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THE ORGANIC UNITY OF REVELATION: TOWARDS A  
BIBLICAL, HISTORICAL, AND THEOLOGICAL  
UNDERSTANDING OF THE EXTERNAL AND  
INTERNAL NATURE OF REVELATION

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by  
Ryan Andrew Brandt  
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**APPROVAL SHEET**

THE ORGANIC UNITY OF REVELATION: TOWARDS A  
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To all those who seek

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

|       |   |
|-------|---|
| AB    | Anchor Bible  |
| ABD   | <i>The Anchor Bible Dictionary</i>  |
| ACT   | Ancient Christian Texts   |
| ANF   | <i>Ante-Nicene Fathers</i>  |
| ANET  | <i>Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament</i> , 3 <sup>rd</sup> ed. with supplement |
| BECNT | Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament  |
| BEMCT | <i>The Blackwell Encyclopedia of Modern Christian Thought</i>   |
| BTCB  | Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible  |
| CEB   | <i>Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words</i>                                  |
| EBC   | <i>The Expositor's Bible Commentary</i>   |
| EDB   | <i>Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible</i>   |
| EDBT  | <i>Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology</i>  |
| HIBD  | <i>Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary</i>  |
| ICC   | The International Critical Commentary   |
| LCL   | The Loeb Classical Library  |
| LNTS  | Library of New Testament Studies  |
| NAC   | The New American Commentary   |
| NBD   | <i>New Bible Dictionary</i> , 3 <sup>rd</sup> ed.   |
| NCBC  | <i>New Cambridge Bible Commentary</i>   |
| NDBT  | <i>New Dictionary of Biblical Theology</i>  |
| NIBC  | New International Biblical Commentary   |
| NICNT | The New International Commentary on the New Testament   |

|         |  |
|---------|--|
| NICOT   | The New International Commentary on the Old Testament                      |
| NIDNT   | <i>The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology</i>          |
| NIDOTTE | <i>New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis</i> |
| NIGTC   | The New International Greek Testament Commentary                           |
| NPNF    | <i>A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers</i>              |
| NSBT    | New Studies in Biblical Theology   |
| OCB     | <i>The Oxford Companion to the Bible</i>                                   |
| OGIIB   | <i>The Oxford Guide to Ideas and Issues of the Bible</i>                   |
| PCNT    | Paideia Commentaries on the New Testament                                  |
| PNTC    | <i>The Pillar New Testament Commentary</i>                                 |
| PRRD    | Richard A. Muller, <i>Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics</i>              |
| TLOT    | Mark E. Biddle, trans., <i>Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament</i>    |
| TNTC    | Leon Morris, ed., The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries                   |
| WBC     | Word Biblical Commentary   |
| ZECNT   | Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament                       |

## PREFACE

This dissertation is a product of time, energy, and the support of those around me: most notably, the support and mentorship of my father, Douglas Brandt, as well as Chad Brand and Gregg Allison. My father initially taught me how to write, and he spent copious amounts of time editing my papers during my high school years. Regarding this dissertation, specifically, he diligently read through every draft and provided beneficial critiques. I am deeply indebted to him for who I am today.

Chad Brand has also been a supportive and insightful mentor over the last seven years. His scholarly eclecticism and pastoral heart were among the foremost motives for me continuing my doctoral work at Southern. I would also like to thank my supervisor, Gregg Allison, who graciously “adopted” me. His keen eye and helpful suggestions went far beyond what I could have foreseen. He and his wife, Nora, have also become supportive and encouraging mentors for me and my wife, Laura.

Moreover, I could not have written this dissertation as clearly without my experiences teaching at Boyce College and Ivy Tech Community College. I would like to thank Chad Brand, Dan DeWitt, and Robert York for the ongoing experiences. They have invested time and energy in my teaching, and they have entrusted me with far more than I deserve.

My dissertation has also obviously benefited from countless hours of reading theology, history, and philosophy. I am thankful for all the scholars who have gone before me, who have blazed the trails that I have traveled, and who have written far better than I will ever be able. I am especially indebted to the work of Augustine, Calvin, Bavinck, and Bloesch, whose bold visions and pious musings on the subject of revelation

continue to inspire me.

My dissertation was also a product of focused energy. The majority of it was written within a five-month span, thanks to the loving and caring dedication of my wife, who unceasingly supports my writing and career. I never would have imagined that marriage would accelerate the writing process. The fact that it has is a testament of her grace.

I would also like to thank Sojourn Community Church for its gospel-centered ministry. Nearly every sermon by Daniel Montgomery sparked a new, tangential thought or application to this dissertation. Moreover, my service as a research assistant under Robert Cheong taught me to research and write at a much higher level than I had previously achieved. I am thankful he hired me, a sleep deprived fool who had slept through his membership interview. I am grateful for Robert's grace, wisdom, and pastoral care.

Any merits of this dissertation are not my own. All praise be to God the Father, in Christ, by his Spirit.

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Louisville, Kentucky

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Revelation is a central concept in Christianity. It is indispensable to the doctrine of God, the very presumption of the biblical narrative, and the epistemological starting point for any faithful Christian theology. In other words, speaking about God in any way implies some kind of revelation. Revelation thus stands at the center of a whole host of Christian convictions that stem from the reality and authority of God. It is not surprising, therefore, that many theologians have logically started their systematic theologies with the doctrine of revelation.

The doctrine of revelation nevertheless may strike different chords with different persons. An especially controversial issue involves the form(s) of revelation. To simplify this discussion, Avery Dulles helpfully maintains that, across the course of church history, five overlapping models of revelation have been circulated: revelation as (1) doctrine, (2) history, (3) inner experience, (4) dialectical encounter, and (5) new awareness.<sup>1</sup> As he maintains, there is a sense in which each model contributes to an understanding of revelation in helpful ways: namely, God is truly a (1) teacher who uses Scripture to lead his children; (2) an actor who uses mighty, divine acts to witness himself; (3) a guest who may speak in a form of inward, spiritual experience; (4) a judge who is utterly transcendent and reveals himself as he pleases; and (5) a poet who speaks

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<sup>1</sup>See Avery Dulles, *Models of Revelation* (Dublin: Gill & MacMillan, 1983). While he posits all five of these models as possibilities, he defines revelation in such a way that combines them: "Revelation is God's free action whereby he communicates saving truth to created minds, especially through Jesus Christ as accepted by the apostolic Church and attested by the Bible and by the continuing community of believers" (117). Although several critiques are in order, it is notable that he ignores the special inner work of the Spirit in his definition.

to the inner depths of our consciousness as he moves history.<sup>2</sup>

The problem with each model is not so much what is asserted but rather what is not asserted; namely, each model prioritizes one dimension—external or internal—over the other. On the one hand, some of the models stress revelation in terms of its external or objective dimension. In this schema, revelation occurs externally to the human person in the form of a disclosure of information. Proponents of this position stress that revelation refers to the information contained in Scripture, the cosmos, or (sacred or universal) history. Revelation is therefore basically aimed at the production of knowledge. Dulles’s revelational models of (1) doctrine and (2) history broadly apply to this category.<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, some models stress revelation in terms of its internal or subjective nature. In this interpretation, revelation occurs within the human subject in the form of an internal change of consciousness (e.g., mystical or dialectical encounter) or, for more orthodox proponents, an unveiling of perception (e.g., illumination or testimony of the Spirit). It is thus concerned not with information but with an inner encounter. The models of (3) inner experience, (4) dialectical encounter, and (5) new awareness fall under this broad umbrella.<sup>4</sup>

### **The Problems to be Avoided: Revelation as External or Internal**

It is helpful to lay out the broad context of these two positions on revelation,

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<sup>2</sup>See the helpful discussion in Michael Horton, *The Christian Faith: A Systematic Theology for Pilgrims on the Way* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 113-14; and Alister E. McGrath, *Christian Theology: An Introduction*, 4th ed. (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), 155-59.

<sup>3</sup>Two examples are instructive. B. B. Warfield is one moderate example. He says that revelation is “the correlate of understanding” having “as its proximate end . . . the production of knowledge” (Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield, *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible*, ed. Samuel J. Craig [Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 1948], 80). Albeit less orthodox, Wolfhart Pannenberg, who equates universal history with revelation, is also a good example in this instance (Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Revelation as History* [New York: Macmillan, 1968]).

<sup>4</sup>Friedrich Schleiermacher is the obvious example here. He understood the redemptive experience of the individual, the “feeling of dependence,” to mediate the knowledge of God (Friedrich Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith* [London: T & T Clark, 1999], 5-31).

that is, revelation as merely external or internal. This section will briefly summarize these two positions as they developed through history in order to help establish the context of the thesis.<sup>5</sup>

With the dawn of the Enlightenment, the coinherence of the Christian concepts underlying revelation—the Spirit, grace, and faith, for example—began to disintegrate. The enlightened philosophers laid claim to the sufficiency of human reason and thus stood against any claim of divine intervention (see discussion below). Meanwhile, René Descartes’s sharp distinction between extension and thought accentuated an antithesis between object and subject, the external and internal.<sup>6</sup> The detrimental result of these contentions was twofold: Revelation was either objectivized or subjectivized. In other words, the concept was no longer seen in terms of its organic relationship with its source, the triune Godhead, but it was rather positioned as something merely external (from the person), on the one hand, or internal (to the person), on the other.

The first problem to be avoided is the externalization of revelation. This concern becomes apparent as the Enlightenment unfolded. Empirically minded philosophers, such as John Locke and David Hume, began to emphasize that knowledge itself is something that is induced merely through the human senses.<sup>7</sup> In this schema, the mind and nature of the person is essentially a blank slate, and thus the only concern for these empiricists became the external object that imprints itself onto the passive human subject. In tandem with the efforts of the empiricists, biblical critics such as Hermann

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<sup>5</sup>Briefly summarizing the views of brilliant yet misguided people inevitably leads to oversimplification. The actual philosopher or theologian is much more complex and nuanced than the feeble classifications attached to him. Nonetheless, as this dissertation maintains, there is a distinctively problematic stream within the course of history. It is this stream that this dissertation seeks to avoid.

<sup>6</sup>See especially René Descartes, *Passions of the Soul*, trans. S. H. Voss (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1989); and idem, *Treatise of Man*, trans. T. S. Hall (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1972).

<sup>7</sup>See, for example, John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Roger Woolhouse (New York: Penguin, 1997); and David Hume, *Inquiries concerning Human Understanding and concerning the Principles of Morals*, ed. L. A. Selby-Bigge (Oxford: Clarendon, 1975).

Samuel Reimarus began to apply these rational principles to the Bible, thus viewing scriptural revelation in terms of its bare historical or external character.<sup>8</sup> In light of these kinds of developments, it is not surprising that traditional Christians responded to the new criticisms in the form of apologetic responses, attempting to establish the historical certainty of the record. Indeed, Jean-Alphonse Turretin, the son of the celebrated Francis, was convinced that any rational person could believe revelation on the basis of reason alone, so much so that he never mentioned the testimony of the Spirit.<sup>9</sup>

The second problem is the internalization of revelation. This problem reared its ugly head in the ancient Greek Sophists,<sup>10</sup> and it became ironically pronounced in the pious musings of the late Gotthold Ephraim Lessing.<sup>11</sup> The problem, nevertheless, became especially prominent with the rise of modern philosophy associated with

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<sup>8</sup>See, for example, Hermann Samuel Reimarus, *Fragments from Reimarus: Consisting of Brief Critical Remarks on the Object of Jesus and his Disciples as Seen in the New Testament*, trans. G. E. Lessing, ed. Charles Voysey (London: Williams and Norgate, 1879); see also Ernst Troeltsch, *The Christian Faith* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1991).

<sup>9</sup>Martin I. Klauber and Glen S. Sunshine, "Jean-Alphonse Turretini on Biblical Accommodation: Calvinist or Socinian?" *Calvin Theological Journal* 25, no. 1 (1990): 15; cf. Martin I. Klauber, *Between Reformed Scholasticism and Pan-Protestantism: Jean-Alphonse Turretin (1671-1737) and Enlightened Orthodoxy at the Academy of Geneva* (London: Associated University Press, 1994), 10, 16, 70-72, 76, 109-12. See also Richard Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993), 2:140-41. While Jean-Alphonse Turretin's apologetic response was useful, it ironically led to the same problem: revelation was externalized. Karl Barth's evaluation, albeit overly dramatic, rings true: revelation became "a fixed total of revealed propositions to be systematized like the sections of a corpus of law" (Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, vol. I.1, ed. G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance [Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1936], 156). As Louis Berkhof defines the testimony, "The testimony of the Holy Spirit is simply the work of the Holy Spirit in the heart of the sinner, by which he removes the blindness of sin, so that the erstwhile blind man, who had no eyes for the sublime character of the Word of God, now clearly sees and appreciates the marks of its divine nature" (Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996], 1:185; see also John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeil, trans. Ford Lewis Battles, The Library of Christian Classics [Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1960], 1:7.5).

<sup>10</sup>For example, Protagoras, one of the quintessential Sophists, said, "Man is the measure of all things, of those that are that they are, of those that are not that they are not" (quoted in Plato, *Theaetetus, Sophist*, trans. Harold North Fowler, vol. 7, Loeb Classical Library, ed. G. P. Goold [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987], 80b1; cf. Frederick Copleston, *A History of Philosophy, 9 vols.* [New York: Doubleday, 1946-], 1:87). This quote seems to mean, as Plato summarizes, that reality is to each as it appears to each, even as the sensation properly corresponds to the reality. The connection with modern philosophy is obvious.

<sup>11</sup>Hermann Samuel Reimarus's most famous student, Gotthold Lessing, argued that because history itself cannot be the vehicle for revelation, revelation must be mere personal-experiential self-disclosure (Gotthold Lessing, *Lessing's Theological Writings*, ed. Henry Chadwick [London: Black, 1956], 53, 82, 105).

Immanuel Kant. Kant, famously awakened from his dogmatic slumbers by David Hume, attempted to unite the subject and object together in knowledge. In so doing, he incongruously caused the ominous pendulum swing away from the external—which was so pertinent in Hume’s own system—and towards the internal.<sup>12</sup> Kant argued that knowledge takes place when the *a priori* categories of the mind are actively imposed on sense experience. As he underscored, the categories by themselves are empty, and sensation by itself is blind—the two necessarily presuppose one another.<sup>13</sup> While he attempted to argue the opposite, his philosophy implicated that knowledge—and all of reality as we know it—is solely based upon the person’s senses.<sup>14</sup> In other words, there exists a necessary agnosticism about transcendent realities, so that encounter with God is confined to the phenomenal realm. Revelation, therefore, can only pertain to an internal or subjective reality.<sup>15</sup>

Within Kant’s murky wake followed an internal turn within religion and its correlate, revelation. Revelation began to be regarded in terms of its influence on the

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<sup>12</sup>With Kant, as Berkhof rightly comments, “The autonomy of the subject began” as he moves the discussion from the “external” to the “human nature” (Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 1:174, cf. 119).

<sup>13</sup>Kant writes, “Thoughts without content are empty; intuitions without concepts are blind” (Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Werner S. Pluhar [Indianapolis: Hackett, 1996], 51-59, 107; 129-31; see also Norman Kemp Smith, *A Commentary to Kant’s ‘Critique of Pure Reason’*, 2nd ed. [London: Macmillan, 1923]; Patricia Kitcher, *Introduction to Critique of Pure Reason by Immanuel Kant* [Indianapolis: Hackett, 1996]).

<sup>14</sup>He writes again, “There can be no doubt that all our cognition begins with experience. . . . But even though all cognition starts with experience, that does not mean that all of it arises from experience” (Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 43-44). He then presents the *a priori* categories that “occur absolutely independently of all experience” (ibid., 45, cf. 47-48).

<sup>15</sup>James Collins rightly suggests that for Kant, the precepts of practical reason are essentially divine revelation, and thus “the true Church is not the external one but the internal one” (James Collins, *A History of Modern European Philosophy* [Milwaukee: Bruce, 1954], 534). To be fair to Kant, however, he did attempt to leave room for transcendent knowledge/revelation. Indeed, he believed that the mind naturally and irresistibly tries to apply the concepts or categories to metaphysical issues. However, when the mind attempts this complex feat, the mind is necessarily led to errors and inconsistencies. In other words, a person cannot have knowledge of metaphysical realities, but he can treat them as regulative principles—principles which go beyond experience and which we must think in terms as if they are true in order to help us to find unity. In other words, the mind wants us to think that there is a God in order to make sense of things, but this regulative principle is not knowledge. Kant thus makes room for faith. See Kant, *Religion within the Bounds of Reason Alone*; see also Walter Sparr, “Kant’s Doctrine of Atonement as a Theory of Subjectivity,” in *Kant’s Philosophy of Religion Reconsidered*, ed. Philip J. Rossi and Michael Wreen (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 103-4, 108.

inner human subject.<sup>16</sup> For example, within Schleiermacher and later classical liberalism, the concept of revelation was repositioned away from the external locus of Scripture and placed within the individual or the community. The redemptive experience of the individual—understood as a “feeling of dependence” (Schleiermacher) or moral “value judgment” (Ritschl)—mediated the knowledge of God.<sup>17</sup> Absolute idealism also sought objectivity from within the subject, not within experience or feeling (Schleiermacher) but rather in reason. Georg Hegel, for instance, regarded the most important revelation to be within the inner life of man, where the Infinite comes to self-consciousness.<sup>18</sup> Revelation thus did not reveal new knowledge but rather a new internal consciousness. Rudolf Otto, the prominent German thinker, later followed this Kantian tide, arguing that the concept of God cannot be understood by speculative reason, but it can only be grasped as the ineffable numinous—an obvious intellectual nod to Kant.<sup>19</sup> The philosophies of

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<sup>16</sup>John Frame likewise calls the tendency of the period the “subjective turn” (John Frame, *The Doctrine of the Word of God: A Theology of Lordship* [Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2010], 38).

<sup>17</sup>See Friedrich Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, ed. H. R. MacKintosh and J. S. Stewart (London: T & T Clark, 1999), 5-31; and Albrecht Ritschl, *The Christian Doctrine of Justification and Reconciliation*, ed. and trans. H. R. Mackintosh and A. B. Macaulay (Edinburgh: Clark, 1900), 398, cf. 205; see also Albrecht Ritschl’s essay, “Theology and Metaphysics,” in Albrecht Ritschl, *Three Essays: Theology and Metaphysics: Prolegomena to the History of Pietism: Instruction in the Christian Religion*, ed. and trans. Philip Hefner (Philadelphia: Fortress, 2004). R. C. Johnson explains Schleiermacher well: “The content of revelation is not dogma or doctrine, or the raw material of dogma or doctrine, but ‘immediate awareness’; and in its substance theology is man’s expression of, and commentary on, this consciousness or awareness of God” (R. C. Johnson, *Authority in Protestant Theology* [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1959], 74). Therefore, it is unsurprising when Schleiermacher begins, not with the self-disclosure of God, but rather—paradoxically, one might add—with the experience of the human person (the Christian) and his or her community (the church). In so doing, for Schleiermacher, “the inner event of illumination and revelation tends to absorb into itself any external fact” (Jean-Yves Lacoste, “Revelation,” in *Encyclopedia of Christian Theology*, ed. Jean-Yves Lacoste [New York: Routledge, 2005], 3:1388).

<sup>18</sup>Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Phenomenology of the Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller (Oxford: Clarendon, 1977); idem, *Introduction to the ‘Philosophy of History’*, trans. Leo Rauch (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1988); idem, *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History*, trans. H. B. Nisbet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975); idem, *The Philosophy of Right*, trans. T. M. Knox, Great Books of the Western World, vol. 46, ed. Robert Maynard Hutchins (Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, 1952). As Berkhof summarizes Hegel, revelation thus comes from within and not without (Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 1:120).

<sup>19</sup>Rudolf Otto explains, “The word ‘numinous’ [means] supernatural divine power. It stands for the specific non-rational religious apprehension and its object, at all its levels, from the first dim stirrings where religion can hardly yet be said to exist to the most exalted forms of spiritual experience” (Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*, trans. John W. Harvey [London: Oxford University Press, 1958], 7, see also xvii).

correlation follow this general route and seek to articulate a phenomenology of experience as the anthropological grounding of revelation.<sup>20</sup> Therefore, revelation in this basic trajectory is seen as an internal awakening, so much so that many have suggested that any truth-value language about God is misplaced.<sup>21</sup> Post-evangelicals, such as Stanley Grenz and John Franke, have also followed this current by asserting that revelation is not so much found in a written text as in the community itself.<sup>22</sup> Revelation is not about knowledge at all but rather an internal awakening of the community.<sup>23</sup>

In the end, the problems to be avoided are twofold: the understanding of revelation as merely external or internal, objective or subjective. Revelation here is wrongly conceived either as an objective or informational disclosure to the human person (external) or a subjective unveiling of perception to the human person (internal); in other words, one side emphasizes that revelation is a mere object of study (external), and the other avers that it is an internal change in being or consciousness in a person (internal). Bernard Ramm summarizes the problem well and points to a way forward: “the

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<sup>20</sup>See, for example, Paul Tillich, “Reply to Interpretation and Criticism,” in *Theology of Paul Tillich*, ed. Charles W. Kegley and Robert W. Bretall (New York: Macmillan, 1952), 332.

