

B. B. WARFIELD ON FAITH, REASON AND THE HOLY SPIRIT

In the forward to fellow Presbyterian Francis Beattie's book *Apologetics: or the Rational Vindication of Christianity*, Warfield, ironically, if not prophetically, anticipated much of the criticism which would be leveled at him by those who are in many ways his direct theological descendants. It is primarily based upon Warfield's remarks about reason in this essay that many of his critics have reached their negative assessment about Warfield's apologetic. A brief evaluation of Warfield's essay will be extremely helpful in determining many of Warfield's own views on these matters, since Warfield specifically discusses several of the issues under debate.

Lamenting the twin enemies of rationalism and mysticism, Warfield notes,

The mystical tendency is showing itself in our day most markedly in a wide-spread inclination to decline Apologetics in favor of the so-called *testimonium Spiritus Sancti*. The convictions of the Christian man we are told, are not the product of reasons addressed to the intellect, but are the immediate creation of the Holy Spirit in his heart. Therefore, it is intimated, we can not only do very well without these reasons, but it is something very like sacrilege to attend to them. Apologetics, accordingly, is not merely useless, but may even become noxious, because tending to substitute a barren intellectualism for a vital faith.¹

Many of these same charges have been leveled against Warfield himself.

Quickly dismissing the rationalists, since what they need is "not less Apologetics but more Apologetics," Warfield indeed seems quite perplexed about the role of apologetics proposed in the *Encyclopedia of Sacred Theology*, recently published by Abraham Kuyper. There are two primary issues about which Warfield takes issue with his esteemed Dutch friend. First, Warfield is concerned that Kuyper has adopted a "mystical" conception of apologetics, which in effect, results in the practical depreciation of apologetics altogether. Second, Warfield is concerned that Kuyper's understanding of theological encyclopedia is unduly confused, and may in fact, amount to a departure from historic Reformed practice.

¹ B. B. Warfield, "Introduction to Francis R. Beattie's *Apologetics*," 94.

Warfield finds it greatly disturbing then, when he hears the mystical conception of apologetics, on "the lips of the heroes of faith," like Kuyper, "who depreciate Apologetics because they felt no need of 'reasons' to ground faith which they are sure they have received immediately from God."² The necessity of grounding the Christian faith in the evidence for special revelation, assuming as Warfield did that the doctrines of Christianity are necessarily connected to the facts of revelation, is the position of much of the historic Reformed tradition. This means that Kuyper, following the "mystical approach," is now identified with those who declare, "apologetics...will never make a Christian. Christians are made by the creative Spirit alone. And when God Almighty has implanted faith in the heart, we shall not require to seek 'reasons' to ground our conviction of the truth of the Christian religion."³ Warfield states that this is unfortunately the union of belief and unbelief to "disparage the defenses of the Christian religion."⁴ As Warfield sees it, it is Kuyper who has unwittingly been seduced by Kant and the Enlightenment.

Warfield is troubled by the fact that Abraham Kuyper is one of these who demonstrates this new found distrust of the traditional role for apologetics since Kuyper has hidden apologetics away as "a subdivision of a subdivision," which "concerns itself only with the distinct philosophical assault on Christianity."⁵ What concerns Warfield the most in this regard is that Kuyper's distrust of apologetics has led him into a self-contradictory conception of the ground of the Christian faith. Warfield concludes that in Kuyper's scheme, "something is lacking at the beginning." While depreciating apologetics by placing it as a subdivision of a subdivision, Kuyper also argued that "the subject of theology is the human

² Warfield, "Introduction to Francis R. Beattie's *Apologetics*," 95. Warfield makes a similar charge against Herman Bavinck, that he too "is a shining ornament to estimate the value of Apologetics somewhat lightly." See Warfield, "Review of Herman Bavinck's *De Zekerheid des Geloofs*," 114.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid., 96.

consciousness; that in this consciousness there is implanted a *sensus divinitatis*, a *semen religionis*."⁶

