studies in the Doctrine of the Person of Christ*, 2nd ed. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998), 97–99.

46. See Dennis Michael Ferrara, "Hypostatized in the Logos: Leontius of Byzantium, Leontius of Jerusalem and the Unfinished Business of the Council of Chalcedon," *Louvain Studies* 22, no. 4 (1997): 312–27; and Fred Sanders, "Chalcedonian

As an exposition of Chalcedon, the affirmation that Christ's humanity is enhypostasic in union with the Son makes a crucial point for anthropology and for our reflections on rationality. God is not the antithesis of creaturely existence, nor the opposite of humanity, nor the denial of humanity. In his works God provides the foundation and ground for creation. They come from him as his gifts. We are created through him, in him all things hold together, and we live and move and have our being in him. Humanity is made in his image, not as his opposite. We are made to enter into communion with him. So while humanity cannot be transformed into God, neither is humanity lost in union with God. As the Reformed affirmed, the finite cannot bear the infinite (*finitum non capax infiniti*), but the whole of existence rests on the fact that the infinite can bear and sustain the finite (*infinitum capax finiti*). Humanity can never reach to God, but just as God condescends to create and continues to sustain, so in his grace he can assume humanity, and in that union humanity finds its perfect expression.

Thus, revelation in Christ establishes reason, not by displaying it as a general principle but by bringing humanity back to its proper relationship of communion with God in which our reason can operate as it should.

CHRIST'S MEDIATORIAL KNOWLEDGE OF GOD IS KEY TO HIS WORK OF REVELATION

One final claim adds depth to the significance of Christ's human knowledge. In opposition to Apollinarianism, we should insist that Christ mediates revelation because he has a full and fully human knowledge of God. He is the revealer because he receives revelation.

It is sometimes assumed that Christ's humanity obscures God's self-revelation and so we must penetrate through the veil of his humanity to know God.⁴⁷ Against such a view, we should rather see that revelation

Categories of the Gospel Narrative," in *Jesus in Trinitarian Perspective*, ed. Fred Sanders and Klaus Issler (Nashville: B&H, 2007), 25–36.

47. Richard Bauckham, "Jesus as the Revelation of God," in *Divine Revelation*, ed. Paul Avis (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1997), 174, raises the question clearly and argues that the eschatological hope of revelation of Christ (1 John 3:2) reminds us that his revelation in his first coming had an aspect of hiddenness about it. Barth, similarly, sees a paradox in Christ's revelation of God in his humanity. He is the

through the incarnate one is accommodated for us through his humanity rather than being veiled by it. Christ's redemptive revelation comes through the whole of his life, leading to the climax in his second appearing, when we shall not only see him as he is (1 John 3:2) but be conformed to his glorified humanity (Phil 3:21), and so, in and through his humanity, ~~we~~ shall see God's face (Rev 22:4). In all of this, Christ's humanity mediates knowledge of God. Such a claim is coherent with the place of Christ's humanity in his all work. His humanity serves his mission and ~~does~~ ^{it does not} limit it. The Westminster Confession (8:3) puts it admirably when it states that the Lord Jesus as very God and very man "was sanctified, and anointed with the Holy Spirit, above measure, having in Him all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." Christ as God and Man is perfectly fitted for his work, and this applies as much to his work as prophet as to priest and king. At the heart of Christ's prophetic work is his own knowledge of God, received in his humanity as revelation. The Westminster formulation reflects this when it refers to Christ as having "all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" and being "full of grace and truth."