<sup>21</sup>As one postmodern linguist avers, “The word ‘God’ marks the point at which the religious man has come up against the final limit of what he can say about the object of his concern” (Paul M. van Buren, *Edges of Language: An Essay in the Logic of a Religion* [New York: Macmillan, 1972], 135).

<sup>22</sup>Stanley Grenz writes that “spirituality is generated from within the individual,” so that Scripture is not the Word of God but rather the “foundational record of how the ancient faith community responded” to God (Stanley Grenz, *Revisioning Evangelical Theology: A Fresh Agenda for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1993], 46, 77). John Franke similarly conflates the Spirit’s inspiration and illumination as he asserts that “the speaking of the Spirit through the Scripture and through culture does not constitute two communicative acts but rather one unified speaking” (John Franke, *The Character of Theology: An Introduction to its Nature, Task, and Purpose* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005], 142). Therefore, they both conclude that the Bible itself is not the church’s final norm but rather the “message the Spirit declares through the text” (Stanley J. Grenz and John Franke, *Beyond Foundationalism: Shaping Theology in a Postmodern Context* [Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001], 74). These two post-conservative or post-evangelical theologians thus show that the (external) Word is being replaced by the (internal) Spirit.

<sup>23</sup>Other examples here include Elton Trueblood, who understands revelation as the immediate experience of the divine (Elton Trueblood, *The Trustworthiness of Religious Experience* [Richmond, IN: Friends United, 1939], 15ff.); Karl Rahner, who suggests that revelation is the “transcendental experience of the absolute and merciful closeness of God, even if this cannot be conceptually expressed . . . by everyone” (Karl Rahner, “Revelation,” in *Encyclopedia of Theology: The Concise Sacramentum Mundi*, ed. Karl Rahner [New York: Seabury, 1975], 1461); and John Macquarrie, who follows the currents and suggests that revelation is merely being grasped by the “power of being” (John Macquarrie, *Principles of Christian Theology* [New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1966], 83-86).

disjunction presented so frequently in modern theology between revelation as either ‘information’ or ‘encounter’ is false. . . . The structure of special revelation calls for a hard event and a hard word of interpretation.”<sup>24</sup>

### **The Eclipse of the Internal Dimension in Evangelicalism**

The dichotomization of revelation is also apparent within contemporary evangelicalism; namely, the internal dimension of revelation has generally “suffered eclipse” in evangelical circles.<sup>25</sup> Revelation, while still considered to be the self-disclosure of God, is basically reduced to an external object to be studied (e.g., Scripture, the created world). To highlight the eclipse, this section will summarize the views of six pertinent and influential evangelical theologians: Carl F. H. Henry, Wayne Grudem, Millard Erickson, Robert Reymond, Norman Geisler, and James Leo Garrett. These men, while outstanding models in the study of theology, generally minimize the role of the internal dimension in revelation. The section will conclude by noting the neglect and dichotomization of revelation in evangelical theology. It will thereafter affirm a way forward for evangelicals through the thesis of the dissertation.

First, Carl F. H. Henry minimizes the internal dimension of revelation. He focuses on revelation as “rational-verbal communication,” believing that revelation is “essentially a mental conception.”<sup>26</sup> Revelation thus issues from the mind of God and involves an activity of consciousness.<sup>27</sup> He explains, “Regardless of the parable, allegories, emotive phrases and rhetorical questions used by these writers in Scripture,

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<sup>24</sup>Bernard Ramm, *Special Revelation and the Word of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1961), 158.

<sup>25</sup>Louis Berkhof’s words, while written in 1932 (and revised in 1938), are just as applicable today (Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 1:183).

<sup>26</sup>Carl F. H. Henry, *God, Revelation, and Authority* (Waco, TX: Word, 1976), 3:248.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid. Henry refers especially to revelation as verbal (ibid., 1:26, 36-37, 200, 296; 2:12-13, 87, 159, 178-79) or propositional (ibid., 1:67, 149, 188, 90-91, 200, 208, 272; 2:150-59, 179, 263), that is, in the written text of Scripture itself (ibid., 3:249-51, 263-64; 392-95).

their literary devices have a logical point which can be propositionally formulated and is objectively true or false.”<sup>28</sup> Henry is correct insofar as he goes, but he seriously overlooks the internal or receptive dimension of revelation, reducing revelation to its external (Word) sense.<sup>29</sup> This failure accounts for why he does not explore the internal dimension in his discussion of the doctrine of revelation.<sup>30</sup>

Second, Wayne Grudem minimizes the internal dimension. He begins his discussion of revelation by elaborating the forms of the Word of God, which include Jesus Christ, God’s speech, personal address, speech through human lips, and the Bible.<sup>31</sup> His categorizations are helpful, including a discussion of the authorship of the Spirit in relation to the Bible.<sup>32</sup> He does not, however, address the teaching or illuminative dimensions of Spirit in relationship to the Word in the vicinity of this discussion. Rather, he explores these issues much later in the doctrine of salvation, wherein he briefly includes the internal aspects under “the Holy Spirit’s revealing work.”<sup>33</sup> He may consider this spiritual work to be internal revelation, but he does not include it in his discussion of revelation proper.

Third, Millard Erickson also tends to minimize the internal dimension. Like

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<sup>28</sup>Ibid., 3:453.

<sup>29</sup>Henry is often critical of views that lean towards internalized revelation. According to him, these views include neo-Platonism, Barth, and Bultmann (ibid., 1:56, 63, 191; 2:83, 87-88; see also Carl F. H. Henry, “Justification by Ignorance: A Neo-Protestant Motif?” *JETS* 13, no. 1 [1970]: 3-14 for an extended treatment).

<sup>30</sup>Henry can speak about “inner revelation,” namely, the human moral conscience or the *sensus divinitatis* (ibid., 1:338-39). Following John Calvin, he suggests that there is a twofold knowledge of God in terms of creation and redemption. Because neither aspect is “reducible” to the other, he writes, “The inner revelation and the outer revelation together comprise the sphere of general revelation” (ibid., 339; cf. Calvin, *Institutes*, 1:2.1). In other words, as far as general revelation is concerned, God reveals himself in creation (outer) and conscience (inner). Henry continues later, “In addition to the external revelation in the cosmos, man’s moral conscience relates him internally to the God of revelation” (ibid., 2:84). While Henry mentions this internal aspect of revelation, he does not develop it any further.

<sup>31</sup>Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Leicester: InterVarsity, 1994), 47-51.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., 49-51.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., 645.

Grudem, he does not specifically formulate revelation as external and internal, and he does not establish both principles in his prolegomena. Erickson does include an overview of revelation after his prolegomena;<sup>34</sup> however, he does not address the internal revelation of the Spirit until his discussion of the Holy Spirit and the “subjective aspects” of salvation.<sup>35</sup> Erickson also utilizes Calvin’s idea of “the spectacles of faith”<sup>36</sup> in his discussion of creation, and he is close to elaborating the intimate connection between the Word and Spirit in revelation.<sup>37</sup> Nevertheless, displaying a common evangelical tendency, he separates the external dimension (in his prolegomena) from the internal dimension (in his soteriology). He thus minimizes the internal dimension of revelation.

Fourth, Robert Reymond minimizes the internal dimension. In his discussion of revelation in general, he focuses on God’s direct and propositional disclosure in terms of history, the development of the covenants, theophanies, dreams/visions, and Scripture.<sup>38</sup> He continues to explain the nature and attributes of Scripture in the following chapters.<sup>39</sup> He later helpfully includes a discussion of the self-authentication of Scripture, wherein he explains the inward work of the Holy Spirit; however, his discussion is short, following the conclusion of Berkhof: “The testimony of the Spirit is simply the work of the Spirit in the heart of the sinner by which he removes the blindness of sin.”<sup>40</sup> Reymond thereafter does not explore the internal work of the Spirit until he discusses soteriology.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>34</sup>Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 177-285.

<sup>35</sup>For Erickson’s discussion of the Holy Spirit, see *ibid.*, 861-98; for the “subjective aspects” of salvation, see 941-59.

<sup>36</sup>Calvin, *Institutes*, 1:6.1.

<sup>37</sup>Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 195-96. He later concludes, “Because this revelation includes both the personal presence of God and informational truth, we are able to identify God, understand something about him, and point others to him” (*ibid.*, 223; cf. 273-79).

<sup>38</sup>Robert L. Reymond, *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith* (Dallas: Thomas Nelson, 1998), 3-12.

<sup>39</sup>*Ibid.*, 25-94.

<sup>40</sup>*Ibid.*, 79-82.

<sup>41</sup>*Ibid.*, 708-10.

He also has no treatment of revelation as external and internal.

Fifth, Norman Geisler minimizes the internal nature of revelation. He begins by discussing general revelation in terms of physical nature, human nature, human history, human acts, and music.<sup>42</sup> He later describes special revelation in terms of bibliology.<sup>43</sup> Surprisingly, he does not discuss the necessity of the internal spiritual work of illumination until he engages with neo-orthodoxy, a heterodox position that he suggests has helpfully recovered the doctrine of illumination.<sup>44</sup> Outside of this particular discussion, he does not explore revelation as external and internal. He minimizes the internal revelatory work of the Spirit.

Sixth, James Leo Garrett minimizes the internal nature of revelation. When he surveys revelation, he begins with general revelation in terms of the created universe and human nature.<sup>45</sup> He later addresses revelation in terms of Scripture, where he focuses most of his attention.<sup>46</sup> In the process of developing his doctrine of revelation, he vaguely affirms a theological usage of revelation in terms of an unveiling of perception; however, his comments are succinct and do not influence the form or substance of his theology.<sup>47</sup> In other words, he does not elaborate his concise comments elsewhere. Like other evangelical theologians, moreover, he does not discuss the internal work of the Spirit until soteriology.

While this theological analysis is by no means comprehensive, its conclusions

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<sup>42</sup>Norman L. Geisler, *Systematic Theology* (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 2002-2005), 1:65-69.

<sup>43</sup>*Ibid.*, 229-564.

<sup>44</sup>*Ibid.*, 382-83.

<sup>45</sup>James Leo Garrett, *Systematic Theology: Biblical, Historical, and Evangelical*, 2nd ed. (North Richland Hills, TX: BIBAL, 2000), 51-54.

<sup>46</sup>*Ibid.*, 105-12, 179-212.

<sup>47</sup>*Ibid.*, 51, 114-15.

are clear: the internal nature of revelation has suffered eclipse in the evangelical world.<sup>48</sup> Some of these evangelical theologians are close to articulating the balanced reality of revelation, and most—if not all—would affirm the nature of internal revelation. Nevertheless, their emphasis upon the external dimension tends to overshadow the internal dimension. None of these theologians discuss revelation in terms of external and internal dimensions; none of them discuss the internal work of the Spirit until soteriology.

Consequently, these prominent and influential evangelicals not only neglect but also dichotomize the two dimensions of revelation. Their methods implicate that while the Word is foundational to theological study, the Spirit—who gives meaning, coherence, and life to the Word—is secondary to the foundational issues in revelation.<sup>49</sup>

### **The Thesis of the Dissertation**

Because of the neglect and dichotomization in evangelical theology, this dissertation seeks to provide an evangelical ressourcement for the external and internal reality of revelation. By using resources from Scripture, the history of the church, and systematic theology, it argues that revelation includes external and internal dimensions that are organically united in the triune God. Over the course of argument, the dissertation will consider a biblical, historical, systematic, and practical theology of revelation. Through the demonstration of the thesis, the dissertation will provide direction and resources to reunite the two dimensions of revelation within evangelical theology.

Following the present chapter, chapters 2 and 3 will chart a biblical theology of

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<sup>48</sup>Other evangelical theology prolegomenas/textbooks that fail to explore the internal dimension at the onset include Norman R. Gulley, *Systematic Theology: Prolegomena* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2003), 190-389; Charles C. Ryrie, *Basic Theology* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1986), 25-34, 63-120; Robert W. Jenson, *Systematic Theology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 1:23-41.

<sup>49</sup>For further support for the evangelical neglect and dichotomization of revelation, see chap. 6 of this dissertation, “Theological Prolegomena Includes the External and Internal Dimensions.”

revelation as external and internal. As such, the discipline of biblical theology will be central to the thesis. Brian S. Rosner aptly defines this important discipline:

Biblical theology may be defined as theological interpretation of Scripture in and for the church. It proceeds with historical and literary sensitivity and seeks to analyse and synthesize the Bible's teaching about God and his relations to the world on its own terms, maintaining sight of the Bible's overarching narrative and Christocentric focus.<sup>50</sup>

Biblical theology, then, is the task of understanding the unfolding narrative of Scripture as it is developed through the covenants. It is intratextual, as it reads the Bible according to its own categories and agendas; it is also intertextual, as it reads the Bible in all its literary diversity, according to its development within the canon.<sup>51</sup>

Chapter 2 will likewise apply biblical theology's method and insights to

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<sup>50</sup>Brian S. Rosner, "Biblical Theology," in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology: Exploring the Unity and Diversity of Scripture*, ed. Brian S. Rosner et al. [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000], 10; cf. Stephen G. Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty: A Theology of the Hebrew Bible*, New Studies in Biblical Theology (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2003), 15-43. Geerhardus Vos, in his momentous inaugural address as Professor of Biblical Theology at Princeton Theological Seminary, provides a classic definition: "Biblical theology, rightly defined, is nothing else than the exhibition of the organic progress of supernatural revelation in its historic continuity and multiformity" (Geerhardus Vos, "The Idea of Biblical Theology as a Science and a Theological Discipline," in *Redemptive History and Biblical Interpretation: The Shorter Writings of Geerhardus Vos*, ed. Richard B. Gaffin, Jr. [Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 1980], 15). In this sense, he says elsewhere, "Biblical Theology occupies a position between Exegesis and Systematic Theology in the encyclopedia of theological disciplines" (Geerhardus Vos, *Biblical Theology: Old and New Testaments* [Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1975], v). For a helpful overview of the history of this discipline, see H. G. Reventlow, "Theology (Biblical), History of," in *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1992), 6:483-505; and Robert W. Yarbrough, *The Salvation Historical Fallacy? Reassessing the History of New Testament Theology* (Leiden, The Netherlands: Deo, 2004).

<sup>51</sup>For varying but helpful understandings of these concepts, see D. A. Carson, "Systematic Theology and Biblical Theology," in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology: Exploring the Unity and Diversity of Scripture*, ed. Brian S. Rosner et al. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000), 89-104; Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 37-34; Dale C. Allison, Jr., *Studies in Matthew: Interpretation Past and Present* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 79-105; and Jonathan T. Pennington, *Reading the Gospels Wisely: A Narrative and Theological Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), 189-92; cf. Robin Routledge, *Old Testament Theology: A Thematic Approach* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2008), 17-80. In other words, the concepts, intratextual and intertextual, imply that biblical theology seeks to understand the Bible in terms of the exegetical, epochal, and canonical horizons of interpretation. The exegetical horizon deals with the immediate context of the text itself, the epochal horizon reads that text in light of the context of the historical timeline of revelation in Scripture, while the canonical horizon understands the text in light of the context of the entirety of the Christocentric canon (Richard Lints, *The Fabric of Theology: A Prolegomenon to Evangelical Theology* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993], 293; cf. Edmund P. Clowney, *Preaching and Biblical Theology* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1961], 16). Therefore, "Each biblical covenant will first be placed in its own immediate context, then understood in terms of what comes *before* it in redemptive-history, and then finally what comes *after* it, ultimately in light of the entire Canon and the coming of Christ" (Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 126; italics theirs). This basic method will be implicitly followed throughout chaps. 2 and 3.

understand the external and internal nature of revelation in the Old Testament.

Throughout the storyline of Scripture, from Genesis to Revelation, the idea of revelation is advanced. Because the concept of revelation is a pervasive motif, a broad biblical theology approach is essential to understand it adequately. The chapter shall argue that, according to the Old Testament, the idea of revelation may include both external and internal dimensions. While this construal is somewhat opaque within the earlier development of the law and promises (where the external dimension is emphasized), it becomes more evident as one follows the development of the covenants into the new one. This chapter shall demonstrate the thesis in four stages: (1) by explaining the important words and concepts surrounding the Old Testament's understanding of revelation; (2) by chronologically expounding a biblical theology of revelation in the Old Testament, from creation and the covenant with Adam until the promise of the new covenant; (3) by summarizing revelation in the remaining historical, prophetic, and poetic books; and (4) by summarizing the concept of revelation in terms of its external and internal forms.

Chapter 3 will continue the purpose and trajectory of the second chapter, applying biblical theology's method and insights to an understanding of the idea of revelation in the New Testament. The chapter shall argue that, according to the New Testament, the idea of revelation contains both external and internal dimensions. This chapter shall demonstrate the thesis in three stages: (1) by explaining the important words and concepts surrounding the New Testament's understanding of revelation; (2) by expounding a biblical theology of revelation in the new covenant chronologically, from the Gospels through the rest of the New Testament; and (3) by summarizing the concept of revelation in terms of its external and internal forms.

Thereafter, chapter 4 will argue that the external and internal nature of revelation is implicitly or explicitly evident throughout the history of the church. In other words, this chapter will show the critical presence of the dissertation's argument in important thinkers beforehand. This thesis will first be demonstrated by surveying the

development of Christian thought, from the early church through today. The important thinkers are Origen, Jerome, Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, Bonaventure, John Calvin, the Reformed confessions, Francis Turretin, Herman Bavinck, Donald Bloesch, and John Frame.

Chapter 5 will apply some of these historical insights to a contemporary systematic theology of revelation. In other words, whereas the dissertation has thus far simply described what the Bible and some significant theologians say about revelation as external and internal, chapter 5 will begin to organize and categorize this important doctrine in more systematic terms for the purposes of an evangelical renaissance. Using insights from Scripture, Reformed theology, and speech act theory, the chapter will argue that revelation properly includes both external and internal dimensions; moreover, the external and internal dimensions of revelation are grounded within the organic unity of the triune God. It shall demonstrate this thesis in four stages: (1) by summarizing the nature of external and internal revelation as it relates to Christ, Scripture, and creation; (2) by suggesting that these twofold dimensions correspond to the twofold *principia cognoscendi* in both science (via general revelation) and theology (via special revelation); (3) by grounding the *principia cognoscendi* and thus revelation itself within the *principium essendi* (that is, God); and (4) by responding to some of the most pertinent objections. In many ways, therefore, the dissertation's use of systematic theology will be the pinnacle of the dissertation as it attempts to express the concept of revelation that is both biblical and historical, while also providing a broader conceptual framework to articulate a theology of revelation in the evangelical church.<sup>52</sup>

Naturally flowing from systematic theology, chapter 6 will seek to provide

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<sup>52</sup>D. A. Carson perhaps best articulates the debated topic of how biblical and systematic theology relate. See his chapter, "Systematic Theology and Biblical Theology," in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology: Exploring the Unity & Diversity of Scripture*, ed. Brian S. Rosner et al. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000), 89-104.

practical resources for evangelical theology by exploring some of the most pertinent implications of the thesis. The chapter's implications involve theological prolegomena, the authority of Scripture, hermeneutics, and theology. This chapter shall argue that the thesis implicates that (1) theological prolegomena includes both external and internal dimensions; (2) the authority of Scripture involves both Word and Spirit; (3) hermeneutics embraces both Word and Spirit, and thus it requires a humble posture; (4) theology contains both Word and Spirit and entails practical action. In this manner, the chapter seeks further to evaluate the argument of the thesis for the purposes of an evangelical renaissance of the doctrine of revelation. The chapter does not intend to explore these practical realities exhaustively or comprehensively; rather, it will attempt to expound the thesis by showing how it elaborates important areas of study to it.