Thus, what Kuyper has done, despite his assertions to the contrary, is leave us with a "very considerable—though certainly not a complete apologetic, which must precede and prepare the way for the 'Bibliological Group' of theological departments."⁷ Warfield points out that if Kuyper argues for the "existence of a *sensus divinitatis* in man capable of producing a natural theology independently of special revelation," and then argues for "the reality of a supernatural revelation in deed and word; and as well, the reality of a supernatural preparation of the heart to receive it; before we study theology at all," has he not given an outline of the task and duties of apologetics as classically understood? Clearly then, Warfield is perplexed because he sees Kuyper's scheme as confusing and novel, and he notes accordingly, "we cannot think it an improvement upon the ordinary *schema*."⁸

At this point, Warfield's exasperation with Kuyper's scheme reaches its zenith. "It is a standing matter of surprise to us that the brilliant school of Christian thinkers, on whose attitude toward Apologetics we have been animadverting, should be tempted to make little of Apologetics."⁹ Since Warfield finds Kuyper's treatment of "sin and regeneration" in relation to science to be a "beautiful exposition," Warfield cannot understand why it is that Kuyper does not "magnify, instead of minifying, the value of Apologetics."¹⁰ Perhaps it is because Kuyper insists upon absolutizing "the contrast between 'the two kinds of science'—that which is the product of the thought of sinful man in his state of nature, and that which is the product of man under the regenerating grace of God."¹¹ While Warfield fully agrees

⁶ Warfield, "Introduction to Francis R. Beattie's *Apologetics*," 96.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 97.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Ibid.*, 100.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ Warfield, "Introduction to Francis R. Beattie's *Apologetics*," 100.

with Kuyper, that in one sense there indeed are two kinds of men, regenerate and unregenerate, what concerns Warfield, however, is Kuyper's total absolutization of this since,

the difference between the two is, after all, not accurately described as a difference in kind....Sin has not destroyed or altered in its essential nature any one of man's faculties, although—since it corrupts *homo totus*—it has affected the operations of them all. The depraved man neither thinks, nor feels, nor wills as he ought; and the products of his action as a scientific thinker cannot possibly escape the influence of this everywhere operative power.¹²

Notice that it is not Kuyper's belief that sin colors all aspects of life and knowing, with which Warfield takes issue. What Warfield rejects is Kuyper's absolutizing of the difference between Christian and non-Christians. For one thing, the regenerate man remains a sinner even after conversion, and "no new faculties have been inserted in him by regeneration; and the old faculties, common to man in all his states, have been in some measure restored to their proper functioning." Certainly the Christian and the non-Christian have different presuppositions. But to argue there are "two kinds of people, hence two kinds of science," is to draw an improper conclusion. To Warfield's way of thinking, the difference between the two is quantitative, not qualitative. The real difference wrought by palingenesis should not lead us to conclude that there are really two kinds of science, a "Christian" science and an "unregenerate" science.

Thus, Warfield can conclude in this regard, that the Christian, though regenerate, "does not produce a 'science' differing in kind from that produced by sinful man....Sinful and sinless men are, after all both men; and being both men, are fundamentally alike and know fundamentally alike."¹³ Those, such as Marsden, who have correctly observed that Warfield was confused, indeed, perplexed by Kuyper's comment in this regard are absolutely correct. Warfield certainly was. Warfield saw Kuyper's conception of the whole theological encyclopedia as confused, and therefore, problematic from the outset. Warfield also thought Kuyper too innovative at this particular point, and even went so far as to

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid., p. 101.

note that his otherwise esteemed Dutch colleague had wedded himself too deeply with unbelief. Warfield disagreed with Kuyper's conception of an epistemological dualism drawn between the regenerate and unregenerate. And he believed that while "ideally" there would be one science, he also noted that any perfect science is found only in the divine mind. Fallen humanity can never attain this.¹⁴ Because science operates on a continuum, however, Warfield can state, "it is the better science that ever in the end wins the victory; and paligenetic science is the better science, and to it belongs the victory. How shall it win the victory if it declines the conflict?"¹⁵ Here then, lies the source of Warfield's perplexion, for Kuyper declines the conflict altogether. How, then, can Christianity conquer unbelief, if it refuses the fight, especially so, when it has all of the advantages on its side? Thus it is Warfield in this regard who is the optimist, and Kuyper who is the pessimist.