In the incarnation the Son who from eternity knows the Father perfectly also has a human life, in which by the Spirit he comes to know the Father in perfect, human obedience. He is both the Word of God *and* a prophet who received the word. In his humanity Christ grew in knowledge and wisdom (Luke 2:40, 52) given by the Spirit. He rejoiced at visions and insights from God (10:18) and refreshed himself in prayer (Matt 14:23; Mark 1:35; 3:21; 6:46; Luke 5:16; 6:12; 9:18, 28; 11:1). He agonized in Gethsemane and on the cross and looked forward to his return to the glory of the Father (John 12:23; 13:31, 32; 14:28). Michael Allen, arguing for the significance of Christ's human faith, concludes that the "assumption of true humanity necessarily involves the embrace of certain limitations, specifically intellectual and developmental ones."⁴⁸

humanity of God, and yet this humanity veils God. Trevor Hart, "Revelation," in *The Cambridge Companion to Karl Barth*, ed. John B. Webster (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 59, explains Barth's view that "In apprehending the man Jesus, we do not as such and without further ado lay hold of God. We are, after all, beholding his humanity which serves as a created veil for the divinity as well as a door which, at God's own behest, may open for us."

48. R. Michael Allen, *The Christ's Faith: A Dogmatic Account* (New York: T&T

The human pilgrim knowledge of God possessed by Christ is a deep, abiding, intimate, and constant fellowship with the Father. It is analogous to the ectypal knowledge of the Father enjoyed by the Son in all eternity, but it is always a human knowledge of God.

Jesus' human knowledge of the Father ^{was} mediated by the Spirit as he is formed, led, and empowered by the Spirit (Matt 1:18, 20; 3:10; 12:28, 32–33; Luke 1:35; 2:40; 3:21–22; 4:1, 14; 12:10; John 1:33; Heb 9:14; Rom 1:1–4; 1 Tim 3:16; 1 Pet 3:18).⁴⁹ In the context of the ministry of the Spirit ^{was} it is developed through meditation on Scripture. He ^{knew} his task through his contemplation of Scripture in light of his call (Matt 3:17; Mark 1:11; Luke 3:22). From the Scriptures ^{grasped} he grasps that his death and resurrection ^{were} are the inevitable outcome of his mission (Matt 16:21; 20:18–19; Mark 8:31; 10:33–34; Luke 9:22; 18:31–33), and he ^{explained} explains his work in terms of the Scriptures and their fulfillment (Luke 24:27). Telford Work comments that “if Jesus’ self-awareness was an effect of his anointed priesthood ... and not merely his status as incarnate Word, then it is also in large part a function of Jesus’ relationship with Scripture.”⁵⁰

As B. B. Warfield observes, in the New Testament “a duplex life is attributed to him [Jesus] as his constant possession.”⁵¹ In the God-man we see humanity and divinity in unity. He has direct and immediate knowledge of God, and he receives the knowledge of God. Although these are distinct, they are not opposed. There is a wonderful and mysterious harmony. It is not that divine knowledge denies or replaces human knowledge, but rather that Spirit-given knowledge of God

Clark, 2009), 68.

49. John Owen, “Pneumatologia,” in vol. 3 of *Collected Works* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1966), 159–88; Sinclair Ferguson, *The Holy Spirit* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1996), 35–56; Myk Habets, “Spirit Christology: Seeing in Stereo,” *Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 11, no. 2 (2003): 199–234.

50. Telford Work, *Living and Active: Scripture in the Economy of Salvation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 171; and see N. T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God* (London: SPCK, 1996), 536–37.

51. Benjamin B. Warfield, “The Human Development of Jesus,” in *Selected Shorter Writings of Benjamin B. Warfield*, ed. J. E. Meeter (Nutley, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1970), 1:164, states that the question of Jesus’ knowledge is “a topic very much under discussion nowadays.” See also Thomas C. Oden, *The Word of Life*, vol. 2 of *Systematic Theology* (San Francisco: Harper, 1989), 204; Donald G. Bloesch, *Jesus Christ: Savior & Lord*, Christian Foundations (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1997), 70–71.

conforming^S Jesus' human knowledge to the full knowledge of the Son without transforming the human into the divine. It is the same pattern as in the two wills of Christ, in which human obedience in the power of the Spirit conforms with the eternal will of God.