In the end, therefore, the dissertation shall argue that revelation is an organic unity that includes external and internal components. Herman Bavinck, who affirms this position, perhaps best summarizes the argument:

Corresponding to this *objective revelation*, general as well as special, there is a *subjective revelation*, which in a broad sense can be called revelation. . . . Answering to this objective general revelation, there is an illumination of the Logos. . . . Likewise, answering to this objective special revelation, there is an illumination of human beings who live in light of the gospel.<sup>53</sup>

Revelation properly includes, therefore, both the external object (e.g., Scripture) and the internal subject (e.g., illumination). Both components are interconnected and necessary to the biblical, historical, and theological conception of revelation.

This dissertation seeks both to pursue these particular Reformed insights, as represented by Bavinck and others, and to position itself as an extension of these

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<sup>53</sup>Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics: Prolegomena*, ed. John Bolt, trans. John Vriend (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 1:350; italics mine. Bavinck, along with this dissertation, is careful to distinguish the difference between these two aspects: while the external dimension is knowledge-producing, the internal dimension is knowledge-illuminating. Yet his greater point is well taken: both dimensions should be included under the larger category of revelation. As he continues, "Thus objective and subjective revelation, in a general as well as a special sense, are carried forward by the witness of the Spirit throughout the centuries until in the final manifestation of Christ they will have attained their end" (ibid., 1:351).

discussions for the purposes of a contemporary evangelical renaissance. The dissertation shall likewise explore a fuller understanding of revelation through biblical, historical, systematic, and practical theological tools.

### **The Value of this Dissertation**

The value of this study is threefold. First, Scripture often and incessantly uses the language of revelation. Therefore, the precise meaning of revelation ought to be known and understood. The question is, biblically speaking, what does revelation ultimately entail? There are certainly many helpful biblical, historical, and systematic studies of revelation; this dissertation, however, will more fully and cogently systematize the discussion of revelation as external and internal.

Second, and following the former point, a misunderstanding of the doctrine of revelation can lead to tragic consequences in one's theology. For instance, Georg Hegel, the great philosophical prophet who sought to restore the objectivity of knowledge through idealism, stressed that the most important revelation—save for the disclosure of the *Geist* in space-time—is found within the inner life of man, where the Infinite comes to self-consciousness.<sup>54</sup> Among other ideas, this conception contributed to the development of his absolute idealism. Therefore, one's idea of revelation drastically affects one's conception of God (and vice versa). In other words, the substance of this dissertation is not merely academic; rather, it contributes to discourse that affects Christian thought and practical life.

Third, the internal dimension of revelation has, as Berkhof suggested, generally “suffered eclipse” in the contemporary evangelical discussions.<sup>55</sup> While evangelicals excel at appreciating the work of the Spirit in regeneration and illumination,

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<sup>54</sup>Georg Hegel, *Phenomenology of the Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller (Oxford: Clarendon, 1977).

<sup>55</sup>Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 1:183.

they often fail to place these discussions in their necessary epistemological place, that is, under the locus of prolegomena or revelation. In other words, revelation is not only an object that one studies (e.g., Scripture) but also includes the spiritually illumined mind itself (e.g., illumination). This dissertation seeks to recognize the work of the Spirit as it relates to the evangelical understanding of revelation and the prolegomena. Indeed, the ultimate aim of this dissertation is to provide direction and resources to reunite the two dimensions of revelation within evangelical theology.

## CHAPTER 2

### A BIBLICAL THEOLOGY OF REVELATION IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

Because this dissertation seeks to provide ressourcement for a distinctively evangelical theology of revelation as external and internal, it naturally must begin with Scripture itself. The task of the present chapter, therefore, is to apply biblical theology's method and insights to understand the idea of revelation in the Old Testament. The chapter shall argue that according to the Old Testament, the idea of revelation includes both external and internal dimensions. While this construal is somewhat opaque within the earlier development of the law and promises (where the external dimension is emphasized), it becomes more evident as one follows the development of the covenants into the new one. This chapter shall demonstrate the thesis, first, by explaining the important words and concepts surrounding the Old Testament's understanding of revelation; second, by expositing a biblical theology of revelation through the covenants; third, by tracing revelation through the remaining historical, prophetic, and poetic books; and finally, by summarizing the concept of revelation in terms of its external and internal forms.

#### **Introducing the Hebrew Words for Revelation**

Before setting forth a biblical theology of revelation, it is necessary to begin with the biblical words themselves. Taken together, these Hebrew words for revelation literally mean "to unveil," "to uncover," "to make known," "to appear," or "to manifest." In other words, the concept refers to the state or act of uncovering something that was previously hidden, making something appear, making known an otherwise unknown reality, or manifesting that which is unseen.

First, the verb, גלה, occurs 187 times in the Old Testament.<sup>1</sup> The word primarily means, “to uncover.”<sup>2</sup> It can also mean to exile, go into exile, expose, depart, or have sexual relations.<sup>3</sup> By implication, then, the word may be used as a metaphor for idolatry.<sup>4</sup> More pertinent to this discussion, however, the word often means “to reveal,” especially in the qal, niph'al, or piel. Regarding the qal and niph'al in particular, the word can also be used in the sense of “to open” and thus “to reveal.” In the piel, likewise, the word “always indicates the disclosure of something normally hidden.”<sup>5</sup> In summation, the verb indicates divine revelation through the removal of obstacles to perception.<sup>6</sup>

The verb, גלה, may have a human person or God as its subject. When it takes a human person as the subject, it may refer to the revealing action of a secret (Prov 20:19), thought (Prov 18:2), rebuke (Prov 27:5), betraying a person (Isa 16:3), exposing hiding places (Jer 49:10), uncovering foundations (Mic 1:6), flaunting obscene acts (Ezek 23:18), or nakedness (Hos 2:12; Lev 18:6ff.; Deut 27:20; 20:11ff.). Alternatively, the word may translate as the noun, “revelation,” in the sense of publicly exposing something (Esth 3:14), unsealing a document (Jer 32:11), disclosing information (1 Sam 20:2), or

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<sup>1</sup>Or, alternatively, it occurs 188 times, if one includes the instance in Jer 52:29, which some MSS contain.

<sup>2</sup>For an excellent discussion of its meaning and derivation, see C. Westermann and R. Albertz, “גלה *glh* to uncover,” in *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament*, ed. Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann, trans. Mark E. Biddle (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1997), 1:314-20.

<sup>3</sup>David M. Howard, Jr., “גלה,” in *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*, vol. 1, ed. Willem A. VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 861-64; William D. Mounce, *Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), 588.

<sup>4</sup>For example, Ezekiel displays this tendency when he writes, “Thus says the Lord God, Because your lust was poured out and your nakedness uncovered in your whorings with your lovers, and with all your abominable idols, and because of the blood of your children that you gave to them, therefore, behold, I will gather all your lovers with whom you took pleasure, all those you loved and all those you hated. I will gather them against you from every side and will uncover your nakedness to them, that they may see all your nakedness. . . . Have you not committed lewdness in addition to all your abominations?” (Ezek 16:36-43; cf. 22:10).

<sup>5</sup>Westermann and Albertz, “גלה *glh* to uncover,” 1:317.

<sup>6</sup>Timothy R. Ashley, *The Book of Numbers*, NICOT, vol. 4 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 489.

making oneself known (1 Sam 14:8). Lastly, it may refer to the actual state of being announced (Isa 23:1) or revealed (1 Sam 3:7).

On the other hand, when the word has God as its subject, the word can be used for God's revelation of himself to people (Gen 35:7; 1 Sam 3:21; 9:15; Isa 22:14), his revelation of his attributes (Ps 98:2), glory (Isa 40:5), a truth or knowledge (Deut 29:29; 2 Sam 7:27; Dan 10:1), his word (1 Sam 3:7), a case (Jer 11:20), blessings (Jer 33:6), his arm (Isa 53:1), salvation, (Isa 56:1), a secret (Amos 3:7), or his opening of people's eyes (Num 22:31; 24:4). The word can also be used to affirm that the heavens themselves will reveal the sin of the wicked (Job 20:27), or to communicate that guilt will be revealed (Prov 26:26). In the end, therefore, one should note that the word carries significant revelatory connotations.<sup>7</sup>

Second, the verb, נגד, occurs 371 times. It generally means, "to communicate," but it usually specifies a particular kind of communication in terms of telling, declaring, or reporting.<sup>8</sup> This communication implies a broad range of human affairs that involve disclosing something that was previously unknown, whether that might be answering a question (Gen 43:7), disclosing a secret (Josh 2:14, 20), relaying the words of a message (Gen 44:24; Exod 19:9; 1 Sam 18:26; 25:12), or describing a situation to someone (1 Sam 19:7; 2 Kgs 6:12). Though the word normally refers to human verbal transmission, it may also have God as its subject. In these cases, the word implicates God's declaration or disclosure of something that has been misperceived, misunderstood, concealed, or mysterious.<sup>9</sup> Examples include the declaration of a condition (Gen 3:11), the solving of a

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<sup>7</sup>Westermann and Albertz, "גלה *glh* to uncover," 1:319.

<sup>8</sup>"As a rule, it indicates audible, verbal communication" (Robert H. O'Connell, "נגד," in *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*, vol. 3, ed. Willem A. VanGemeren [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997], 16-18; see also C. Westermann, "נגד *ngd* hi. to communicate," in *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament*, ed. Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann, trans. Mark E. Biddle [Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1997], 2:714-18).

<sup>9</sup>Gen 3:11; 12:18; 1 Kgs 10:3; 2 Chr 9:2; cf. Mounce, *Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, 588.

riddle (Judg 14:12, 15, 16, 19), the revelation of a dream (Dan 2:2), or the disclosure of a secret (Job 11:6). Therefore, the word naturally may take on the causative sense (i.e., “to cause to know”), that is, “to inform” or “reveal.”<sup>10</sup> For instance, the causative stem is used when God reveals something directly either through dreams (Gen 41:25) or prophets (Deut 4:13).<sup>11</sup> The word, however, is “predominately nontheological” even though it “acquires its own significance as divine proclamation” in some of the above instances and especially in Isaiah.<sup>12</sup>

Third, the noun, נְאֻם, is used 376 times. It connotes an utterance, word, or revelation. Because it is generally categorized as a prophetic idiom, it is usually translated as “oracle,” “parable,” “declaration,” or “word.”<sup>13</sup> This word is oftentimes used for a revelation of prophet (Num 24:3; 24:15; 2 Sam 23:1; Prov 30:1), and it incessantly appears before divine names (Gen 22:16; Num 14:28; 2 Kgs 9:26; 19:33; Ezek 13:6; Hos 2:15). In the latter sense, the word is used to strengthen the fact that the message of the prophet comes from the Lord.<sup>14</sup>

Fourth, related to these words are other conceptual associations. First, revelation oftentimes appears with words meaning to see, display, touch, or hear.<sup>15</sup> Second, revelation is related to other verbs such as יָרַע (in the causative stems, “to make known”) and לָמַד (in the causative stem, “to teach, make known”). Third, revelation goes

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<sup>10</sup>Gen 41:25; 2 Sam 7:11; 2 Kgs 4:27; Mic 6:8; Jer 42:3; Ps 147:19; cf. Westermann, “נגד ngd hi. to communicate,” 715.

<sup>11</sup>Indeed, a prophet’s God-given words carry *divine* authority (Deut 5:5).

<sup>12</sup>Westermann, “נגד ngd hi. to communicate,” 716; cf. Isa 41:22-23, 26; 42:9; 43:12; 44:8; 45:19; 48:3, 5.

<sup>13</sup>Mounce, *Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, 588; D. Vetter, “נְאֻם n<sup>e</sup> ’um utterance,” in *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament*, ed. Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann, trans. Mark E. Biddle (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1997): 2:693.

<sup>14</sup>Vetter, “נְאֻם n<sup>e</sup> ’um utterance,” 693.

<sup>15</sup>For a good discussion of other related words, see Warfield, *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible*, 97-100.

hand in hand with the תּוֹרָה (“Law, instruction”) and the דְּבַר־יְהוָה (“word of the Lord”), perhaps the two most common vehicles of revelation in the Old Testament. Fourth and finally, revelation is directly related to the concept of כְּבוֹד (“glory”).<sup>16</sup> In the end, the word, “revelation,” often appears alongside related concepts and words. It is difficult, therefore, to distinguish sharply between revelation and some of these other cognates.

Consequently, revelation is a broad concept. Indeed, given its expansive use and natural association with other concepts, it is not surprising that revelation is often accompanied by auditions, visions, and theophanies—as is simultaneously true in the case at Sinai, perhaps the most quintessential revelatory event in the Old Testament. The idea of revelation, in other words, occurs much more frequently than any usage of the words suggests. While the word and its cognates occurs more than a hundred times in the Bible, as Stephen D. Renn notes, “The phenomenon of ‘revelation’ is not limited to the specific vocabulary with this meaning.”<sup>17</sup> Indeed, revelation occurs in the Old Testament through dreams and visions; it occurs in both aural and visual theophanies; it occurs as the prophets speak God’s words through the covenant; and it occurs as the Bible continues and culminates in the person of Christ, who constitutes the fulfillment of the Old Testament revelation. Indeed, revelation spans the entire canon, from the first to the last book, and it includes everything which God intended humankind to know concerning his redemptive plan and purposes. Therefore, as Robert Yarbrough concludes, “The Bible does not so much discuss or reflect on revelation as assume, embody, and convey it.”<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup>Indeed, whether one looks at Isaiah’s revelatory vision in the Temple (Isa 6:1-7) or recalls the earth as God’s Temple in which everything cries “glory” (Ps 29:9), revelation and glory are intricately tied (see Gerhard von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, trans. D. M. G. Stalker [New York: Harper Collins, 1962], 1:239-41; Scott, *The New Testament Idea of Revelation*, 49).

<sup>17</sup>Stephen D. Renn, *Expository Dictionary of Bible Words: Word Studies for Key English Bible Words Based on the Hebrew and Greek Texts* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2005), 821; cf. Warfield, *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible*, 97. Or, Yarbrough suggests, the “analysis of revelation in the Bible must extend beyond the use of the word” (R. W. Yarbrough, “Revelation,” in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, ed. T. Desmond Alexander and Brian S. Rosner [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000], 732).

<sup>18</sup>Yarbrough, “Revelation,” 732; cf. Scott, *The New Testament Idea of Revelation*, v.

This is why a fully biblical theology is necessary to understand the concept of revelation, from Genesis to Revelation. Revelation is an expansive concept.

At this point in the chapter, therefore, only a tentative definition of the concept of revelation is possible: it is the opening or uncovering of a previously hidden reality; it denotes the removal of a covering or veil, or a disclosure of something that was previously unknown. Theologically speaking, revelation refers to the unveiling or disclosure of God's plans, character, and person.<sup>19</sup>

### **A Biblical Theology of Revelation Through the Covenants**

In order to understand more fully the biblical idea of revelation, this chapter will now proceed to articulate a biblical theology of revelation in the Old Testament. This biblical theology will emphasize the centrality of God in revelation through the historically unfolding covenants (from Adam to the new covenant). God is a speaking God who addresses people through progressive covenants. G. K. Beale adeptly explains:

The Old Testament is the story of God who progressively reestablishes his new-creational kingdom out of chaos over a sinful people by his word and Spirit through promise, covenant, and redemption, resulting in worldwide commission to the faithful to advance this kingdom and judgment.<sup>20</sup>

The present chapter shall now chart this theology as it pertains to the concept of revelation. The argument is simple: according to the Old Testament, the idea of revelation contains both external and internal dimensions.

Because of the organic and progressive nature of revelation, the thesis will not

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<sup>19</sup>See also Randal A. Argall, "Revelation," in *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. David Noel Freedman (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 1123; David S. Dockery, "Revelation of God," in *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, ed. Chad Brand, Charles Draper, and Archie England (Nashville: Holman Reference, 2003), 1383; and William B. Nelson, Jr., "Revelation," in *The Oxford Guide to Ideas and Issues of the Bible*, ed. Bruce M. Metzger and Michael D. Coogan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 440.

<sup>20</sup>G. K. Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology: The Unfolding of the Old Testament in the New* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 87; cf. Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 13-14.

be as visible in the first stages of biblical history; namely, while the external dimension of revelation will be plain throughout the storyline of the Old Testament, the internal dimension will not be as clear. To be precise, the internal dimension will not be distinct in the Adamic through the Abrahamic covenants; it will, however, be somewhat evident in the Mosaic covenant, clearer in the Davidic covenant, and finally unmistakable in the new covenant. Therefore, the thesis, while seeming dim in the earlier covenants, will grow clear as the chapter moves into the later covenants.

### **Creation: The Presumption to the Covenants**

The Bible starts with three interrelated chapters, Genesis 1-3. God creates the cosmos and gives his first creational mandate to humans (chap. 1), he provides specific instructions for life in the garden (chap. 2), and he encounters and responds to human sin (chap. 3). God's revelation is displayed all over these narratives, a pattern that is likewise repeated throughout the Old Testament. Among other realities, the chapters establish that revelation (1) consists broadly of spoken words and performed actions, and (2) is related to the image of God in humans.

First, the account visibly displays the God who speaks and acts, the two basic media of revelation. On the one hand, he speaks. While before creation the earth was “formless and void” (תהו וָבֶהוּ) (v. 2), after creation, God reveals by speech: “And God said, ‘Let there be light,’ and there was light” (v. 3). The importance of this verse is unmistakable: It displays that God's speech is creative and revelatory.<sup>21</sup> God, however, does not merely speak creation into existence; he also speaks words to humans in his creational mandate (Gen 1:28-30). On the other hand, God acts. God acts by creating a “good” and—shortly thereafter—“very good” creation, an important declaration that is

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<sup>21</sup>Indeed, this specific phrase, “God said,” is formulaic, occurring ten times, and initiates each process in the creation of the world (Gen 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 14, 20, 24, 26, 28, 29).

made seven times.<sup>22</sup> The heavenly bodies in fact serve as signs for the timing of the calendar, such as festivals (Gen 1:14, 18). In some sense, then, they reveal something.<sup>23</sup> In other words, God acts and his actions are revelatory.

Second, the account shows that the image of God is related to revelation. First, God creates Adam and Eve in his image and likeness (Gen 1:26-27). This kind of action shows that humans have a special purpose in God's creation, and that they mirror or reveal God in some sense as they reason, feel, imagine, morally choose, and have dominion. As Leon Morris suggests, these qualities "tell us something about the God who made man."<sup>24</sup> Second, God forms an association with Adam and Eve. God not only speaks humanity into existence—like the rest of the world—but also he truly reveals himself to them in a way that they understand: He blesses them to be fruitful, multiply, fill, and subdue the earth (vv. 28-30), and he charges them not to eat the fruit of one specific tree (2:16-17). The act of the creation of and relationship with humanity, therefore, displays much about the concept of revelation. "At the beginning of the canon," as Dempster says, "human beings are created as rulers of the earth, representing the mighty name of God throughout the world."<sup>25</sup> Humans represent God as they image and mirror him and as they are put into association with him.

In the end, as Gabriel Fackre rightly maintains, "Who God is comes to

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<sup>22</sup>Gen 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31.

<sup>23</sup>Eugene Merrill notes, "All generations of mankind that look upon these things draw theological conclusions about them for good or ill, for in some sense they are declarative about God" (Eugene H. Merrill, *Everlasting Dominion: A Theology of the Old Testament* [Nashville: B & H, 2006], 76; see also Ps 19:1-6; Rom 1:18-23).

<sup>24</sup>Leon Morris, *I Believe in Revelation* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1976), 33. Indeed, the idea of the image connotes, as Gerhard von Rad succinctly writes, "how the deity is pleased to reveal himself, for the image is first and foremost the bearer of a revelation," in this case, the revelation of God (von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, 1:214).

<sup>25</sup>Stephen G. Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty: A Theology of the Hebrew Bible*, New Studies in Biblical Theology (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2003), 62. Alternatively, God has "bound himself in a special way to humankind," says Gerhard Hasel, "for man is created in the image of God, indicating among other things the token of man's intimate relation to his Maker" (Gerhard F. Hasel, *Old Testament Theology: Basic Issues in the Current Debate*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991], 169).

expression in what God wills.”<sup>26</sup> In other words, through God’s actions, the account of creation conveys some preliminary truth about revelation: (1) the media of revelation consist (most basically) of spoken words and performed actions, which are both consummate with the creative and governing God who expresses them; and (2) humans are image bearers of God and thus reveal him.