In his treatment of Warfield's differences with Kuyper, George Marsden certainly overstates matters when he notes that it is Kuyper who writes "from a traditional point of view"¹⁶ implying that Warfield is the innovator. As we have seen, Warfield writes from within a long-standing Reformed evidentialist tradition. When judged from this perspective, there is really more of a question here as to the degree of Kuyper's innovation, not Warfield's. Therefore, by not taking due notice of the context of Warfield's review of Kuyper's theological prolegomena—the Reformed debate over natural theology and the proper structure of the theological system—Marsden improperly concludes that Warfield's perplexity is merely indicative of those who held "a combination of Enlightenment heritage and millennial expectation, anticipating the unification of the race on the basis of the triumph of a fully rational

¹⁴ Warfield, "Introduction to Francis R. Beattie's *Apologetics*," 102.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 103.

¹⁶ Marsden, *The Soul of the American University*, 214.

science,"¹⁷ in contrast to those, such as Kuyper, who hold to the "Reformed" understanding of the noetic effects of sin and regeneration. This is, as we have seen, a false dichotomy. While there is in my mind a legitimate question as to the source of Warfield's optimism in this regard, and it may indeed be related to his postmillennial optimism, Warfield's criticism of Kuyper comes from the perspective of Reformed scholasticism and Scottish evidentialism, not Scottish rationalism.¹⁸

We have also seen throughout Warfield's discussion, that at no point does Warfield *ever* assert that reason serves as a kind of *principium of faith*. Warfield's comments about reason take place within the context of the in-house debate over natural theology, and faithfully follow that tradition, and it must be noted that Warfield is responding to what he believes to be Kuyper's confusion on these matters. It is, therefore, quite misleading that many recent interpreters of the Princeton tradition take Warfield's remarks that "it is the distinction of Christianity that it has come into the world clothed with the mission to *reason* its way to dominion," and that "Christianity makes its appeal to right reason," as though this is all that Warfield has to say on the subject; or that his comments here are characteristic of his apologetic; or that Warfield is an innovator of sorts; or as though Warfield has somehow unwittingly capitulated to Enlightenment rationalism; or even worse, that Warfield has somehow adopted an Arminian or Romanist scheme. There is no evidence whatsoever to support these kind of *ad hominem* arguments.

Warfield's remarks, however, very likely come from the Scottish evidentialist tradition, quite possibly from the words of James MacGregor. If Warfield did not immediately draw on this tradition, at

¹⁷ Marsden, *The Soul of the American University*, 215. It is important to note that in his treatment of this in *Fundamentalism and American Culture* (115), Marsden notes that much of the difference between Warfield, Bavinck and Kuyper, is related to differing conceptions of common ground, a better category perhaps in which to frame the overall discussion. Marsden interprets Warfield's view as "pervasive but quite limited," though Warfield himself describes the effects of sin as corrupting *homo totus*, which Warfield defines as effecting the mind, the heart and the will. See B. B. Warfield, "Introduction to Francis Beattie's *Apologetics*," 100.

¹⁸ By making this point, I am not denying the fact that there is a legitimate debate concerning proper apologetic methodology amongst Reformed Christians.

the very least, he certainly concurred with it. Warfield's remarks are also qualified by several preceding comments in the essay, and which are critical to Warfield's argument though they are often overlooked by many of these interpreters. Writes Warfield in this regard,

We are not absurdly arguing that Apologetics has in itself the power to make a man a Christian or to conquer the world to Christ. Only the Spirit of Life can communicate life to a dead soul, or can convict the world in respect of sin, and of righteousness and judgement. We are arguing that faith is, in all its exercises alike, a form of conviction, and is therefore, necessarily grounded in evidence. And we are arguing that evidence accordingly has its part to play in the conversion of the soul; and that the systematically organized evidence which we call Apologetics similarly has its part to play in the Christianizing of the world. And we are arguing that this part is not a small part; nor is it a merely subsidiary part; nor yet a merely defensive part—as if the one end of Apologetics were to protect an isolated body of Christians from annoyance from the surrounding world, or to aid the distracted Christian to bring his head into harmony with his heart. The part that Apologetics has to play in the Christianizing of the world is rather a primary part, and it is a conquering part. It is the distinction of Christianity that it has come into the world clothed with the mission to *reason* its way to dominion.¹⁹

Thus Warfield's conception of the role of reason must be seen in light of this context, specifically his comments regarding the inability of apologetics to conquer the world to Christ.