In all of this, Christ's knowledge is mediatorial, that is, he knows God so that we may know him. So he becomes head of a new humanity among whom God is known. Because Jesus Christ knows the Father by the Spirit, those who share in his Spirit also come to know God (1 Cor 2:9–16).⁵²

The high point of John's presentation of this theme is Jesus' prayer in John 17. There Jesus states that he has revealed the Father to the disciples on the basis of what he has been given by the Father, and as the disciples receive it they recognize that he has come from the Father (John 17:6–8; see 17:25). This recognition of Jesus as from the Father has a double effect. On the one hand, it means that they acknowledge Jesus for who he is and believe in him; at the same time, it means that they come to know the Father in and through Jesus. This passage underscores what is correct in Bultmann's overstatement that Jesus reveals nothing but that he is the Revealer.⁵³ Knowing Jesus truly is knowing that we know God in him, and knowing God is knowing that we know him in Jesus, and all of this comes from the revelation of the Father to the Son.⁵⁴

In terms of the theme of this paper, Christ's own knowledge is fully human and also fully divine. This most ^{completely} fully establishes the place of reason. The New Testament Christ is not an Apollinarian figure who has a divine mind alone, or even the neo-Apollinarian version whose human knowledge is a section of the divine mind or human consciousness with a divine subconscious. Christ's knowledge is fully human knowledge, in harmony with divine knowledge. As Christ knows God as a man, he knows according to reason, he knows as the human capacity of knowing

52. See Douglas F. Kelly, *Systematic Theology Grounded in Holy Scripture and Understood in the Light of the Church*, vol. 1, *The God Who Is: The Holy Trinity* (Fearn, Ross-shire, UK: Mentor, 2008), 28–32.

53. Rudolf Bultmann, *New Testament Theology*, trans. K. Grobel (New York: Scribner, 1955), 2:66.

54. See Marianne M. Thompson, *The God of the Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 140–41.

and understanding is sanctified and put to its full and proper end. On that basis he enables us to know God.

CONCLUSION

I am glad that our topic has been framed as “revelation and reason.” There are different pairings used for similar discussions: “faith and reason,” “theology and reason,” “theology and philosophy.” Each is an important topic and deserves discussion. One of the burdens of my paper is that the “revelation and reason” question is the most basic. Christian faith should follow revelation as the proper human response to what God makes known about himself. God’s self-revelation is the external cognitive foundation (*principium cognoscendi externum*) of theology. The work of the Spirit evokes in us faith in God as he has revealed himself, and so the illumination of the Holy Spirit is the internal principle (*principium cognoscendi interernum*) that brings knowledge of God to human consciousness.⁵⁵ Thus theology, the human account of knowledge of God, follows faith, and faith follows revelation. All of which is to say that to ask how revelation relates to reason will provide the right basis for then considering how reason relates to faith and how, then, reason and philosophy function in theology.

The traditional Reformed view is that reason is a good servant but a demonic master. This extended theological reflection underscores that conclusion. Reason must be chastened. We are quick to measure all things, and especially God, by our own understanding and comprehension. The gospel of Jesus Christ shows that our capacity is not only limited but that in sin humanity is committed to misunderstanding and opposing God’s truth. That is the point of the theology of the cross; left to ourselves we will be theologians of glory.

The answer to the rebellion of reason is not the destruction of reason. For revelation establishes reason in two senses. First, it shows the validity of reason, even for the things of God. The presence of the Logos in the flesh means Christ has mediatorial knowledge. He reveals and is revelation because he has been given the gift of knowledge of God accommodated to human reception. Reason has its place.

55. Herman Bavinck, *Prolegomena*, vol. 1 of *Reformed Dogmatics*, ed. John Bolt, trans. John Vriend (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 213; see 39.

Revelation establishes reason in another sense as well. It is because we are redeemed into communion with God and receive knowledge of him that we can think properly.

Revelation in Christ does not displace or subvert reason. It chastens it, but not to discard it. This is a case of grace perfecting nature, not destroying it. The path to perfection is through judgment and repentance. Reason must be sanctified, in the full Reformed sense of mortification and vivification. It must be stripped of pretensions and brought to heel before it can be raised to know God. So raised, in Christ and by the Spirit, human reason enters into its God-ordained vocation to know God and to view all things in their relation to him, for his glory and to guide the redeemed in living for God.

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