### **Adamic Covenant: The Formation of the Covenant**

As readers turn to the Adamic narratives, they step into the particularized world of human beings. The Adamic covenant and its failure further explain an ongoing understanding of revelation. They reveal a special relationship between God and humans, the nature of the tragic fall that separates the two, and a verbal promise of restoration that becomes the source and means of salvation. All in all, following the basic creational outline, revelation is disclosed in its external dimension. These important ideas shall be elaborated below.

After God created Adam and Eve in his own image and formed some association with them, he revealed himself through the establishment of a special, personal relationship with them. While the word “covenant” is not used in the opening narrative, the relationship is construed in this way. God gave Adam and Eve the tree of life as a symbol of their guarantee of their ongoing mutual relationship and their own immortality (Gen 2:9; 3:22). God then commands Adam and Eve not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, lest they die (Gen 2:16-17). In other words, God gives a condition for obedience and a sanction for disobedience. These two aspects, a promise and a stipulation, as conveyed by the two respective trees, are the rudimentary bases upon which a covenant exists.<sup>27</sup> Indeed, these events “show man as the recipient of a precious

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<sup>26</sup>Gabriel Fackre, *The Doctrine of Revelation: A Narrative Interpretation*, Edinburgh Studies in Constructive Theology, vol. 3 (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1997), 38.

<sup>27</sup>Additional support for a covenant with creation may be found in three further biblical-

divine self-revelation and the object of God's intimate friendship and love."<sup>28</sup>

While the story ends tragically with the fall, God's revelation is herein intensified.<sup>29</sup> Even as Adam and Eve disobeyed God's one precept, experienced shame and guilt, and were judged by God, it is at this juncture that the reader ironically perceives the revelation of God more clearly. Through words and actions, God reveals first to the serpent (vv. 14-15), then to the woman (v. 16), and finally to Adam (vv. 17-19).<sup>30</sup> In the end, his revelation is gracious because, in the midst of human sin and rebellion, God initiates and discloses himself in a special and intimate relationship between God and humans. Revelation is also gracious because it—at least in the Adamic covenant—entails salvation; namely, God declares the so-called protoevangelium, the first gospel of the Bible, wherein he promises that the serpent's life would be limited, that one would come to "bruise" its head (v. 15).

While at this juncture revelation is only understood through its external form,

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theological links. First, the later promise (Gen 3:15) and its unfolding development and fulfillment throughout the rest of the Scripture are further proof of a significant relationship between God and Adam—a covenant—in creation. Second, there is certainly a link between "image" and "sonship" and also "sonship" and "covenant" (Exod 4:22; 2 Sam 7:14ff.; Ps 2; Hos 11:1; cf. Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty*, 58-59). This point will be made more forcefully in our discussion of the Davidic covenant. Third, because Adam and Christ are closely paralleled as the foundational individuals (Rom 5:12-21; 1 Cor 15:20-23), "it seems difficult to think of Christ as the head of the new covenant without Adam being the head of some kind of covenant in the original situation" (Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 616-17).

<sup>28</sup>O'Collins, "Theology and Revelation," 15. O'Collins' words are helpful notwithstanding his understanding that this passage, containing mere primitive symbolism, is simply a "story projected on the screen of the past" in the time of the Israelite kings (*ibid.*, 15, see also 14).

<sup>29</sup>Many scholars question the use of such language as the fall (James Barr, *The Garden of Eden and the Hope of Immortality* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993], 6, cf. 1-20; see also Walter Brueggemann, *Genesis, Interpretation* [Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1982], 48-54). However, as Dempster notes, "The concept of the fall is not absent from the text" (Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty*, 66). While the word is not used, it is impossible to understand the important text without the concept of a fall, or, perhaps better yet, a "cosmic tragedy" (*ibid.*, 66). As W. M. Clark has carefully argued, the phrase—knowing good and evil—has to do with the exercise of absolute moral autonomy and thus has a negative connotation in mind (W. M. Clark, "A Legal Background to the Yahwist's Use of 'Good and Evil' in Genesis 2-3," *JBL* 88 [1969]: 266-78).

<sup>30</sup>At this juncture, the results of the fall are relevant. First and most immediately, the fall led to the immediate expulsion from the garden (Gen 3:23-24), signifying "the estrangement of humanity from Deity and all the intended partners to God's purposes" (Fackre, *The Doctrine of Revelation*, 43; cf. D. M. Baillie, *God was in Christ: An Essay on Incarnation and Atonement* [New York: Scribner's, 1948], 205-6). Humans are estranged from God (Gen 3:23-24), each other (Gen 2:24-25; 3:7; 3:16), and nature (Gen 3:16-18). The fall also led to the moral and noetic depravity of humanity (cf. Ps 51:5; Rom 7:18).

this covenant is the spring by which God began a series of revelatory interventions; these interventions revealed God to his people so that they could know him and love him. The interventions would also eventually culminate with the new covenant, the covenant that reveals an internal means and guarantee to salvation.

### **Noahic Covenant: The Continuation of the Covenant**

Even after the fall and the continual degeneration of humanity from Adam onwards, God was faithful to his spoken promise in Genesis 3:15. His faithfulness is clear as he confirms a universal covenant with Noah.<sup>31</sup> Indeed, the Noahic covenant, a restatement of the Adamic covenant, sheds more light on the idea of revelation. The story shows that (1) revelation is the only true route towards God, and (2) revelation is ultimately assured through the covenant. In the end, following the former Adamic covenant, revelation is construed merely in its external dimension. These ideas shall be discussed in order.

First, the covenant implicates that God's powerful revelation is the only answer to the seriousness of sin. Indeed, the Noahic covenant did not ultimately fix the problem of human sin. The "recreated" state is still vastly imperfect. Human life is still marked by evil intention (8:21). Even Noah, the presupposed new Adam, falls into sin (9:20-27). Because Noah and his offspring did not follow the truth of God's revelation, the story ends dreadfully and abruptly. It ends, not with a recreated paradise, but with a human attempt towards domination and the divine reaction of dispersing and exiling the people from the Tower of Babel (Gen 11:1-9). God's revelation is the only route towards him—not human determination or power.

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<sup>31</sup>The covenant with Noah marks the first time that the word "covenant" is used (Gen 6:18). God says, "I will establish my covenant with you, and you shall come into the ark, you, your sons, your wife, and your sons' wives with you." The word here is to "establish" or "confirm" a covenant (הִקְיַם בְּרִית, "hēqīm bērit").

Second, and perhaps more tellingly, the covenant implicates the assurance that the world will continue to reveal God. The covenant is given to “every living being” and “the earth” (Gen 9:9-17), and it emphasizes that God will “never again” send a flood (8:21; 9:11, 15), a promise that applies throughout everlasting generations (9:12, 16).<sup>32</sup> The covenant will not be undone. As God later explains,

If I have not established my covenant with day and night and the fixed order of heaven and earth, then I will reject the offspring of Jacob and David my servant and will not choose one of his offspring to rule over the offspring of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. For I will restore their fortunes and will have mercy on them (Jer 33:25-26).

In other words, God’s dealings with the world are the basis for his dealings with his people. Indeed, God also says that his faithfulness to the promise of the Noahic covenant is proof of his continuing faithfulness today.<sup>33</sup> The covenant thus assures the ongoing nature of God’s universal revealing presence in creation whereby he enables and enlightens knowledge.<sup>34</sup> It enables the continued truth that, as David would later write, “The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork” (Ps 19:1). Indeed, without the covenant, one might conclude that there is no universal or special sense of God’s revelatory actions; but with the covenant, one concludes quite the opposite. Because of the Noahic covenant, one can be assured that the world will continue to reveal God.

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<sup>32</sup>It is often named along with the first person singular possessive pronoun, “my,” in reference to God (Gen 6:18; 9:9, 11, 15). In other words, “This is a covenant in which God binds himself, God obligates himself, and he will maintain the covenant in spite of human failure” (Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 170).

<sup>33</sup>Isa 54:9-10: “This is like the days of Noah to me: as I swore that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth, so I have sworn that I will not be angry with you [and] my steadfast love shall not depart from you, and my covenant of peace shall not be removed.” See also Gen 9:8-10, 12-13; Hos 2:14, 18; Isa 24:3-5; 33:8-9; 11:6-9; Jer 5:22-25; 14:20-22; Ezek 34:25-30; 37:26.

<sup>34</sup>Indeed, Rabbi Chanina ben Gamaliel identified the knowledge of the laws of life as the “Noahian precepts” as early as the second century. In other words, the Noahic covenant is credited with including all people within the possibility of knowledge and preservation of life (see David Novak, *The Image of the Non-Jew in Judaism: An Historical and Constructive Study of the Noahide Laws*, in *Toronto Studies in Theology*, vol. 14 [Toronto: Edwin Mellen, 1983]; see also Williamson, *Sealed with an Oath*, 67-68; Fackre, *The Doctrine of Revelation*, 63).

In the end, the Noahic covenant provides a universally recognizable external revelation. The covenant is extended to Noah, his family, and every living creature with them. Therefore, “The divine saving purposes reach out to all nations and all men.”<sup>35</sup> The covenant elaborates that revelation is the only answer to sin and even guarantees God’s promises. Whereas the Adamic covenant primarily implicates God’s creation, this latter covenant implicates God’s preservation of the world, both in terms of its life and revelatory capabilities. As Christoph Barth notes in this covenantal context, “Preservation is no doubt a continuation of creation, yet God’s acts of preservation are so amazing that it seems each time as if a new revelation takes place.”<sup>36</sup> Chief among these, the rainbow is a revelatory witness, a sign, for the preservation of the possibility of the world’s continued knowledge.<sup>37</sup> We are not left “without a witness” (Acts 14:17) to those things necessary to know, an idea to be developed in later covenants.<sup>38</sup>

### **Abrahamic Covenant: The Narrowing of the Covenant**

“The universal light of preservation keeps life livable, but sets up a yearning for something more,” reflects Fackre, alluding to the benefits and problems of the Noahic covenant.<sup>39</sup> Indeed, the Noahic covenant does not address the promised destruction of the serpent and the redemption of the world (Gen 3:15). While it provides a potential answer in Noah, he ultimately fails; therefore, God continues to reveal himself through a

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<sup>35</sup>Hasel, *Old Testament Theology*, 170.

<sup>36</sup>Christoph Barth, *God with Us: A Theological Introduction to the Old Testament*, ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 33. As he says, “He long ago began to reveal himself as such, but he also does so continually offering fresh evidence of his creative and innovative activity by preservation and development” (ibid., 29).

<sup>37</sup>Eugene Merrill suggests that the sign of the rainbow—and all signs for that matter—are revelation (Merrill, *Everlasting Dominion*, 95).

<sup>38</sup>See also Mark 10:1-9; Matt 5:16; 7:11, 16; 19:1-9; Luke 12:5; 14:8-10; John 1:9; Rom 1:19-20; 2:14-15; 12:17; 13:1-6; Acts 14:17; 17:22-28; 1 Cor 11:14-16; 15:31; 1 Pet 2:12.

<sup>39</sup>Fackre, *The Doctrine of Revelation*, 105.

covenant to Abram (Gen 15:1-18; cf. 12:1-3). This covenant reveals more about the nature of God and his revealing activity. The covenant (1) shows that revelation particularly focuses itself upon one individual (and his family), who becomes the foundation of God's later dealings with the Jewish people; and (2) introduces more media of revelation, including revelation in terms of dreams, visions, and persons. Revelation, in all these ways, remains attached merely to the external dimension. These ideas shall be discussed in order.

First, the covenant shows that revelation particularly focuses itself upon one individual (and his family), who becomes the foundation of God's later dealings with the Jewish people. As Stephen Dempster notes, "the command of God [in Gen 12:1-3] is the engine that drives the Abraham narrative in Genesis 12."<sup>40</sup> Revelation moves forward through this promise. The fivefold repetition of "blessings" in these verses—and the continued repetition of the word throughout the narratives—clearly point the reader towards the realization that Abraham is somehow going to overturn the curse of Genesis 3.<sup>41</sup> Indeed, as the narrative continues, the covenant emphasizes that Abraham would not only be a great nation, but also that all the nations would be blessed through him. Abraham is now the focus of revelation.

Second, the narrative of the Abrahamic covenant begins to elaborate several forms or media of revelation, including dreams, visions, and persons. First, God reveals himself in a vision in the making of the covenant (Gen 15:1; cf. 17:1). Second, God appears as a theophany to Abraham and Isaac (Gen 15:17; 17:1, 22; 26:2, 24).<sup>42</sup> He also

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<sup>40</sup>Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty*, 86.

<sup>41</sup>N. T. Wright sums masterfully, "Abraham emerges within the structure of Genesis as the answer to the plight of all humankind. The line of disaster and of the 'curse', from Adam, through Cain, through the Flood to Babel, begins to be reversed when God calls Abraham and says, 'in you shall all the families of the earth be blessed'" (N. T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992], 262).

<sup>42</sup>See Geerhardus Vos, *Biblical Theology: Old and New Testaments* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1975), 69-72.

appears in humanly form to Abraham after the confirmation of the covenant, as one of three men at Hebron (Gen 18:1-21).<sup>43</sup> Third, he appears in a dream to Jacob, the grandson of Abraham, in the famous ladder scene (Gen 28:13-14). Fourth, Joseph becomes a prominent interpreter of dreams (Gen 44:5), and his father, Jacob, received a vision that reassured him to go down to Egypt, the place that God would make Jacob a great nation (Gen 46:3-4).

While summarizing the Abrahamic covenant lies outside of the chapter's purpose, theologically speaking, the covenant is the linchpin from where revelation goes from general to special, from revelation to all men in Adam (and Noah) to one man in Abraham (and Christ). The covenant also introduces more media of revelation, including revelation in terms of dreams, visions, and persons. This becomes significant because, as the Bible unfolds, God continually reveals himself through different means. Revelation in both its external and internal forms is yet to be seen; however, given the fact that Abraham has been offered a righteousness-from-faith (Gen 15:6), it is inevitable that an internal awakening and illumination is well on its way.

### **Mosaic Covenant: The Covenant with Israel**

The Mosaic covenant exemplifies the continued development of the concept of revelation.<sup>44</sup> Within this newer covenant, revelation becomes more attached to the structures of the Mosaic law, the tabernacle, and the sacrificial system. Revelation, in this sense, remains purely external. The externality of revelation shall be shown, first, by explaining the basic media of revelation in the covenant (word and action) and, then, by

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<sup>43</sup>See Merrill, *Everlasting Dominion*, 81-82. This seems to parallel God's revelation in the form of the angel of the Lord. See the angel's unique encounter with Hagar (Gen 16:1-6; 21:17) and Abraham/Isaac (Gen 22:11). The significance of the angel of the Lord seems to be the "concept of a representative who stands in for another person in such a close relationship as to be virtually identical to him [Yahweh]" (Merrill, *Everlasting Dominion*, 83).

<sup>44</sup>This covenant is also called the "old covenant" (2 Cor 3:14-15), "first" covenant (Heb 8-9), "the Book of the Covenant" (Exod 24:7), or the "Torah" or "Torah of Moses" (Exod 24:12).

describing the primary threefold means of God's word-act revelation, that is, the Mosaic law, the tabernacle, and the sacrificial system. Finally, the section shall describe additional actions associated with the Mosaic covenant, including God's ability to open (Balaam) or close (Pharaoh) spiritual eyes. While this revealing action will remain somewhat opaque at the moment, it brings the chapter closer to an understanding the internal nature of revelation.

The mode of God's revelation in the Mosaic covenant is speech and action. Given the creational foundation, this is not new. Regarding speech, for example, God uses direct verbal communication to reveal his name ("I am who I am"), holiness, and special presence in a theophany at the burning bush (Exod 3:14). Written speech is also common in the establishment of the covenant itself (Exod 20:1-2, 22-33; Lev 17-26). God also reveals through his actions. He acts as he appears as a pillar of cloud and fire (Exod 13:21-22; 14:24; 16:6-10) and as the angel of the Lord (Exod 14:19), revealing his presence to his people in the hard times of the exodus. God also acts in an unusual way as he shows himself able to change human beings, even the mighty Pharaoh, presumably the divine manifestation of the Egyptian gods himself. As God declares, "I will harden Pharaoh's heart" and "Pharaoh will not listen to you" (Exod 7:3-4).<sup>45</sup> God, then, has the power to harden hearts. This action, a functional "anti-revelation," ironically reveals God as it shows his presence and sovereignty.<sup>46</sup> The significance of this (internal) action will be more fully explained later.

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<sup>45</sup>"Moses is ordered to speak to Pharaoh . . . what Yahweh has spoken to him, and Pharaoh will be stubborn-minded, so that the mighty deeds of proof may be multiplied and their impact heightened" (John I. Durham, *Exodus*, WBC, vol. 3 [Waco, TX: Word Books, 1987], 87). The references to God's action of hardening Pharaoh's heart are abundant in these narratives (Exod 4:21; 7:13-14, 22; 9:7, 12, 35; 10:20, 27; 11:10; 14:4). It seems, however, that Pharaoh also hardened his own heart, but even this was done "as the Lord had said" (Exod 7:13; 8:15, 19, 32; 9:34).

<sup>46</sup>Indeed, by hardening Pharaoh's heart God is showing who he is and what he can do. "Thus Yahweh is orchestrating, in a combination of opposing and unlikely forces, a deliverance that will above all be a proof of his active Presence" (Durham, *Exodus*, 87). He rightly calls this knowledge that Pharaoh gains through these narratives "experiential" (ibid.).

God's word-act revelation is primarily through the threefold means of the Mosaic law, the tabernacle, and the sacrificial system. First, the Mosaic law is central to revelation as it contains the words of the covenant. Moses received the very words of God, who in turn disclosed these words to Israel.<sup>47</sup> Second, the tabernacle, the very mobile tent of God, is central to revelation as it reveals the Mosaic covenant and God himself.<sup>48</sup> Its existence and nature reflect the reality of the covenant; indeed, it is a miniaturized and portable reproduction of God's heavenly sanctuary.<sup>49</sup> Third, hand in hand with the law and tabernacle, the sacrificial system is central to revelation as it discloses Israel's sin and God's forgiveness. It discloses Israel's sin as it was intended to expiate, propitiate, and otherwise atone for the sin and guilt of those who have wronged someone unwittingly and those who are repentant (cf. Lev 4:20ff.). It also discloses God's mercy as it was the main means by which forgiveness was realized. Through these three main vehicles—law, tabernacle, and sacrificial system—God externally revealed himself by word and act.

In order to understand the fullest picture of revelation during the Mosaic era, the story of Balaam should be introduced at this point. While this narrative might seem like a detour in our discussion, it is in fact central to an understanding of revelation. Indeed, the story contains a peculiar kind of revelation: "Then the *Lord opened the eyes*

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<sup>47</sup>God declares to Moses, "Write these words, for in accordance with these words I have made a covenant with you and with Israel" (Exod 34:27). Thereafter, as Moses receives God's very words, so also Israel receives these very words (Exod 24:3; cf. Deut 18:18). Moses was already given God's name (Yahweh), and now he was also trusted with his very words (in the Law).

<sup>48</sup>The tabernacle, among other things, symbolizes God's desire to dwell among his people, even amongst human sinfulness (Exod 31, 35; Lev 4). True to God's intentions, therefore, the tabernacle naturally reflects the fact that Israel would become a "kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Exod 19:6). It thus can be seen, as Vos suggests, as a "concentrated theocracy" (Vos, *Biblical Theology*, 148).

<sup>49</sup>Stephen Dempster writes that the tabernacle "designates Israel as a particular type of kingdom. Instead of being a kingdom of a particular king, it will be a kingdom marked by priesthood; that is service to God on behalf of people and vice versa. . . . Israel will thus redefine the meaning of dominion (service). This dominion will be a distinctive task, its distinguishing characteristic among the world of nations" (Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty*, 101-2). As Scripture says, the "pattern of the tabernacle, and of all its furniture" was made "after the pattern . . . shown you on the mountain" (Exod 25:9, 40; cf. Exod 26:30; 27:8; Num 8:4; Heb 8:5; 9:23-24). The tent is thus a physical image of the heavenly reality.

of Balaam, and he saw the angel of the Lord standing in the way, with his drawn sword in his hand. And he bowed down and fell on his face” (Num 22:31, cf. 24:4, 16; italics mine).<sup>50</sup> God’s opening of Balaam’s eyes is not a physical opening but a spiritual one, a divine revelation, whereby God removes the obstacles to perception through a vision of some kind. God spiritually opened up Balaam’s eye so that he would see, not what Balak wanted him to see, but the reality of the situation.<sup>51</sup> “Balaam’s inner perception has been tuned to understand and communicate what Yahweh wants.”<sup>52</sup> God thus unveils a true understanding or perception of the situation. The example, in fact, seems to point the discussion back to this situation’s functional reversal, Pharaoh’s hardened heart. It seems that God has the revealing and anti-revealing power both to open and close eyes/hearts. This rather unusual and opaque example shall be more substantiated at a later point in the chapter.