First, unless Warfield is openly contradicting himself in the span of a few sentences—and given Warfield's reputation and overall abilities, this is quite unlikely—he very clearly states that the power to conquer the world comes from the Holy Spirit, not apologetics ("it is absurd to believe that apologetics by itself can conquer the world"). As Warfield emphatically states, only the Holy Spirit gives life to the dead soul and convicts the world of sin. The Holy Spirit is the one who conquers the world for Christ, not unaided human reason. But the question necessarily arises as to how the Holy Spirit does this. Here, as Warfield had noted in some detail earlier in the essay, the Holy Spirit creates faith in the heart, not by creating faith from nothing, but by allowing the will to act upon what the mind knows to be true, yet which is otherwise sinfully suppressed.

It is certainly not in the power of all demonstrations in the world to make a Christian...Faith is the gift of God; but it does not in the least follow that the faith God gives is an irrational faith, that is, a faith without grounds in right reason. It is beyond all question only the prepared heart

¹⁹ Warfield, "Introduction to Francis Beattie's *Apologetics*," 99.

that can fitly respond to the `reasons'; but how can even a prepared heart respond when there are no `reasons' to draw out its actions?...The Holy Spirit does not work a blind, an ungrounded faith in the heart. What is supplied by his creative energy in working faith is not a ready-made faith, rooted in nothing and clinging without reason to its object; nor yet new grounds of belief in the object presented; but just a new ability of the heart to respond to grounds of faith, sufficient in themselves, already present to the understanding. We believe in Christ because it is rational to believe in him, not though it be irrational. Accordingly, our Reformed fathers always posited in the production of faith the presence of the `*argumentum propter quod credo,*' as well as the `*principium seu causa efficiens a quo ad credendum adducor.*' That is to say, for the birth of faith in the soul, it is just as essential that grounds of faith should be present to the mind as that the Giver of faith should act creatively upon the heart.²⁰

Therefore, in order for there to be faith present in the heart, there must be both the presence of an object of faith—in this case the contents of special revelation, specifically the person and redemptive work of Christ in whom we must believe in order to be justified—and the Holy Spirit who must perform a supernatural work, not by creating new grounds of faith, but instead, creating a new ability of the sinful heart to respond to the grounds of faith, already sufficient in themselves, and which are instrumentally apprehended by fallen reason. Again, Warfield frames this in terms of his subjective-objective distinction.

When Jack Rogers and Donald McKim criticize Warfield for supposedly arguing that the "Holy Spirit does not produce faith," they apparently base their assertions on the understanding that in Warfield's scheme, the Spirit makes "faith already present in the mind by reason, into saving faith." Rogers and McKim may have, to some degree, accurately represented Warfield's view in this regard. But the implication that they draw from this, the "Holy Spirit does not produce faith for Warfield" is typical of the gross misrepresentations of Warfield's position, since Warfield emphatically states the contrary, namely that it *is* the Holy Spirit who produces faith. Those who accuse Warfield of Arminianism or Romanism likely do so because they assume that Warfield's supposed appeal to "right reason" somehow necessitates a form of synergism, in which reason is supposedly elevated over regeneration, and this,

²⁰ Warfield, "Introduction to Francis Beattie's *Apologetics*," 99. These comments are also found almost *verbatim* in Warfield's "Review of Herman Bavinck's *De Zekerheid des Geloofs*," 114-15.

therefore, produces a kind of divine-human co-operation, since in Warfield's conception reason judges the ground for faith, the evidence for special revelation. Warfield expressly denies any form of synergism, for as he states, it is easy to "say that Christianity is attained, not by demonstrations, but by a new birth. Nothing could be more true."²¹ This then, leads to a second point, "how can reason judge the ground of revelation?"

If the Holy Spirit alone is responsible for faith, why does Warfield make the comments that he does about "Christianity reasoning its way to dominion"? While Warfield unequivocally asserts that we can only draw our theology from the Scriptures, nevertheless, before we can do this, "we must assure ourselves that there is a knowledge of God in the Scriptures. And before we do that, we must assure ourselves that a knowledge of God is possible for man."²² But the chain goes back even farther, for even

. . . before we do that, we must assure ourselves that there is a God to know. Thus, we inevitably work back to first principles. And, in working our way back to first principles, we exhibit the indispensability of an 'Apologetical Theology,' which of necessity holds the place of the first among the five essential theological disciplines.²³

This conception of apologetics is important to this discussion in several regards. It is Kuyper's failure to be clear about this that provoke's Warfield's negative assessment. There is also no doubt that Warfield is echoing the Scottish Common Sense philosophers, Thomas Reid and especially James McCosh, as well as the Scottish Presbyterian evidentialists, Dick, Chalmers, Cunningham, Buchanan and MacGregor. There is also an echo from Francis Turretin as well, since as Turretin had concluded, there are first principles which are true both in the light of nature, and in revealed religion (Institutio, I.ix.5). It is here, then, that we see Warfield's conception of reason as occupying an instrumental function.

It is what Warfield calls the "mystical conception" of apologetics which piously contends that "a

²¹ Warfield, "Introduction to Francis Beattie's *Apologetics*," 99.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

Christian man must take his standpoint not *above* the Scriptures, but *in* the Scriptures."²⁴ With this conception, Warfield can agree to a point, since as he states, one must not take their standpoint above the Scriptures. But this conception, left without qualification, begs the question. As Warfield notes, "surely [the Christian man] must *have* Scriptures, authenticated to him as such, before he can take his stand in them."²⁵ It is in this context then, that we must see Warfield's conception of the role of reason in the dominion to be taken by Christianity. Since according to Warfield, "faith is, in all its exercise alike, a form of conviction, and is, therefore, necessarily grounded in evidence," it is because of the weight and strength of the evidential case for the ground of faith that this dominion will come. The evidences are so great that unbelievers will never be able to ultimately overcome them. This is why Christians must go on the offensive and not merely be content with fending off challenges in an exclusively defensive posture.

As Warfield sees it, the Holy Spirit works through means to create faith, in this case, the means are Christian evidences. And Christian evidences can indeed provide a sufficient basis for faith. While it is revelation that provides the foundation for faith (not reason), nevertheless, it is reason (as instrument) which investigates the ground of special revelation, even though it cannot establish the content of that revelation. Warfield clearly stands in the line of the Reformed scholastics and Scottish evidentialists on this point.

This point also helps explain Warfield's concern that Kuyper's view minimized rather than maximized apologetics. Apologetics is to play a primary role in the "Christianizing of the world," not because Warfield exalts reason above revelation, since he has asserted that apologetics has in itself "no power to make a man a Christian," but because Christianity "makes its appeal to right reason," and in

²⁴ Warfield, "Introduction to Francis Beattie's *Apologetics*," 98. The italics are in the original.

²⁵ Ibid.

doing so, it will "put all its enemies under its feet."²⁶ Despite all of the "tremendous energy of thought and the incredible fertility in assault which characterizes the world in its anti-Christian manifestation," it is apologetics which stands "calmly over against the world with its credentials in its hands and fears no contention of men."²⁷ This is why Warfield can lament, "it is a standing matter of surprise to us that the brilliant school of Christian thinkers," such as Abraham Kuyper, "should be tempted to make little of apologetics."²⁸

Since Warfield never intended his "Forward" to be a stand-alone systematic treatise on the relationship between faith and reason, it is important to briefly survey the Warfield *corpus* for additional clarification of these disputed issues. In an article on "regeneration" written for Johnson's Cyclopaedia, Warfield stated that the efficient cause of regeneration is "a divine power acting supernaturally and immediately upon the soul, quickening it to spiritual life, and implanting gracious principles of action."²⁹ Man's response to this divine initiative (conversion), "instantly follows, as to the change of action consequent upon the change of character, and consists in repentance, faith, holy obedience, etc."³⁰ There can be no doubt that for the Princeton theologian, regeneration precedes faith, if not temporally, certainly causally. The efficient cause, to use the scholastic formulation, is God the Holy Spirit, and a person's response to the "new birth" is conversion, manifesting itself in faith and repentance. This is why Warfield can assert that apologetics can convert no one. To make this assertion is not to deny that the Holy Spirit uses means to produce faith, in this case the evidence for the truth of the Christian religion.