In the end, the Mosaic covenant begins to elaborate what revelation means. First, God reveals himself by words and actions. The formulaic phrase combining the two, “I will be your God, and you shall be my people” (Lev 26:12), becomes, as Edward

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<sup>50</sup>The verse, “Then the Lord opened the eyes of Balaam” closely parallels the aforementioned reference in v. 28: “Then the Lord opened the mouth of the donkey.” Indeed, the writer replaces the donkey with Balaam, and the donkey’s mouth with Balaam’s eyes. “The act of uncovering human eyes is no less Yahweh’s act than that of opening the mouth of a dumb beast” (Timothy R. Ashley, *The Book of Numbers*. NICOT, vol. 4 [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993], 458). The miracle of the story is obvious. In the same way that God can open up the mouth of the donkey to make it speak—a miraculous feat—God can also open up a person’s eyes so that they can see the reality of the living God. What kind of revelation this is, however, is another story. As God “opened the eyes of Balaam” and he “fell on his face,” it seems that Balaam went “into a prophetic trace in with the prophetic eye is ‘uncovered’” (Philip J. Budd, *Numbers*, WBC, vol. 5 [Waco, TX: Word Books, 1984], 140).

<sup>51</sup>The word for revelation used here, גִּלְיָה (LXX: ἀποκαλύπτω) here means “to allow one to see things as they are, especially things that are not ordinarily visible to humans (as the angel [cf. vv. 23-27] was not)” (Ashley, *The Book of Numbers*, 458; cf. 1 Sam 3:1, 7; cf. 3:21; 9:15; 2 Sam 7:27). As one commentator summarizes, “Though unseeng at first, his eyes have been uncovered by Yahweh” (R. Dennis Cole, *Numbers*, NAC, vol. 3B [Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2000], 419). Another says, “God opened the prophet’s inner eye and presented him with a true view of reality which, of course, did not accord with the wishes of Balak, who wanted him to curse Israel. God gave him knowledge of the Most High, so that he could hear and speak his word” (Colin Brown, “Revelation,” in *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, ed. Colin Brown [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986], 3:311).

<sup>52</sup>Ashley, *The Book of Numbers*, 488.

Schillebeeckx writes, “The quintessence of divine revelation in the Old Testament.”<sup>53</sup> Second, the covenant’s word-act revelation is primarily in terms of the Mosaic law, the tabernacle, and the sacrificial system. God reveals as he speaks his word, discloses his immediate divine presence, and unveils his holiness and his people’s sin through sacrifice. Revelation, then, is purely external within this covenant. However, there are additional actions associated with the Mosaic covenant that show that God is able to open spiritual eyes to see (Balaam) or close them to misunderstand (Pharaoh). While this revealing action is obscure at the moment, it brings the chapter closer to an understanding of revelation as external and internal.

### **Davidic Covenant: The Kingly Covenant**

The covenant with David begins to combine together various biblical strands that have heretofore been left apart.<sup>54</sup> Most pertinently, the covenant discusses the concept of revelation explicitly and implicitly. This discussion will argue that the Davidic covenant confirms and elaborates the connection between (1) revelation and the king and (2) revelation and the temple.

First and foremost, the Davidic covenant shows that revelation is inseparably tied to the king. God forms a father-son relationship with David, saying, “I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son” (2 Sam 7:14). In the Ancient Near Eastern context, of which the Hebrew context is one part, the son represents the character of the father. Therefore, as Gentry and Wellum suggest, King David “represents the character of [God] in some way to the people.”<sup>55</sup> In other words, God’s father-son relationship with David

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<sup>53</sup>Edward Schillebeeckx, *Christ the Sacrament of the Encounter with God* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1963), 12; cf. Exod 6:7; Lev 26:12.

<sup>54</sup>Though the word for covenant is not found in the 2 Sam 7 and 1 Chr 17 narratives, it is found elsewhere with reference to the same covenant (2 Sam 23:5; Jer 33:21; Pss 89:3, 28, 34, 39; 132:12; 2 Chr 13:5). Its existence is also implied given the continuity with the Abrahamic covenant (Williamson, *Sealed with an Oath*, 120-22).

<sup>55</sup>Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 396-97. Dempster again reflects, “This Davidic covenant establishes and confirms a relationship with David and God in which David is regarded

harks back to the Genesis narratives concerning the image of God.<sup>56</sup> In a similar manner that Adam images God (as a son of God), so also the Davidic king images God (as the son of God). King David is thus simultaneously a special revealer of God and also the chosen one who is the promised messiah, the promised seed who will crush the serpent. The point here is simple: the unfolding line of Scripture, the revealing activity of God, will now be seen through the kingship following David.<sup>57</sup> Revelation is more fully understood through the king. (The implications of this point in relationship to the organic unity of revelation in King Jesus will be clarified in chapter 3.)

Second, the Davidic covenant shows that revelation is inseparably tied to the glory of the new temple. The covenant foundationally includes the establishment of the permanent presence of God in the temple. While the temple was not built in David's lifetime, God promised David that he would make him a "house," a temple (2 Sam 7:11).<sup>58</sup> Similar to the tabernacle (Exod 25:9, 40), the temple was constructed as a microcosm of the entire heavens and earth. Indeed, alluding to the overpowering presence of God on Sinai and in the tabernacle during the wilderness wandering (see Exod 13:21-

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as a son and God as a father, and in this relationship lies the key to Israel's national redemption and ultimately the world's as well" (Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty*, 142).

<sup>56</sup>God herein makes Adam in his image and likeness (Gen 1:26-28); when Adam had a son, Seth, Adam "fathered [him] in his own likeness, after his image" (5:3). Concerning these important verses, Dempster says, "By juxtaposing the divine creation of Adam in the image of God and the subsequent human creation of Seth in the image of Adam, the transmission of the image of God through this genealogical line is implied, as well as the link between sonship and the image of God. As Seth is a son of Adam, so Adam is a son of God" (Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty*, 58). Israel later inherited this role. God calls Israel his son (Exod 4:22-23) and "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (19:6).

<sup>57</sup>In other words, the promise does not end with David. When Solomon was born, the writer is clear that "the Lord loved him" (2 Sam 12:24). God's covenant with David also clearly extends to Solomon through his adulthood. Indeed, as Solomon pleads for wisdom, he asks for a "mind to govern your people" to discern (1 Kgs 3:9). Based upon God's love and loyalty to David, God gave Solomon what he asked (1 Kgs 3:10-12). His life and words, though falling short of perfection, reverberate numerous times with God's presence (1 Kgs 8:30ff.; cf. 2 Chr 6:21ff.). In fact, in his prayer in benediction to the new Temple, the place of God's special presence, he prays "that all the peoples of the earth may know that the Lord is God" (1 Kgs 8:60).

<sup>58</sup>In the most general terms, the temple replaces the tabernacle. The basic difference between the two is that the temple, unlike the tabernacle, is a permanent meeting place (G. K. Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God*, New Studies in Biblical Theology [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004], 32).

22; 24:15-16; 40:34-35), the historian suggests that the temple was so revealing “that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud, for the glory of the Lord filled the house of the Lord” (1 Kgs 8:11; cf. 2 Chr 5:13-14). This luminescent cloud, as Beale asserts, was thus an “appropriate vehicle to express the invisible heavenly, radiant presence of God in the tabernacle and subsequent temple.”<sup>59</sup> In this manner, revelation and the temple became interrelated through the Davidic covenant.

In the end, therefore, the Davidic covenant and various writings reflecting the covenant elaborate the idea of revelation in a more fully accessible way. The covenant explicitly establishes the idea that revelation is attached to kingship and temple.

### **New Covenant: The Restoration of the Covenant**

Because of the failure of the previous covenants, the prophets began to declare the existence of a new covenant, a covenant in which “ultimately all of the covenants find their fulfillment, terminus, and *telos*.”<sup>60</sup> As this section will elaborate, the new covenant consists of God revealing himself (1) through the permanent indwelling of the Holy Spirit, (2) more directly, and (3) more supremely. Most pertinently, this covenant declares that revelation includes both external and internal dimensions.

First, God reveals himself through the permanent indwelling of the Spirit in believers. As the Lord reflects through Isaiah, “‘My Spirit that is upon you, and my words that I have put in your mouth, shall not depart out of your mouth, or out of the mouth of your offspring, or out of the mouth of your children’s offspring,’ says the Lord, ‘from this time forth and forevermore’” (Isa 59:21). The difference in pronouns is striking: God makes his covenant “with them” (third-person plural), while his Spirit is “upon you” (second person singular). While this latter singular reference most naturally

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<sup>59</sup>Beale, *The Temple and the Church’s Mission*, 37.

<sup>60</sup>Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 644.

refers to the Davidic messiah (cf. “redeemer,” v. 20), it also highlights the future reality in which the Spirit is given individually to all believers through the new covenant (see below).<sup>61</sup> God’s revelation now more fully includes the special indwelling of the Spirit.

Second, through the witness of the Spirit, God reveals himself more directly. He will replace people’s old heart of stone with a new heart of flesh (Ezek 36:25-27). In this “individualizing form” of the promise, Vos notes, God spiritually regenerates people as they become a “permanent receptacle of the Spirit.”<sup>62</sup> Moreover, as God regenerates, he also promises to reveal himself more directly through Spirit-driven internalized teaching, as elaborated elsewhere: “I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts” (Jer 31:33). In other words, while the Spirit was at work before the inauguration of the new covenant, that covenant explicitly acknowledges an internal aspect to revelation. This kind of revelation does not lead to new information or knowledge; rather, it leads to understanding and obedience.<sup>63</sup> Isaiah explains that on this new basis, all covenant members will be believers, for “all your children shall be taught by the Lord” (Isa 54:13).<sup>64</sup> God reveals himself more directly by renewing the internal nature of people, writing the law within them, and teaching everyone directly himself.

Third, the new covenant points toward a time when God would reveal himself supremely and intimately, where sin and death would be no more, and where love and

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<sup>61</sup>See Gary V. Smith, *Isaiah 40-66*, NAC, vol. 15B (Nashville: B & H, 2009), 605-6.

<sup>62</sup>Geerhardus Vos, “The Eschatological Aspect of the Pauline Conception of the Spirit,” in *Redemptive History and Biblical Interpretation: The Shorter Writings of Geerhardus Vos*, ed. Richard B. Gaffin, Jr. (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1979), 97.

<sup>63</sup>Regarding Jer 31:33, for example, J. A. Thompson summarizes: “Yahweh himself proposes to bring about the necessary change in the people’s inner nature which will make them capable of obedience,” for indeed, “there could be no obedience and no recognition of Yahweh’s sovereignty as long as the covenant was externalized” (J. A. Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah*, NICOT [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980], 581).

<sup>64</sup>“In the new covenant community, the believing community and the covenant community will be perfectly coextensive. This is what Isaiah means when he says: ‘all your sons will be taught by the Lord’” (Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 444). God explains it in this way through Jeremiah: “And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ for they shall all know me” (Jer 31:33-34).

forgiveness would be permanent. This future idea of total salvation finds its most elegant description in Isaiah 60. Pictured as the zenith of God's revealing presence, the "City of the Lord" (v. 14) is a bright light on account of God's glory (vv. 1-5), and it is so pervasive that one might call it a "never-ending illumination" (vv. 18-20).<sup>65</sup> This is, of course, a transformed city, a city that points towards the vision's climax (Isa 66), where "the new heavens and the new earth are being created."<sup>66</sup> Indeed, texts like this made Israel realize that its own plight required nothing less than a total restoration and resurrection by God (Ezek 37:1-14). In other words, the new covenant requires that God transform this world (Isa 60) and people therein (Ezek 37). The new covenant, therefore, necessitates the eventual display of God's benevolent and holy revelation in perfect measure.

Revelation, in addition to its previously described external dimension, now explicitly includes an internal dimension. The two dimensions are distinguished by the giving of the law or the writing on a page (external), and the giving of the Spirit or being taught within (internal). The new covenant, moreover, ties revelation to (1) the permanent indwelling of the Spirit in believers, (2) the direct witness of the Spirit and his work in the human heart, and (3) a supremely perfect and intimately personal final revelation at the end of time. Hasel concludes, "So man is led constantly forward into the future. This history as the 'way' of Yahweh leads to an ever deepening and more complete knowledge of God and an increasing expectation of an as yet outstanding final revelation of God."<sup>67</sup> The finality of revelation, and an overall explanation of the new covenant in Christ, will be further elaborated as this dissertation moves onto the next chapter.

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<sup>65</sup>Richard J. Mouw, *When the Kings Come Marching In: Isaiah and the New Jerusalem*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmanns, 2002), 102; cf. John D. W. Watts, *Isaiah 34-66*, WBC, vol. 25 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2000), 865.

<sup>66</sup>Watts, *Isaiah 34-66*, 868.

<sup>67</sup>Hasel, *Old Testament Theology*, 170.

## **Revelation in the Rest of the Old Testament**

This chapter heretofore has explored a biblical theology of revelation chronologically through the covenants. Because this approach admittedly overlooks other material in the Old Testament, the following section will briefly summarize the relevant material; namely, it will explore revelation in the (1) historical, (2) prophetic, and (3) poetic books.

### **Historical Books**

The historical books contribute to a theology of revelation in one important way: the books show that the progress of revelation is tied to kingship. The Deuteronomic history is a clear example. As the narrative moves through Joshua and Judges, the historian explains how the land was conquered and the Israelite people grew in numbers. The people nevertheless fail to follow God's instruction; rather, everyone did whatever was right in their own eyes. According to the historian, this moral relativism is directly associated with a lack of king in the land.<sup>68</sup> The (implied) solution is that God will send a king, not like the pagan kings (Judg 9:7-15), but a king who loves the law (Deut 17:14-20). In other words, the hope was that this future king, a true follower of God, would one day come and restore the moral order.<sup>69</sup> The progress of revelation and kingship are tied. (As explained before, this idea is also apparent through the establishment of the Davidic covenant.)

### **Prophetic Books**

The prophetic books contribute to a theology of revelation in two ways: they elaborate the nature of revelation (1) in the created world and (2) as the word of God. These two will be explained in order.

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<sup>68</sup>Judg 17:6; cf. 21:25; Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty*, 133; Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 390-91.

<sup>69</sup>See also 1-2 Kings; 1-2 Chronicles.

First, the prophet books often elaborate the nature of revelation in the created world. As the prophet Isaiah reflects on the beauty of the seas and heavens, he powerfully writes, “Lift up your eyes on high and see: who created these? He who brings out their host by number, calling them all by name, by the greatness of his might, and because he is strong in power not one is missing” (Isa 40:26). The prophets also discern a revelation of God in the course of history. Unlike the false gods, Yahweh declares what the future holds (Isa 41:23, cf. 24, 29); he is “declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things not yet done” (Isa 46:10). Unfortunately, however, most people do not regard these deeds of the Lord or see the works of his hands (Isa 5:12). Amos likewise proclaims that the maker “who forms the mountains and creates the wind, and declares to man what is his thought, who makes the morning darkness, and treads on the heights of the earth,” is revealed as the Lord, Yahweh (Amos 4:13). God’s revelation universally extends to the created world.

Second, the prophetic books elaborate the nature of revelation as the word of God. God speaks to the prophets; namely, he puts his words into their mouths so that their words are actually God’s words.<sup>70</sup> As explained at the beginning of the chapter, the prophets spoke oracles (“אָמַרְתִּי”) of the Lord.<sup>71</sup> For example, Moses, the prophet *par excellence*, becomes the mouthpiece of God as he speaks to Pharaoh and all the people (Exod 4:15-16; cf. 7:1). The prophets were also given the Spirit of God (Hos 9:7; Mic 3:8), the Spirit that is often associated with the internal organ for communicating the Word of God.<sup>72</sup> The prophets were thus God’s tools to pronounce both judgment and salvation. They explain in more detail revelation through the word of God.

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<sup>70</sup>Num 22:35; Jer 1:9, 14; Isa 51:16; 59:21; Ezek 3:4.

<sup>71</sup>See Num 24:3; 24:15; 2 Sam 23:1; Prov 30:1.

<sup>72</sup>2 Sam 23:2; 1 Kgs 22:24; Isa 61:1; Joel 2:28; Zech 7:12; Neh 9:30; cf. Vos, *Biblical Theology*, 191-97, 219-20.

## Poetic Books

Finally, the poetic books elaborate the nature of revelation. Stemming from the poetry of the Psalms and Job especially, they show that revelation (1) involves the vastness of God's revelation in nature, (2) displays God's incomprehensibility, and (3) contains external and internal dimensions.

First, David associates revelation with the created world. He often declares that God's revelation stretches throughout creation. In Psalm 29, for instance, he beautifully calls the reader to worship and ascribe glory to God (vv. 1-2). He grounds this plea by declaring that even the voice of the Lord is heard in nature, including the storms, trees, fire, and deer (vv. 3-9). Like the prophets, David does not bifurcate nonverbal and verbal revelation. This kind of revelation in nature is the sort of thing that impressed David as he sang, "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork" (Ps 19:1). He saw this happening by day and by night, as they "reveal knowledge" (v. 2). He even metaphorically refers to creation as speaking (v. 4, cf. 3). In other words, God's disclosure is as vast and universal as creation itself.

Second, the poetical books explain that God's revelation is ultimately incomprehensible. Indeed, divine incomprehensibility, among other things, is a major reason why the law is needed in the first place. As Job maintains, however, the law does not reveal God exhaustively: God "does great things beyond searching out, and marvelous things beyond number" (Job 9:10). Just as Moses could not directly behold the glory of the Lord, so also Elihu declares, "Behold, God is great, and we know him not" (36:26). Indeed, God later rebukes Job for calling into question God's ways simply based upon Job's observation of the natural order: "Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge?" (38:2). God then challenges Job, questioning him about divine knowledge, power, and providence (Job 38, 40). Even in his revelation, God is ultimately incomprehensible.

Third and finally, as both David and Job maintain, because God is

incomprehensible, revelation must be external and internal; it must include both information and personal encounter. Two examples are most instructive. First, David shows that the Mosaic law, no matter how wonderful a revelation, is simply not enough. He prays, “Open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of your law” (Ps 119:18). Reflecting the same key word in the Balaam narrative,<sup>73</sup> David prays that God might “open” his eyes so that he can actually perceive what is in the law. As Leslie C. Allen deduces, the text shows that the “Torah represents God” and the “hiding of God’s face in standard psalm usage is replaced . . . by hiding the Torah.”<sup>74</sup> Because the Torah is “hidden,” the psalmist asks for a personal, internal revelation (i.e., “open my eyes”) to perceive or understand correctly. Reflecting upon the meaning of revelation, Colin Brown concludes, “In this way Samuel [in Sam 3:7] and David [in Ps 119:18] are able to hear God’s instructions and promises.”<sup>75</sup> As noted earlier, this basic understanding of revelation is already present implicitly within the events of Pharaoh and especially of Balaam. It becomes more evident through the internal revelatory work of the Spirit in the new covenant. In some sense, God’s revealing activity happens in both an external (covenantal speaking) and internal (covenantal hearing) sense.

As a second example, the book of Job is instructive of the idea of external and internal revelation. Indeed, Job’s infamous ignorance at the end of the story is only removed when God shows him direct and personal knowledge. The story begins with

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<sup>73</sup>“גלה” in Num 22:31; 24:4, 16. Second Kgs 6:17, 20 is also instructive. Both verses use the same wording as Balaam and the psalmist: “Elisha prayed and said, ‘O Lord, please open his eyes that he may see.’ So the Lord opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw, and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha” (v. 17) and “Elisha said, ‘O Lord, open the eyes of these men, that they may see.’ So the Lord opened their eyes and they saw, and behold, they were in the midst of Samaria” (v. 20).

<sup>74</sup>Leslie C. Allen, *Psalms 101-150*, rev. ed., WBC, vol. 21 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2002), 186.

<sup>75</sup>Brown, “Revelation,” 3:311. Regarding the meaning, John Calvin perceptively writes, “Having acknowledged, that power to keep the law is imparted to men by God, he, at the same time, adds, that every man is blind, until he also enlighten the eyes of his understanding.” In other words, God must “remove the veil from our eyes” (John Calvin, *Commentary on the Book of Psalms 93-150*, trans. James Anderson, The Calvin Translation Society [repr., Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996], 413).