²⁶ Warfield, "Introduction to Francis Beattie's *Apologetics*," 100.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ B. B. Warfield, "Regeneration," reprinted in Selected Shorter Writings, ed. John E. Meeter (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1980), 323.

³⁰ Warfield, "Regeneration," 323.

Warfield not only asserted his conviction of the truth of the formula, *Credo ut intelligam*, but *Fides praecedat rationem* as well. His reason for affirming the truth of these formulae is because they do indeed faithfully reflect the apostle Paul's words in 1 Corinthians, "the natural man receiveth not the things of God," which Warfield cites as a proof-text.³¹ Declares Warfield, "it is only through the guidance of the Holy Ghost, dwelling within us, that we can reach to the apprehension of the deep things of God." Indeed doctrine cannot produce life, "it is the *Creator Spiritus* alone who is competent to quicken dead souls into life."³² Here again, Warfield unequivocally asserts that faith precedes understanding, and that it is the Holy Spirit alone who can give understanding of spiritual things. This means that reason, which investigates the ground for faith, can only occupy a ministerial or instrumental function. But apart from reason performing its humble and necessary task, there could be no faith since saving faith looks to an object, in this case the person and work of Christ.

Warfield makes this point quite eloquently, when discussing the nature of faith as found in the New Testament.

It is, accordingly, solely from its *object* that faith derives its value. The object is uniformly the God of grace, whether conceived of broadly as the source of all life, light, and blessing, on whom man in his creature weakness is entirely dependent, or, whenever sin and the eternal welfare of the soul are in view, as the author of salvation in whom alone the hope of unworthy man can be placed....The *saving power* of faith resides not in itself, but in the Almighty Saviour on whom it rests....So little is faith conceived as containing in itself the energy or ground of salvation, that it is consistently represented as, in its *origin*, itself a gratuity from God in the prosecution of His saving work. It comes, not of one's own strength or virtue, but only to those who are chosen of God for its reception (II Thess. ii.13), and hence his gift (Eph. vi.23, cf. ii.8,9, Phil. I.29), through Christ (Acts iii.16, Phil. I.29, I Pet. I.21, cf. Heb. xii.2), by the Spirit (II Cor. iv.13, Gal. iii.2, 5); and as it is thus obtained from God (II Pet. 1.1, Jude 3, I Pet. 1.21), thanks are to be returned to God for it (Col.1.4, II Thess. 1.3). Thus, even here all boasting is excluded, and salvation is conceived in all its elements as the pure product of unalloyed grace, issuing not from, but in, good works (Eph. ii.8-12). The place of faith in the process of salvation, as biblically conceived, could scarcely, therefore, be better described than by use of the scholastic term 'instrumental cause.' Not in one portion of the Scriptures alone, but throughout their whole extent, it is conceived as a boon from above which comes to men, no doubt, through the channels of their

³¹ Warfield, "The Right of Systematic Theology," 274.

³² *Ibid.*

own activities, but not as if it were an effect of their energies, but rather, as it has been finely phrased, as a gift which God lays in the lap of the soul.³³

Here again, we find that the effectual cause is God the Holy Spirit, though men and women are certainly not passive in this process of coming to faith, since this comes "through the channels of their own activities." Thus one wonders about the propriety of taking Warfield's comments about reason, even if they are in conflict with his assertions elsewhere (which is unlikely, based upon the sources themselves), as characteristic or representative of his total apologetic, when the overall data seems to indicate otherwise.³⁴

In another important essay, "On Faith in its Psychological Aspects," Warfield treats many of the issues particularly germane to the debate. Warfield notes that faith is not an arbitrary act on the part of the subject, but it is that "mental state or act which is determined by sufficient reasons."³⁵ Warfield again, seems to anticipate many of the criticisms that would subsequently arise.