Job's righteous fear of the Lord (1:1); as the story progresses, it continually assumes that he never completely lost this fear (cf. 28:28). However, Job clearly attains a greater understanding of God at the end. After God reveals himself in a frightfully awesome way, Job confesses in repentance:

I know that you can do all things, and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted . . . Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know. . . . *I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees you*; therefore I despise myself, and repent in dust and ashes (Job 42:2-6; emphasis mine).

In this way, Job lays out a basic contrast between timeframes (then and now) and revelatory power (hearing [about] and seeing [directly]).<sup>76</sup> What exactly is this new revelation? Clearly, this is not new information that Job receives. As Dempster rightly deduces, “Job may be externally the same person as before the test, but he has been transformed internally. He has experienced the fear of God in a new sense.”<sup>77</sup> Revelation is something more than mere knowledge or information. It also includes a powerful and personal encounter with the living God.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>76</sup>David Clines finds this contrast doubtful, arguing that the supposed contrast is “essentially equivalent” (David J. A. Clines, *Job 38-42*, WBC, vol. 18B [Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2011], 1217). Clines argues that the basic implication of his argument is that the event does not compose revelation at all but merely vindication on Job's part (Job 19:27). In other words, in 42:5 Job is not suggesting that he received a revelation at all but simply that he had been vindicated in God's eyes. Whether or not Clines is correct, however, does not make a difference for the thesis. Indeed, even if it is true that Job's words merely reflect a vindication given to him, this actually supports the thesis. If Job was vindicated (i.e., justified), this would mean an internal change on Job's part, at least as he and God understands it, so that one might equally speak of the event as an internal revelation of God to his legal problem. Therefore, even while Clines might scoff at the suggestion that the event was a “immediate personal encounter,” if the event was a vindication (as he supposes), then it also contains implications towards a immediate personal encounter in terms of a legal vindication (ibid., 1218).

<sup>77</sup>Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty*, 205. As he suggests, “When Yahweh appears, it is not so much that he gives any new information; rather, he transforms a previous understanding of the world” (ibid., 204).

<sup>78</sup>John E. Hartley wisely summarizes, “Previously Job had heard about God through the tradition perpetuated in songs sung at the festivals and in the teaching of the elders. Rejoicing in what his ear heard about God, Job zealously lived by the precepts. Now he has a far superior basis for his faith—*now my eyes have seen Yahweh!* Job had a direct encounter with the living God and heard him speak clearly. Yahweh veiled himself in a tempest, which resembles in many respects his appearance at Sinai (Exod 19), so that Job was not consumed by holiness. . . . [Now] His deepest longing—to behold his Redeemer with his own eyes—has been fulfilled (19:25-27). The vision of God overwhelms him, filling him with a sense of wonder and awe and reducing all his complaints to insignificance” (John E. Hartley, *The Book of Job*, NICOT [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988], 536-37).

In the end, therefore, the poetical books elaborate the idea of revelation in a more fully accessible way. They maintain that revelation includes God's universal manifestation in the glory of creation, is something that is ultimately incomprehensible, and thus involves God's powerful and personal ability to unveil himself in the human heart. Revelation is more fully seen in its external (word) and internal (reception) nature.

### **Summary of Revelation in the Old Testament**

Ernest Findlay Scott's paradigmatic conclusion of the meaning of revelation in the Old Testament is a fine synopsis: "To sum up—it belongs to the essence of Hebrew thought that God, who is exalted above the heavens, yet makes himself known."<sup>79</sup> In other words, Yahweh is an incomprehensible God who reveals. Such revelation, as we have seen, is grounded in history, especially in the unfolding of the biblical covenants. Whether revelation is the prophetic formula, "Thus says the Lord," or the supernatural speech from Balaam's donkey, the Bible is clear that God reveals. This revelation, moreover, as we have seen, takes on various forms. These forms may be summarized in two categories: the external and internal.

### **External Revelation**

Of the two categories, the external form of revelation is certainly easier to recognize. It is comprised (more or less) of three different media: (1) verbal or written speech, (2) events, and (3) persons.<sup>80</sup> First, God reveals himself externally by speech to Jacob (Gen 35:7), Pharaoh (Gen 41:25), David (2 Sam 7:27), and even the nations (Ps 98:2). Moreover, God speaks and writes his words in a way that the receiving person (and anyone present) could comprehend. This mode of revelation seems to be the basis and

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<sup>79</sup>Scott, *The New Testament Idea of Revelation*, 51.

<sup>80</sup>This helpful threefold categorization comes from John Frame, *The Doctrine of the Word of God: A Theology of Lordship* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2010), 71-74, see also 75-334. It should be noted that dreams or visions may also be included as a fourth classification, but they better fall under the first media, since the revelation within dreams and visions basically consists of a spoken word.

paradigm for all other modes of revelation.

Second, God reveals himself externally through his own actions or events. He reveals himself as he creates the world by his word (Gen 1:1), establishes the rainbow (9:16), and guides and redeems Israel out from Egypt and through the Red Sea (Exod 15:4-12), among many other examples.

Third, God reveals himself externally through persons. Indeed, God is a person who draws near in his revelation (cf. Deut 30:11-14). This particular revelation occurs to Abraham (Gen 22:11-12), Jacob (Gen 32:29-30), Moses (Exod 3:2-6), Joshua (Josh 5:14-15), and David (1 Chr 21:16, 18, 27), among many others.<sup>81</sup> This personal media of revelation also includes the promised coming of the Davidic savior-king (Isa 7:14-17; 9:6-7; 11:2; 55:3) and the new covenantal Spirit that brings internalized teaching and forgiveness (Isa 59:21; Ezek 36:26-27). In summation, the external form of revelation comprises three interrelated and united media—word, event, and person. The purpose of this external revelation was simple: to disclose who God is and how we are to live and act before him (Lev 11:45).

### **Internal Revelation**

The internal form of revelation consists of a divine personal encounter whereby God inwardly allows (or disallows) the person to perceive him and his external revelation. While the internal dimension of revelation is opaquely seen all throughout the Old Testament, it is more fully grasped only with the promise of the new covenant. An internalized revelation is alluded, rather ironically, in the case of Pharaoh, where Yahweh says, “I will harden Pharaoh’s heart” and “Pharaoh will not listen to you [Moses]” (Exod 7:3-4). It returns in Balaam’s mysterious encounter with God, where “the Lord opened the eyes of Balaam” (Num 22:31) so that he would see, not what Balak wanted him to

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<sup>81</sup>God’s revelatory presence in the Garden of Eden is also a plausible example here (Gen 3:8).

see, but what Yahweh wanted him to see. Therefore, God has the power both to close and to open a person's spiritual eyes. This power is confirmed in the particular example of Job, where revelation must include information and personal encounter. Indeed, his ignorance was only removed when the knowledge based upon creation was replaced with knowledge based upon direct and personal knowledge, "things too wonderful for me" (Job 42:3). The psalmist also echoes this as he prays: "Open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of your law" (Ps 119:18). This previously localized phenomenon is later confirmed and developed through the new covenant. God would reveal himself internally through his promised Spirit as well as externally through his word. This is seen in the new covenant in the sense that God gives believers a new spiritual heart and spirit, puts the law within them so they would know God directly, provides the greater provision of the Spirit to all believers, and provides forgiveness, restoration, and even resurrection.

Therefore, while internal revelation is not as clearly perceived in the Old Testament, one can establish certain truths about it. First, God reveals internally in the sense that he is in control of a person's knowledge and perception of things. The (un)veiling aspect of this idea is apparent in the cases of Pharaoh and Balaam, where God had the power either to hide or to reveal himself to the respective men. Second, God reveals internally in the sense that his special encounter with people can transform their perception of a truth. This idea is visible in the cases of Job and the psalmist, where God explicitly confronts and transforms perceptions internally, producing the fear of God or apprehension of the law in a new sense. Third, the reality of internal revelation is confirmed in the promise of the new covenant, where God will provide the greater provision of the Spirit to all believers (Isa 59:21). Whereas before only a select few possessed the Spirit in sporadic measure, then, through a new promise, the Spirit will personally reveal God to sinful human hearts. Fourth, and more specifically, God internally reveals by giving believers a new spiritual heart and spirit (Ezek 36:25-27), and putting the law within them so they would know God directly (Jer 31:33). This latter idea

is what Gerhard von Rad means when he says that the newness of the new covenant lies not in its content per se but “in the way in which the divine will is to be conveyed to man.”<sup>82</sup>

In all these overlapping ways, God reveals internally to the human heart, changing the person’s perception of things. Indeed, in his summary of the Old Testament, especially the new covenant revelation, Hans Urs von Balthasar rightly suggests, “We are now able to discern . . . much more profound, more existential participation in the very substance of the word of God so much so in fact that the word of revelation simply cannot be separated from the articulate human response like kernel from husks.”<sup>83</sup> Unlike external revelation, which is generally perceptible to the public, internal revelation is related to certain individuals’ reception, perception, and understanding of external revelation. Therefore, while the purpose of external revelation is to disclose who God is and how people are to live and act before him, the purpose of internal revelation is more specialized; that is, in the wake of sin, to reveal a spiritual and personal knowledge so that people might affirm inwardly God and his word.

### **Conclusion**

This chapter has begun to provide ressourcement for a distinctively evangelical theology of revelation. It has argued that the Old Testament regards revelation in both external and internal terms. The storyline begins when God reveals himself in creation, and his words speak into existence something out of nothing. He covenants with Adam (and later, Noah), revealing a mandate and salvation promise to humankind. God then establishes a covenant with Abraham, affirming the promise of blessing and land in the future. On the basis of this covenant, he makes a covenant with Israel through Moses, as

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<sup>82</sup>von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, 2:213.

<sup>83</sup>Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Martin Buber and Christianity* (New York: Macmillan, 1962), 21.

he more clearly reveals his law and the promise of a messiah. Also on the basis of the Abrahamic covenant, he gives a covenant to David and the future dynasty, disclosing the kingship. God finally promises the new covenant, as he more clearly elaborates the coming of the messiah-king and the giving of the Spirit for all who believe. Indeed, “now faith would have to be divorced from all merely external supports and find its strength in ‘a new covenant written on the heart,’” as Edwin Lewis perceptively (albeit crudely) writes.<sup>84</sup> It is a story of redemptive revelation.<sup>85</sup> This redemptive revelation speaks about revelation in both externalized and internalized terms.

While one does not see an equal emphasis of the external and internal forms in the Old Testament, it occurs much more clearly in the New: the Word and Spirit become the two quintessential figures in a theology of revelation. The Word represents external revelation, a revelation that speaks, acts, and moves in a perceptible way to the generalized public, whether this is in the discourses of Jesus to masses of people, the words on the pages of Scripture, or the order and power on display in creation. The Spirit (or rather, the work of the Spirit) represents internal revelation, a revelation that encounters and changes the human heart in a personal and specific way, redemptively breaking down the barriers of sin and unveiling the reality of God, so that people are able to perceive God and his revelation correctly and assent to its truth.

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<sup>84</sup>Lewis, *A Philosophy of the Christian Revelation*, 43.

<sup>85</sup>John Lewis summarizes, “From God’s promise through Abraham to bless all mankind, to Israel’s commission at Sinai to be a ‘kingdom of priests,’ to the inspired insight of the great prophets that Israel was to a ‘light to the nations,’ her [Israel’s] history is His-story of redemptive revelation” (Lewis, *Revelation, Inspiration, Scripture*, 35).

CHAPTER 3  
A BIBLICAL THEOLOGY OF REVELATION  
IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

Continuing the purpose and trajectory of the last chapter, the task of this chapter is to provide ressourcement for a distinctively evangelical theology of revelation as external and internal. The chapter shall argue that, according to the New Testament, the idea of revelation contains both external and internal dimensions. It shall demonstrate the thesis, first, by explaining the important words and concepts surrounding the New Testament's understanding of revelation; second, by expositing a biblical theology of revelation in the new covenant chronologically through the New Testament; and third, by summarizing the concept of revelation in terms of its external and internal forms.

**Introducing the Greek Words for Revelation**

Before setting forth a biblical theology of revelation, it is helpful to begin with the biblical words themselves. Taken together, these Greek words for revelation literally mean “to unveil,” “to uncover,” “to make known,” “to appear,” or “to manifest.” In other words, the concept refers to the state or act of uncovering something that was previously hidden, making known an otherwise unknown reality, or manifesting that which is unseen.

The first significant word that may signify revelation is ἀνοίγω (78x). The verb literally means “to open,” and thus it takes on the connotations of speaking and revealing.<sup>1</sup> In the New Testament, likewise, the word basically means to open (Acts

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<sup>1</sup>See William D. Mounce, ed., *Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), 588; Leon Morris, “Revelation,” in *New Bible Dictionary*, ed. D. Douglass, rev. N. Hillyer and D. R. W. Wood, 3rd ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1999), 1014-16.

12:14) or give access to something (Matt 25:11). More significantly to this chapter, the verb is often used to connote figurative meanings of open, including revelation. For example, the word may mean to open eyes (i.e., to cause to see; Matt 9:30), to open the eyes of the mind (i.e., to cause to understand; Acts 26:18), to open a mouth (i.e., to begin to speak; Matt 5:2), to open a door to the gospel (i.e., cause to understand; Col 4:3), to open ears (i.e., to cause to hear; Mark 7:35), or to open the mouth toward someone (i.e., to speak freely; 2 Cor 6:11).<sup>2</sup> Taken together, therefore, the word refers to opening something that was previously shut, especially implicating a sensory organ that opens to speak, hear, see, or understand something. The relevance to the idea of revelation is obvious. Its implications will be elaborated at a further time.

Second, the verb ἀποκαλύπτω, while seldom used (26x), literally means to reveal. A compound word formed from ἀπο (“from”) and καλύπτω (“hide, conceal”), the word means to unveil or uncover something that exists but has been previously hidden.<sup>3</sup> In the New Testament, the word is used in three basic ways, each theological in nature: (1) a general term signifying the disclosure of something that was previously unknown (Luke 2:35; Matt 10:26; Luke 12:2); (2) a word denoting an activity of divine disclosure (Matt 11:25, 27; 16:16-17; Rom 1:17-18); or (3) a term referring to the anticipation of a future event like the final revelation and judgment of Christ (Luke 17:30; Rom 8:18; 1 Pet 5:1). In the end, the word is used to implicate that some reality, which has been previously veiled, is now disclosed through a divine operation.

Third, the related noun, ἀποκάλυψις (18x), refers to something that has been, is, or will be revealed. The word is thus naturally translated as “revelation.” Derived from

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<sup>2</sup>William B. Nelson, Jr., “Revelation,” in *The Oxford Companion to the Bible*, ed. Bruce M. Metzger and Michael D. Coogan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 440; Verlyn D. Verbrugge, ed., *The NIV Theological Dictionary of New Testament Words: An Abridgment of New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 134-36.

<sup>3</sup>C. Westermann and R. Albertz, “גלה *glh* to uncover,” in *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament*, ed. Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann, trans. Mark E. Biddle (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1997), 1:320; cf. Morris, “Revelation,” 1014, 1016.

the previous verb, ἀποκαλύπτω, this noun usually takes God as its subject.<sup>4</sup> The word may denote (1) what God makes known or reveals, such as his plan of redemption (Eph 3:3), (2) an end-time event of revelation (Rom 2:5; 1 Pet 1:7), or (3) particular forms of disclosure, such as a vision (Rev 1:1) or personal guidance (Gal 2:2). Therefore, the word generally signifies a divine revelation.

Lastly, it is important to note the other, lesser-used words for revelation. On the one hand, there is a verb, δηλόω, that may refer to the revelation of divine declarations. In the LXX, the word often translates divine pronouncements. It includes the imparting of knowledge of God's name (Exod 6:3), purpose (Exod 33:12), ways (1 Kgs 8:36), mysteries (Dan 2:28-30), or covenant (Ps 25:14). In the New Testament, likewise, the word basically means, "to make known" or "to declare," either by explanation or interpretation (1 Cor 1:11; 3:13; Col 1:8), or, more rarely, by some revelatory means (Heb 9:8; 12:27; 2 Pet 1:14).<sup>5</sup> On the other hand, some words may refer to revelation as divine manifestation. For example, the verb, φανερόω (49x), means "to bring to light" or "to manifest." While the verb is not a technical term for revelation, it sometimes refers to revelation. It can mean God's action of showing or revealing something (Rom 1:19; 2 Cor 2:14; 7:12), Jesus making known his name (John 17:6), or "to disclose" or "reveal" his righteousness or mystery.<sup>6</sup> In these cases, therefore, the word is basically synonymous with ἀποκαλύπτω.<sup>7</sup> Indeed, its corresponding noun, ἐπιφάνεια, is used only to designate the visible manifestation of a deity in the LXX. In the New

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<sup>4</sup>The word may also carry a general reference (1 Cor 14:6, 26; Gal 2:2; Eph 1:17; 3:3). See Mounce, *Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, 588-89; Morris, "Revelation," 1016.

<sup>5</sup>Brown, "Revelation," 3:316; C. C. Caragounis, "Reveal, Revelation," in *Dictionary of the Later New Testament and Its Developments*, ed. Ralph P. Martin and Peter H. Davids (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1997), 1021.

<sup>6</sup>For disclosing righteousness, see Mark 4:22; Rom 3:21; 1 Cor 4:5; Col 4:4; for mystery, see Rom 16:26; Col 1:26.

<sup>7</sup>The parallel between the two words is especially evident within Paul (Brown, "Revelation," 3:321).

Testament, it is applied only to Christ.<sup>8</sup> Revelation thus may be understood as a divine unveiling of a declaration or a divine manifestation.

In the end, these words suggest a basic understanding of revelation: “to unveil,” “to uncover,” “to make known,” “to appear,” or “to manifest.”<sup>9</sup> In other words, the concept of revelation refers to the state or act of uncovering something that was previously hidden, making known an otherwise unknown reality, or manifesting that which is unseen. The Greek words are thus similar, if not identical, to the Old Testament words for revelation. Of course, in the New Testament, revelation is also and ultimately tied to the specific manifestation of the person of Jesus Christ (cf. ἐπιφάνεια). While a word study alone does not suffice to understand revelation, this section has begun to contribute to the New Testament understanding of revelation. Namely, this section has argued that revelation refers to the active or passive opening, unveiling, or disclosing of some reality. As the rest of this chapter continues, it will show that this disclosed reality may refer to information or understanding—the former of which corresponds to the external dimension and the latter of which corresponds to the internal dimension of revelation.

### **The Gospels**

This chapter shall now chart a biblical theology of revelation in the New Testament. Following the previous chapter, therefore, the present chapter shall continue to trace a biblical theology as it follows the progressive and unfolding nature of revelation. The argument is simple: revelation consists both of external and internal dimensions. This thesis shall be demonstrated by charting a biblical theology of revelation in the new covenant, from the Gospels through the rest of the New Testament.

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<sup>8</sup>See Luke 1:79; Titus 2:11; 3:4; 2 Thess 2:8; cf. Nelson, “Revelation,” 649-51.

<sup>9</sup>For the most helpful and succinct discussion of these issues, see Morris, “Revelation,” 1014.

The Gospels are the natural place to begin. They announce the arrival of the new covenant that is in Christ. As they do so, they point to Christ as the bearer, reality, and means of revelation. In other words, the Gospels proclaim that Jesus is the divine revealer; moreover, he implicates both an external and internal understanding of revelation. We shall demonstrate this thesis, first, by articulating Jesus' embodiment and accomplishment of revelation in his person and ministry; second, by using his person, words, and actions as a window to understand revelation; third, by explaining the incompleteness of his person, words, and actions alone for human salvation; and finally, by describing the internal ministry of revelation through the Spirit of Jesus.<sup>10</sup>

### **Jesus Embodies and Accomplishes Revelation**

The Gospels declare that the revelation of God is fundamentally understood in and through Jesus. "The work of Jesus has to be explained in the light of revelation."<sup>11</sup> Indeed, as Jesus fulfills the covenants, he becomes the quintessential figure and meaning of revelation. This section shall now describe Jesus' relationship to revelation. It shall argue that Jesus fulfills the biblical concept of revelation as he (1) embodies and (2) accomplishes it. (Embodiment here refers to the person or being of Jesus, whereas accomplishment denotes the work or action of Jesus.) After elaborating these two aspects, the rest of the chapter shall explore how Jesus' fulfillment (both embodiment and accomplishment) of revelation illuminates the external and internal nature of revelation.

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<sup>10</sup>The organization of the following (larger) section adheres to the basic chronological structure across the Gospels. It begins where the Gospels begin—with the implications of Jesus's epochal and covenantal inauguration—and ends where the Gospels (and Acts) end—with the coming of the Spirit. While the section's organization could just as easily be structured theologically or topically—i.e., in terms of external and internal revelation—the current form best expresses the intent of the biblical witness, that is, without *a priori* categories imposed upon the text. Therefore, on account of the section's chronological organization, the internal dimension of revelation will only become clear at a later point in the biblical theology.

<sup>11</sup>Scott, *The New Testament Idea of Revelation*, 101.

First, Jesus personally embodies revelation.<sup>12</sup> The synoptic Gospels, for instance, underscore that “the time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is at hand” with Jesus’ physical appearance (Mark 1:15); moreover, they affirm that “the kingdom of God has come upon you” in Jesus’ healing (Luke 11:20). Jesus brings revelation of the gospel to Israel and the Gentiles (Luke 2:32; cf. John 1:31). As a result, it is not surprising that Jesus is called a prophet (Mark 6:4; John 1:21). But he is much more than a prophet. As Matthew clarifies, he is the personal presence of God that has become incarnate in human history. In accordance with Old Testament Scripture, he is disclosed as “Emmanuel, God with us” (Matt 1:23; cf. Isa 7:14; 8:8, 10; Mark 1:3).<sup>13</sup> In other words, the revealing presence of God is here and now fulfilled in the person of Jesus, so much so that he is revelation itself.<sup>14</sup> This reality is what Simon Peter meant when he finally acknowledged to Jesus, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Matt 16:16). Such a declaration, as Jesus replies, is not revealed by “flesh and blood” but rather by “my Father who is in heaven” (v. 17). Jesus is the special embodiment of revelation.

More plainly than the synoptic Gospels, the Gospel of John also shows that Jesus is the embodiment of revelation.<sup>15</sup> This idea is nowhere more succinctly expressed than in the statement, “The word became flesh” (John 1:14; cf. Mark 1:3).<sup>16</sup> As Cyril of

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<sup>12</sup>Or, alternatively, Rudolf Bultmann prefers to call Jesus “the bearer of revelation” (Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, trans. Kendrick Grobel [New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1951], 1:43).

<sup>13</sup>See Richard Beaton, “Isaiah in Matthew’s Gospel,” in *Isaiah in the New Testament*, ed. Steve Moyise and Maarten J. J. Menken (London: T & T Clark, 2005), 64-66. As he says, Matthew’s quotation represents “a christological exegesis of the OT” (ibid.).

<sup>14</sup>As Heinrich Fries summarizes well in this context, “The person of Jesus stands in the place of God” (Fries, *Revelation*, 76).

<sup>15</sup>John tends to liken Jesus as a revealer more than the other gospel writers. As I. Howard Marshall writes, “Matthew emphasizes Jesus as a teacher, but John emphasizes him more as a revealer” (*New Testament Theology: Many Witnesses, One Gospel* [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004], 34).

<sup>16</sup>Hans Conzelmann oversimplifies this discussion by asserting that the *Logos* idea simply means that revelation is “based exclusively on his [Jesus’s] existence, and therefore cannot be taught and learnt as knowledge” (Hans Conzelmann, *An Outline of the Theology of the New Testament*, trans. John Bowden [New York: Harper and Row, 1969], 336). Geerhardus Vos more adequately expresses the rounded intent: The *Logos*, the Word, here refers to both reason and word, “owing to the fine Hellenic perception, that the two processes of thinking and speaking are intimately related,” that is, “thinking being a sort of inward speech” and “speaking a sort of outward thought” (Vos, *Biblical Theology*, 345). In other

Alexandria comments, “God is both in and with the flesh by nature, on the grounds that he has it as his own.”<sup>17</sup> As Jesus took on flesh, he perfectly represents the presence and—indeed, is—the essence of God. The Old Testament affirmation that God spoke to Moses “face to face, as a man speaks to his friend” (Exod 33:11) is now surpassingly fulfilled in the coming of God’s own Son, the final prophet (John 1:17-18, 21).<sup>18</sup> In him, one can “hear,” “see,” and “touch” the Word of God (cf. 1 John 1:1). Indeed, without Jesus “no one has ever seen God,” yet Jesus “has made him known” (John 1:18, cf. v. 4).<sup>19</sup> In Jesus’ own words to Phillip, “Whoever has seen me has seen the Father” (John 14:9). In other words, Jesus reveals God perfectly and fully. He is the embodiment of revelation.

Second, as Jesus embodies divine revelation, he also accomplishes it.

Regarding the synoptic Gospels, take the aforementioned example of Peter’s messianic support of Jesus in the book of Matthew: “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God”

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words, the *Logos* is the outward revelation of the inward mind of God (see Geerhardus Vos, “The Range of the Logos Title in the Prologue to the Fourth Gospel,” in *Redemptive History and Biblical Interpretation: The Shorter Writings of Geerhardus Vos*, ed. Richard B. Gaffin, Jr. [Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 1979], 59-90; Lewis, *A Philosophy of the Christian Revelation*, 48-61; Marshall, *New Testament Theology*, 493-97; Goppelt, *Theology of the New Testament*, 2:296-300; Jo-Ann A. Brant, *John*, PCNT, vol. 4 [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011], 23-42); Gerald L. Borchert, *John*, NAC, vols. 25A and 25B [Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1996], 1:99-106); George R. Beasley-Murray, *John*, WBC, vol. 36 [Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1999], 3-10); J. Ramsey Michaels, *The Gospel of John*, NICNT [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010], 45-57); Andreas J. Köstenberger, *John*, BECNT, vol. 4 [Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004], 19-52); and D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, PNTC [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991], 111-37).

<sup>17</sup>Cyril of Alexandria, *Commentary on John*, trans. David R. Maxwell, ed. Joel C. Elowsky, ACT (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2013), 1:63. Or, as John elaborates later, Jesus is God who “comes from above” and “bears witness to what he has seen and heard” (John 1:1; 3:31-32). While after the prologue, Jesus is no longer explicitly called “the Word,” he continues to reveal and communicate the life, light, and glory of God, while also making the Father known, most especially through his words (see Robert H. Gundry, *Jesus the Word According to John the Sectarian* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002]).

<sup>18</sup>The parallel between Moses and Jesus is transparent. John says, “For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father’s side, he has made him known” (John 1:17-18).

<sup>19</sup>Commenting on these verses, Cyril writes, “The Father’s own substance passes over essentially to the Son and reveals the Father in him” (Cyril of Alexandria, *Commentary on John*, 1:71). As Jesus later promises, “he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him” (John 14:21). Or alternatively, “I made known to them your name, and I will continue to make it known, that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them” (John 17:26). Reflecting upon this idea, Rudolf Bultmann’s student Heinrich Schlier rightly suggests that in the Incarnate Word, “the nature of the Word of God, which was already at work in the word of prophecy and of the promise of God to Israel, has been manifested to us completely and ultimately in history. In this Word God has uttered his word—which means himself—in the world” (quoted in Fries, *Revelation*, 80).

(Matt 16:16). Jesus thereafter claims that Peter’s affirmation was given by God the Father (Matt 16:17). Matthew, moreover, strikingly attributes this revealing activity to Jesus himself. He quotes Jesus earlier: “All things have been handed over to me by my Father; and no one knows the Son, except the Father; nor does anyone know the Father, except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal him” (Matt 11:25-27; cf. Luke 10:22).<sup>20</sup> While this passage is packed with meaning,<sup>21</sup> two conclusions are important for this chapter: (1) God the Father and God the Son reciprocally reveal one another (Matt 16:17; cf. 11:25-27), and (2) because Jesus possesses a unique relationship to the Father, he also possesses—indeed, is—a unique revelation of the Father.<sup>22</sup> Luke confirms the Son’s revelatory activity as he writes that, after the resurrection, Jesus “opened their [the disciples’] minds to understand the Scriptures” (Luke 24:45). In other words, Jesus is not only the content of revelation but also the cause of it. Alternatively, Jesus is not merely a prophet who speaks on behalf of God, but he is the Word of God.<sup>23</sup> He is, as Avery Dulles hails in this context, “the revealer par excellence.”<sup>24</sup> He is the divine actor or accomplisher of revelation.

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<sup>20</sup>The relationship of this saying to the person of the historical Jesus is disputed. For an excellent defense of its authenticity, see Ben Witherington III, *The Christology of Jesus* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), 221-28.

<sup>21</sup>Within the broader passage (vv. 25-28), five avenues of equality between the Father and Jesus are clear: (1) The mutual knowledge that the Father and the Son have of each other, (2) the mutual necessity of the Father and the Son to reveal each other, (3) the mutual affirmation of lordship, (4) the mutual sovereignty each exercises, (5) the mutual ability to save or give rest to weary souls. Jesus claims to possess a knowledge, revelation, lordship, sovereignty, and ability that is the same to that of the Father. He therefore assumes that his being is also divine; indeed, he is the Word of God and the Son of God (cf. John 1:1-3, 18). While Avery Dulles is somewhat correct to suggest that within the synoptic Gospels, “Revelation is chiefly understood as something which Jesus communicates through his preaching and teaching,” Dulles words can easily be misapplied (Avery Dulles, *Revelation Theology: A History* [New York: Herder and Herder, 1969], 22). As this Matthewian passage clarifies, the synoptic Gospels (or, at least Matthew) fundamentally speak about revelation in the person of Christ himself (and not his mere preaching or teaching).

<sup>22</sup>“Hence, Jesus was the exclusive Revealer of God” (Leonhard Goppelt, *Theology of the New Testament*, trans. John E. Alsup, ed. Jürgen Roloff [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981], 2:222). Or as he says earlier, “For this reason, he [Jesus] was able ‘to reveal’ God to others, i.e., to mediate the self-disclosure of God and fellowship with him” (ibid., 1:204). To state it simply, just as the Father reveals, so also the Son reveals.

<sup>23</sup>See Matt 23:8-10; Mark 1:27; cf. Matt 4:1-10, 12-17; Luke 16:16.

<sup>24</sup>Dulles, *Revelation Theology*, 22.

The Gospel of John also affirms that Jesus accomplishes revelation. He and the Father “are one” (John 10:30; cf. 16:15); namely, he does what he sees the Father doing (5:19), he performs the same works as the Father (5:21-22), and he says what the Father has said (8:26, 28). In other words, Jesus’ words and action are divine in origin. Moreover, his very identity is divine in origin. No one else could declare, “He who has seen me has seen the Father” (14:9). In the words of Köstenberger, Jesus provides “firsthand revelation of God.”<sup>25</sup> As the divine revealer, he is the supreme revelation of God’s character, power, and purpose. This is why John often and incessantly uses the adjective “only” in relation to Jesus.<sup>26</sup> It is also why Jesus can say that he is the “I am.” He is the good shepherd, the door, the light, the bread come down from heaven, the resurrection, the true vine, and the way, the truth, and the life.<sup>27</sup> The high point of this self-disclosure is the absolute, ἐγώ εἰμι (i.e., “I am!” in 8:58, cf. 24).<sup>28</sup> Therefore, as Jesus himself affirms, he is God without qualification. To know Jesus, therefore, is to know God. He is the divine revealer who fully and finally accomplishes revelation.

One can summarize this discussion simply: Jesus is revelation in the sense that

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<sup>25</sup>Köstenberger, *John*, 431; cf. Carson, *John*, 494. Or, as John Calvin comments, God was “present in Christ” (John Calvin, *The Gospel According to John*, trans. William Pringle, The Calvin Translation Society [repr., Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996], 2:87).

<sup>26</sup>John 1:14, 18; 3:16, 18, etc.; cf. Marshall, *New Testament Theology*, 515.

<sup>27</sup>See 4:26; 6:20, 35, 41, 48, 51; 8:12, 18, 24, 28, 58; 10:7, 9, 11, 14; 11:25; 13:19; 14:16; 15:1, 5; 18:5, 6, 8; cf. Goppelt, *Theology of the New Testament*, 2:293-96.

<sup>28</sup>“Before Abraham was born, I am” (John 8:58). John uses an aorist verb (γενέσθαι, “came into being”) in order to express the idea of Jesus’s preexistence. Thus, in tandem with John 1:1-3, we have a clear statement of Jesus’s preexistence—but this time coming from Jesus’s very mouth. Jesus seems to be saying much more, however. As Leon Morris suggests, “‘I am’ must here have the fullest significance it can bear” (Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, NICNT [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995], 419). The reason for its significance is clear. Jesus, says, “Before Abraham was born, I am”—not “I was.” In other words, by using the present tense, ἐγώ εἰμι, he claims in the most emphatic way that (1) he has “life in himself” (5:26; cf. 10:17-18) and (2) he has life in himself for all time—he has no beginning and no end (cf. Calvin, *Gospel According to John*, 1:362-363; Jerome H. Neyrey, *The Gospel of John*, NCBC [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007], 167). In this manner, Calvin aptly summarizes, “This saying of Christ contains a remarkable testimony of his Divine essence” (Calvin, *Gospel According to John*, 2:363; cf. Köstenberger, *John*, 273; Carson, *John*, 358). Indeed, this unpredicated statement recalls the self-portrayal of God at the burning bush (Exod 3:14) as well as echoes the strong linguistic connections in Isa 40-55 (cf. Isa 41:4; 43:13; Ps 90:2).

he embodies and accomplishes it. Everything he is (embodies) and does (accomplishes) is revelatory. He is both a stand-in for the revelatory presence of God and the actor who reveals God to people. He is, in other words, the perfect self-revelation of God. While Adam, Noah, and Abraham received direct verbal communication, while Israel was given the law and David the kingship, Jesus received all of these and epitomized what they meant. Gerald O'Collins rightly summarizes, "The many mediators of Old Testament revelation find their goal in the great revealer, the one figure on whom the interest of the New Testament is uniquely concentrated, the historical figure of Jesus of Nazareth."<sup>29</sup> Therefore, in the same way that Jesus fulfills the former covenants, he also fulfills the Old Testament idea and reality of revelation through his embodiment and accomplishment of it.

### **Jesus Points toward the External and Internal Nature of Revelation**

To understand Jesus as revelation also sharpens our own understanding of the concept of revelation, for Jesus' fulfillment (embodiment and accomplishment) of revelation begins to point to the external and internal nature of revelation. As Jesus fulfills the Old Testament substructure, including its covenants, he also fulfills the idea of revelation. As the former chapter has argued, revelation in the Old Testament can be summarized in terms of external and internal categories. While the external category of revelation is certainly most vibrant, the internal category becomes more apparent in the promises of the new covenant. Jesus fulfills both of these dimensions. The following section will clearly demonstrate this thesis. First, it will discuss external revelation according to its three basic categories of persons, words, and events; then, it will

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<sup>29</sup>O'Collins, *Theology and Revelation*, 26. Or, as Blomberg comments, "Jesus's person and ministry so fulfill the purposes of all the Old Testament that he alone now has the authority to dictate how his followers must obey those Scriptures in the new age he has inaugurated" (Craig L. Blomberg, *Matthew*, NAC, vol. 22 [Nashville: Broadman, 1992], 30).

elaborate why external revelation alone is incomplete; finally, it will discuss internal revelation through the work of the Spirit.

**External revelation.** Geerhardus Vos noted that the revelation of Jesus in the Gospels ought to be distinguished broadly in terms of “character-revelation” and “speech-revelation”: in the former, Jesus discloses God by who Jesus is, and in the latter, Jesus discloses God by Jesus’s words and actions.<sup>30</sup> This section shall now describe the external form of revelation in the New Testament following Vos’s basic distinction—“character-revelation” and “speech-revelation”—while expanding the latter category into its two implicit categories, word and event. Therefore, following the basic Old Testament substructure (see chap. 2), this chapter shall categorize external revelation in terms of these three media: person, word, and event.<sup>31</sup> The section will conclude with a discussion of Jesus’ fulfillment of each of these media.

First, revelation occurs through persons, namely, the person of Jesus. Because this media of revelation has already been explicitly described in the discussion about Jesus’ embodiment of revelation, it is only necessary to describe this media briefly. While God previously revealed himself through the theophanic angel of the Lord and promised himself to be revealed through the coming Davidic king (Isa 7:14-17; 9:6-7; 11:2; 55:3), with the dawning of the new covenant, God revealed himself in the person of Jesus. Jesus Christ is thus the concrete personification of revelation to be seen, touched, and heard. He is the Word of God (John 1:1-3). Therefore, as he himself declares, “He

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<sup>30</sup>Vos, *Biblical Theology*, 346.

<sup>31</sup>John Frame argues for this threefold distinction as well (Frame, *The Doctrine of the Word of God: A Theology of Lordship* [Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2010], 71-74). Regarding Vos, person-revelation is the equivalent of character-revelation, and word-revelation and event-revelation are expanded out of his speech-revelation. One could also refer to the various modes of revelation in terms of their specific character. See, for instance, Dunn’s excellent essay in James D. G. Dunn, “Biblical Concepts of Revelation,” in *Divine Revelation*, ed. Paul Avis (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 1-22. While not entirely comprehensive, he summarizes the mediums of revelation in terms of nature/creation, providence/history, moral consciousness, wisdom, inspiration/prophesy, dream/vision/apocalypse, and Jesus Christ.

who has seen me has seen the Father” (14:9). He is the standing presence of God—Immanuel—on this earth. In other words, according to the Gospels, revelation occurs through persons.

Second, revelation occurs through words. Within the Gospels, two examples suffice. First, Scripture is word-revelation. As Jesus himself declares, “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them” (Matt 5:17-18; cf. Luke 16:17). Without engaging in any extraneous debate, it is clear that Jesus is affirming the revelatory value of the words of Old Testament Scripture. As he continues, because he himself fulfills Scripture, “not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law [i.e., “Law and Prophets”] until all is accomplished” (v. 18).<sup>32</sup> As he claims elsewhere, “Scripture cannot be broken” (John 10:35). The foundational importance of Scripture and its word-revelation remains.<sup>33</sup> Second, the speech of Jesus is word-revelation. As he stoutly claims, “You have heard that it was said to those of old . . . *but I say to you. . . .*” (Matt 5:21-22; emphasis mine). In other words, Jesus is not merely a prophet who speaks on behalf of God; rather, he is the Word of God.<sup>34</sup> His speech reveals personal dilemmas (e.g., John 4), discloses personal needs (e.g., Mark 10:17-27),

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<sup>32</sup>Blomberg, *Matthew*, 104. The ἰώτα (“iota”) refers to the smallest Hebrew letter and is often optional in spelling, and the κεράτῃ (“dot”), equally optional, probably refers to the ornamental marks customarily added to certain letters (see *ibid.*, 104n26; Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, WBC, vol. 33A [Dallas: Word, 1993], 106; R. T. France, *The Gospel According to Matthew: An Introduction and Commentary*, TNTC, vol. 1 [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985], 115). Jesus’s point is hard to miss. He does not come to undo Scripture. Therefore, the Old Testament, each iota and dot, will not disappear (παρέρχομαι) from the Scripture. It remains revelatory.

<sup>33</sup>Indeed, in any discussion when Jesus said, “it is written,” that simply ended the matter for him. For example, see Matt 4:4, 7, 10; Mark 12:24, 26-27; 14:21, 27, 49; Luke 20:15ff.; 24:25; John 6:44-45). For an excellent discussion, see Morris, *I Believe in Revelation*, 49-52.

<sup>34</sup>See John 1:1-3. As the people in the Capernaum synagogue deliberated and concluded with amazement, “What is this? A new teaching with authority!” (Mark 1:27). Jesus’s authority (beyond a prophet) was also clear when he taught, “But you are not to be called rabbi, for you have one teacher, and you are all brothers. And call no man your father on earth, for you have one Father, who is in heaven. Neither be called instructors, *for you have one instructor, the Christ*” (Matt 23:8-10). These words sharply distinguish him from other teachers. In fact, Jesus fulfills the promises that came through the prophets (Matt 4:1-10, 12-17, etc.). As Vos notes, Jesus also becomes “his own prophet” as he fulfills his own words (Geerhardus Vos, “The Idea of ‘Fulfillment’ of Prophecy in the Gospels,” in *Redemptive History and Biblical Interpretation: The Shorter Writings of Geerhardus Vos*, ed. Richard B. Gaffin, Jr. [Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 1980], 352-553).

and exposes personal misunderstanding (e.g., Mark 8:14-21). Revelation occurs through words.