It, of course, does not follow that all our `beliefs,' `faiths' correspond with reality. Our convictions are not infallible. When we say that `belief,' `faith' is the product of evidence and is in that sense compelled consent, that is not the same as saying that consent is produced only by compelling evidence, that is, evidence which is objectively adequate. Objective adequacy and subjective effect are not exactly correlated.³⁶

³³ Warfield, "The Biblical Doctrine of Faith," reprinted in Biblical Doctrines (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1981), 502-505. Note the discussion of faith in Warfield's "Review of Herman Bavinck's *De Zekerheid des Geloofs*," 111-117.

³⁴ It is possible to argue as Noll does, that the fidelity of the Princetonians to Scripture and the Reformed confessions kept them from "being entirely at the mercy of their philosophy." See Noll, The Princeton Theology, 33. This may be correct to a point, but assumes that SCSR is the critical factor which seems to pull the Princetonians away from Reformed orthodoxy. This is, as we have seen, a questionable assumption on the part of Noll, since there is nothing inherent within SCSR that denies either the noetic effects of sin, or the necessity of divine illumination. In fact, it may be argued that it is those who follow Kuyper and Van Til who may indeed have adopted a "novel" position in these matters.

³⁵ B. B. Warfield, "On Faith in its Psychological Aspects," reprinted in Studies in Theology (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1981), 313.

³⁶ Warfield, "Introduction to Francis Beattie's *Apologetics*," 318.

The problem, specifically as it relates to this debate, is not with the objective evidence, but with the subjective aspects of knowing, since "the sinful heart—which is enmity towards God—is incapable of that supreme acts of trust in God—or rather entrusting itself to God, its Saviour—which has absorbed into itself the term 'faith' in its Christian connotation."³⁷ Because of this problem, notes Warfield, many have tried to argue that faith is not "a rational act of conviction passing into confidence, resting upon adequate grounds in testimony, but an arbitrary act of sheer will, produced no one knows how."³⁸

The solution to human sinfulness is given through special revelation (not as Rogers and McKim have erroneously asserted "humanly devised evidences for faith"). The Bible teaches the sinfulness of the human heart, and therefore, the impossibility of faith, unless it is "the gift of God."³⁹ Warfield's conception of the means to resolve this dilemma is found in a lengthy, but important treatment of the relationship between faith and the Holy Spirit.

The mode of the divine giving of faith is represented rather as involving the creation by God the Holy Spirit of a capacity for faith under the evidence submitted. It proceeds by the divine illumination of the understanding, softening of the heart, and quickening of the will, so that the man so affected may freely and must inevitably perceive the force and yield to the compelling power of the evidence of the trustworthiness of Jesus Christ as Saviour submitted to him in the gospel. In one word the capacity for faith and the inevitable emergence in the heart of faith are attributed by the Christian revelation to that great act of God the Holy Spirit which has come in Christian theology to be called by the significant name of Regeneration. If sinful man as such is incapable of the act of faith, because he is inhabitable to the evidence on which alone such an act of confident resting on God the Saviour can repose, renewed man is equally incapable of not responding to this evidence, which is objectively compelling, by an act of sincere faith. In this highest exercise faith thus, though in a true sense the gift of God, is an equally true sense man's own act, and bears all the character of faith as it is exercised by unrenewed man in its lower manifestations.⁴⁰

Therefore, any attempt to understand Warfield's statement "that Christianity is to reason its way to

³⁷ Ibid., 337.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Warfield, "Introduction to Francis Beattie's *Apologetics*," 337-38.

dominion," apart from his overall conception of faith, and the need for reason to investigate the ground of faith, risks in a profound sense, a misrepresentation of Warfield's position. Christianity will reason its way to dominion, not because Warfield exalts human reason over revelation, but because Christianity is objectively true, and God the Holy Spirit will create faith, not apart from evidence, but through these evidences, which are sufficient in themselves to serve as the ground for faith.