Third, revelation occurs through events. Two examples again suffice. First, the providential events of the natural world reveal God. Indeed, as the Word of God, Jesus spoke creation into existence; therefore, the “words” of creation, so to speak, reveal him. In one instance, he suggests that if a person “studies closely” (καταμανθάνω) the wild lilies and grass of the field, they can learn that they need to worry (Matt 6:28, 30). Indeed, if God clothes them, “which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you?” (Matt 6:30). Jesus’ point is easy to understand: “To worry about food and drink is to have learned nothing from the natural creation. If the created order testifies to God’s ‘eternal power and divine nature’ (Rom 1:20), it testifies equally to his providence.”<sup>35</sup> In summary, the lilies and grass reveal the way that God works—in this case, his provision.<sup>36</sup>

As a second example of revelation through events, Jesus’ miracles disclose God. For instance, when the disciples of John the Baptist asked Jesus if he is the promised messiah, Jesus answered, “Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind

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<sup>35</sup>Carson, *Matthew*, 215. Or, writes Craig Evans, “Grass is nothing, yet even it reflects God’s provision” (Evans, *Matthew*, 160; cf. Hagner, *Matthew*, 164-165). More precisely, the believer who has eyes to see discovers something about God and his activity through the workings of nature (D. A. Carson, *Sermon on the Mount: An Evangelical Exposition of Matthew 5-7* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1982], 87-90). In this sense, Matthew is moving from lesser things to greater things in his argument from the revelation in the natural world to the human person (France, *Matthew*, 140). As Betz, Davies, and Allison observe, Jesus’s specific form of teaching here is unique. Normally, one would compare a grass/flower to human life in order to show the fragility and temporality of life (cf. Isa 40:6-7; cf. Job 8:12; 14:2). Jesus, however, turns this comparison around to indicate God’s provision over all things; hence humans need not be anxious (cf. Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 478-79; W. D. Davies and D. C. Allison, *Matthew*, ICC [New York: T & T Clark, 1988], 1:653).

<sup>36</sup>Several other examples of God’s revelation in nature are clear from the Gospels and Acts. For instance, Jesus taught that God causes the natural world to work as it does so that his goodness is revealed to all. As he suggests, God “makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust” (Matt 5:45). These and other things point to the fact that God “did not leave himself without witness, for he did good by giving you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness” (Acts 14:17; cf. 17:22-31). God is revealed, at least in some elementary fashion, in God’s constant care of creation and even history. As David Dockery summarizes in this context, “The universe as a whole serves the Creator’s purposes as a vehicle of God’s self-manifestation” (David S. Dockery, “Revelation of God,” in *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, ed. Chad Brand, Charles Draper, and Archie England [Nashville: Holman Reference, 2003], 1384).

receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them” (Matt 11:4-5). Matthew has already illustrated Jesus’ fulfillment of each of these miracles in chapters 8 and 9; now he reminds his audience of their messianic import.<sup>37</sup> Implicitly quoting Isaiah 35:5-6, Jesus affirms that the actions of his miracles reveal that he is in fact the messiah (and, thus, that the messiah has come).<sup>38</sup> The most decisive miracle, of course, is Jesus’ resurrection, which led the once doubting Thomas to exclaim Jesus as his “Lord and God” (John 20:28). Revelation occurs through events as well.

In the end, this discussion underscores that external revelation is best understood as God revealing himself through persons, words, and events. Indeed, Jesus fulfills each of these external forms of revelation. First, he fulfills revelation through persons as he is the concrete personification of revelation to be seen, touched, and heard. Second, he fulfills revelation through verbal/written speech because God has revealed himself once and for all in his own Son, the final prophet, the Word of God, who speaks the very words of God.<sup>39</sup> Third, he fulfills revelation through events as he created and provides for the world, and as he performs miracles, including his own physical resurrection. In the end, Jesus perfectly fulfills the Old Testament’s understanding of external revelation.

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<sup>37</sup>For healing of the blind, see Matt 9:27-31; cf. Isa 29:18; 35:5; 42:18. For healing of the lame, see Matt 9:1-8; cf. Isa 35:6. For healing of the leper, see Matt 8:1-4. For healing of the deaf, see Matt 9:32-34; cf. Isa 29:18; 35:5; 42:18. For raising of the dead, see Matt 9:18-19, 23-26; cf. Isa 26:19. For preaching the good news to the poor, see Matt 5:3; 9:35-36; cf. Isa 61:1.

<sup>38</sup>Jesus shows that God’s future coming (cf. Isa 35:4) is fulfilled in the Messiah’s coming—his coming. As Grant Osborne succinctly concludes, “Jesus interprets his miracles as fulfilling the Isaianic vision of the expected age of salvation; it has now arrived in Jesus” (Osborne, *Matthew*, 415). Christopher Tuckett thus rightly concludes that “the general claim is being made by Jesus . . . that the hoped-for events of the Isaianic expectations are being fulfilled in Jesus’s present ministry” (idem, “Isaiah in Q,” in *Isaiah in the New Testament*, ed. Steve Moyise and Maarten J. J. Menken [London: T & T Clark, 2005], 54). Bart J. Koet suggests that Jesus may also be quoting from Isa 29:18 and even 61:1-2 (Bart J. Koet, “Isaiah in Luke-Acts,” in *Isaiah in the New Testament*, ed. Steve Moyise and Maarten J. J. Menken [London: T & T Clark, 2005], 85). Hence, Jesus is affirming that he is the Immanuel, the God-with-us, who bears divine authority. In fact, Matthew is already implicitly affirming the authority of Jesus here as he calls him the “Christ” (Matt 11:2).

<sup>39</sup>See Gen 35:7; Deut 4:13; 5:5; 2 Sam 7:27; Amos 3:7; Ps 98:2; cf. John 1:1-3, 17-18, 21.

**The incompleteness of external revelation.** It should not be a surprise that the various external media of revelation—person, word, and event—fail to fulfill *all* the promises of the new covenant. Earlier, God promised to reveal himself internally by giving believers a new spiritual heart and spirit (Ezek 36:25-27) and putting the law within them so they would know God directly (Jer 31:33). These promises are not yet fulfilled in the Gospel narrative. The following section shall show that, in fact, the external forms of revelation are incomplete in and of themselves. This section shall prove the incompleteness of the external forms of revelation in regards to the person, word, and event media.

First, Jesus's person incompletely revealed him. This point is perhaps the most obvious. Jesus was present in the flesh both to his disciples and to the surrounding world. Even so, many dissenters simply asserted that he was the son of Mary (Mark 6:5) or the son of Joseph and not the Son of God (John 6:42). Jesus was likewise rejected by his own people in Nazareth (Luke 4:22, 28-29). While his disciples did not reject him on account of his person, at least initially they failed to understand him until after his ministry when he sent his Holy Spirit.

Second, Jesus's words incompletely reveal him. An example is the curious actions of the disciples in the Gospel of Mark. In one sense, they are obviously a privileged group of people. Indeed, Jesus tells his disciples that they have been given "the secret of the kingdom of God" (Mark 4:11). They have indeed been entrusted with the clear words of God. In another sense, however, the disciples incessantly show an inability to understand who Jesus is (the person of Jesus) and what he is saying to them (the words of Jesus). While Jesus implies that they should understand the parables (4:11, 13), they constantly fail to do so (6:52; 8:17; cf. 4:40). In various ways, the disciples also behave ignorantly (i.e., Peter in 9:5-6) and without authority and power (9:18). At Jesus' arrest,

they all fled the scene (14:50).<sup>40</sup> For reasons such as these, Robert Stein rightly concludes that Mark emphasizes a “riddle-like nature [to] much of Jesus’ teaching.”<sup>41</sup> While the disciples are given the secrets, they fail to perceive them. Therefore, the disciples too fall under Jesus’ indignation from Isaiah: “they may indeed see but not perceive, and may indeed hear but not understand, lest they should turn and be forgiven” (Mark 4:12; cf. Isa 6:9-10). Morna D. Hooker summarizes the words of Jesus well: “This quotation reminds us that seeing and hearing the Good News which Jesus is proclaiming and enacting is not enough: it needs to be perceived and understood.”<sup>42</sup> In other words, even given Jesus’ revelation (specifically in the form of his interpretation of the parables), the disciples failed to perceive and understand. The import is significant: it shows that not all people—even his closest disciples—who look upon Jesus’s person and work truly perceive the revelation given them.<sup>43</sup> Jesus’ words are incomplete.

Third, Jesus’s actions (i.e., events) also incompletely reveal him. This is true even of Jesus’s most significant actions: his incarnation, death, resurrection, and ascension. First, his incarnation failed to reveal him effectively or salvifically. While Jesus assumes human flesh, and while the providential time is fulfilled in his preaching, it

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<sup>40</sup>In other words, they constantly failed to believe (See Robert H. Stein, *Mark*, in BECNT, vol. 2 [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008], 208; cf. Matt 16:17; 1 Cor 2:14).

<sup>41</sup>Stein, *Mark*, 237; cf. R. T. France, *The Gospel of Mark: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Paternoster, 2002), 217-18. I. Howard Marshall summarizes Mark’s unique assessment of Jesus’s relationship with the disciples: “Mark seems to have a deeper sense of the numinous quality of the actions of Jesus than the other writers. . . . He does not want his readers to think that everything can be grasped and easily explained” (Marshall, *New Testament Theology*, 91). Vos, noticing this same tendency in Mark, rightly concludes that the ubiquity of Jesus’s messiahship in the gospel of Mark does not mean that it is any less messianic than the other gospels. Rather, the “messianic character was ingrained in the material from the beginning” (Geerhardus Vos, “The Ubiquity of the Messiahship in the Gospels,” in *Redemptive History and Biblical Interpretation: The Shorter Writings of Geerhardus Vos*, ed. Richard B. Gaffin, Jr. [Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 1980], 334-37).

<sup>42</sup>Morna D. Hooker, “Isaiah in Mark’s Gospel,” in *Isaiah in the New Testament*, ed. Steve Moyise and Maarten J. J. Menken (London: T & T Clark, 2005), 39. For an understanding of the Johannine twist of this passage (John 12:40; cf. Isa 6:10), see Catrin H. Williams, “Isaiah in John’s Gospel,” in *Isaiah in the New Testament*, ed. Steve Moyise and Maarten J. J. Menken (London: T & T Clark, 2005), 109-15.

<sup>43</sup>As the larger biblical theology shows, in fact, such misunderstanding was prone until Jesus finally gave his disciples his Spirit, the Spirit who brings wisdom and understanding of the message (John 20:22; cf. 14:15-31).

is not until his death and resurrection are imminent that he refers climactically to “this hour” and “my hour.”<sup>44</sup> His “lifting up” (cf. John 3:14; 12:34) has not yet occurred, and it was only at that time that people would know that Jesus is truly the Son of God/Man.<sup>45</sup> “The ‘signs’ of Jesus’ words and (miraculous) works fail to create general belief, so that it remains for his death and resurrection to mediate the revelation he brings.”<sup>46</sup>

It would be natural to think, then, that when the events of Jesus’ death and resurrection transpired, they would completely and finally reveal Jesus. Of course there is truth in that statement. But Jesus also clearly states, “For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and those who see may become blind” (John 9:39; cf. 12:40). Significantly, Jesus’ coming—even his death and resurrection—were meant for both revelation and judgment. D. A. Carson notes the paradox here: while Jesus came to the world to save it (3:16), “saving some entails condemning others.”<sup>47</sup> Rudolf Bultmann’s conclusion is poignant: “His hiddenness is the very consequence of his self-revelation; his revealing of himself is the very thing that makes ‘those who see’ become ‘blind.’”<sup>48</sup> In other words, his life, death, resurrection, and even ascension simultaneously reveal (to his children) and conceal (to his enemies). The totality of revelation at this point was incomplete.

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<sup>44</sup>See John 12:27; cf. 2:4.

<sup>45</sup>John 8:28: γνώσεσθε ὅτι ἐγώ εἰμι: “you will know that I am he.” As Leon Morris concludes, “Here he is saying that the Jews will not understand who he really is before they have crucified him. There is a revelatory aspect to the cross, and after the crucifixion those who reflect on it will be in a position to appreciate that Jesus is indeed more than man” (Morris, *John*, 401; cf. Carson, *John*, 345; Köstenberger, *John*, 260).

<sup>46</sup>O’Collins, *Theology and Revelation*, 38.

<sup>47</sup>Carson, *John*, 377; cf. Morris, *John*, 441. Carson also quotes Rudolf Bultmann in this instance. The latter’s words naturally continue the former’s thought: “This is the paradox of revelation, that in order to bring grace it must also give offense, and so can turn to judgment. In order to be grace it must uncover sin; he who resists this binds himself to his sin, and so through the revelation sin for the first time becomes definitive” (Bultmann, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*, trans. G. R. Beasley-Murray, ed. R. W. N. Hoare and J. K. Riches [Philadelphia: Westminster John Knox, 1971], 341-42).

<sup>48</sup>Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, 2:48. Strikingly enough, Calvin draws out the same idea (Calvin, *Gospel According to John*, 1:390). Calvin, however, emphasizes the revelation-aspect of this paradox, suggesting that “illumination” is “strictly the cause of his coming,” while blindness is a natural result (*ibid.*, 391).

Geerhardus Vos helpfully concludes this discussion: “Jesus’ revelation-functioning during the New Testament and after His ascension did not, however, complete the entire revealing task performed by Him.”<sup>49</sup> Two points deserve mention. First, the person, words, and events surrounding Jesus were not intended for everyone; thus, they did not complete the entire, God-designed revealing task. In theological language, one might say that this external revelation was (1) incomplete in terms of the biblical timeline and (2) specialized in terms of being received only by people physically close to Jesus (that is, primarily the people of Israel). Second, and more pertinent to the thesis, the external revelation itself was incomplete for the few for which it was intended. The reason for this incompleteness is simple. As this chapter will continue to demonstrate, revelation includes both a disclosure of information and an unveiling of perception or apprehension. Indeed, the Gospels point to the next major event of revelation: the revealing of the Spirit at Pentecost. Before this moment, it is not surprising that even the disciples misunderstood Jesus. External revelation does not encompass the full spectrum of biblical revelation. Revelation includes another dimension, a dimension that is clarified with Pentecost: internal revelation.

**Internal revelation.** Heretofore we have seen—especially through Mark and John—that the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus both reveal and conceal him. This kind of paradox is meant to draw the reader closer to the text, closer to the fuller spectrum of revelation. This section will discuss the idea of internal revelation in the Gospels. It shall argue that there is an internal form of revelation in the Gospels that emphasizes, not the unveiling of information (as in external revelation), but the unveiling of perception. It shall accomplish this argument, first, by briefly discussing the cryptic appearance of this form of revelation in the synoptic Gospels, and second, by elaborating

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<sup>49</sup>Vos, *Biblical Theology*, 344.

internal revelation in terms of regeneration and illumination as set forth in the Gospel of John.

The reality of internal revelation is perhaps first perceived in the synoptic Gospels' cryptic statements regarding Jesus' divinity. For example, Jesus declares, "No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him" (Matt 11:27; Luke 10:22).<sup>50</sup> Jesus affirms that God the Father directly reveals his Son (and vice versa) to people. Indeed, for this reason, Jesus explicitly attributes Peter's affirmation of his messiahship to the Father's revelatory activity and not to Peter's reasoning alone: "For flesh and blood has not revealed this [messianic identity] to you, but my Father who is in heaven" (Matt 16:16-17; cf. Mark 8:29; Luke 9:20). In other words, the Father and Son specially reveal each other to people. This special revelation is not only a disclosure of new information but also an unveiling of true, spiritual understanding. This idea points to the looming internal reality of revelation.

The Gospel of John attaches this internal revelatory agency to the Holy Spirit. Explicating the implicit reality in Matthew 11:27 and 16:16-17, John affirms that the Spirit is the one who makes known the Son. The Spirit, "another counselor" or "helper" (*ἄλλον παράκλητον*), comes so that the disciples might know and explain Jesus. Specifically, the Spirit is sent to (1) "teach" and "bring remembrance" to everything Jesus had said (14:26); (2) "bear witness" about Jesus (15:26); (3) "guide" them into truth (16:13); (4) "convince the world concerning sin, righteousness, and judgment" (16:8); and thus (5) "glorify" Jesus (16:14).<sup>51</sup> The cumulative meaning of these references is best

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<sup>50</sup>Discussed previously under Jesus's "Accomplishment of Revelation."

<sup>51</sup>In these passages, the Spirit is sent to fulfill the role of Christ after he was discharged on this earth and departed to the Father (cf. 7:39; cf. Marshall, *New Testament Theology*, 594). In 14:16, this role was one of a *παράκλητον* (lit., "to call alongside," and thus "to exhort" or "encourage") which refers to one who is a legal advocate, who strengthens and helps the disciples (cf. Morris, *John*, 576-77; Carson, *John*, 500). In 14:26 this role is expanded to include reminding (i.e., "remembrance") the disciples about Jesus's teaching, and thus, as Carson concludes, "to help them grasp [the resurrection's] significance and thus teach them what it meant" (Carson, *John*, 505; cf. Morris, *John*, 583). This teaching and witnessing activity

expressed by Leon Morris: “The Spirit is to be the guide and teacher of the church. This does not mean that he will make new revelations; rather, he will bring back to the disciples’ memory of all the things that Jesus had told them.”<sup>52</sup> The Spirit comes to help unveil or illuminate the true understanding of the gospel as expressed by Jesus.<sup>53</sup> Among other things, the Spirit is the (internal) revealer who makes the Son known to the disciples.

This internal revelatory work of the Spirit extends to believers today through the Spirit’s (1) regeneration and (2) illumination.<sup>54</sup> Both of these actions of the Spirit entail the existence of internal revelation. First, the Spirit regenerates dead human hearts. Jesus cryptically explains regeneration to Nicodemus: “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God” (John 3:5, cf. v. 3). Jesus affirms that a person must be born of the Spirit to be saved.<sup>55</sup> Much more, as

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is further confirmed in 15:26, where Jesus says that the Spirit “bears witness about me.” In this context, then, Beasley-Murray is correct to say that the witness of the Spirit “is to bring to light the truth of the revelation of Jesus in his word and deed, and death and resurrection” (Beasley-Murray, *John*, 277; cf. Morris, *John*, 607). He continues, “The Spirit thus illuminates the hearers’ minds as to the reality of that which is proclaimed by the disciples and brings its truth to bear on their consciences” (ibid.; cf. John 16:8-11). In other words, through the unveiling action of the Spirit, the disciples were graciously allowed to represent Jesus (see Luke 10:16; Matt 28:18-20; Mark 3:14-17; John 20:21; cf. D. A. Carson, *The Gaggling of God: Christianity Confronts Pluralism* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996], 263).

<sup>52</sup>Morris, *John*, 583. Or as I. Howard Marshall writes, just as the Son’s “task is revelation,” so also the Spirit’s task is the revelation of the Son (Marshall, *New Testament Theology*, 519).

<sup>53</sup>The disciples were left with the Holy Spirit to continue to interpret who Jesus is and what he has done for the redemption of the world (see Lewis, *Revelation, Inspiration, Scripture*, 46). This promise was fulfilled at Pentecost (Acts 2; cf. 1:8), the epic day of fulfillment that, along with Christ’s resurrection from the grave, became a determinative impulse for Christianity.

<sup>54</sup>Following the Spirit’s work in the disciples, the Spirit assists all believers today. The Spirit bears witness about Jesus to the disciples (15:26); but, as D. A. Carson rightly suggests, it also applies “derivatively” to all believers today (Carson, *John*, 529). Therefore, “when Jesus is taken from the earth, the Spirit will continually bear witness concerning him” (Morris, *John*, 606-7; cf. Beasley-Murray, *John*, 277). Moreover, the Spirit will “convince the world” (16:8), not only at the time of the disciples but also today. Just as Christ is the agent of God on earth, so also now the Spirit has taken over this role for the church (John 3:17; 4:34; 5:23-24, 36; 6:29, 38-39; 10:36; 11:42; 17:3; cf. Carson, *John*, 534-39; Nelson, “Revelation,” 441). Lastly, the Spirit is also a guide or leader for people today (16:13). The Spirit’s guiding was something longed for by Israel. John asserts that Jesus himself is the truth (John 14:6), and the Spirit of Jesus leads all believers into the truth (cf. Pss 25:4-5; 43:3; 86:11; 143:10; cf. Isa 43:19; 63:14; see also Calvin, *Gospel According to John*, 2:143-44). It should be noted, however, that the first Spirit-Paraclete passage, 14:26, most likely refers to the disciples and the disciples alone (Carson, *John*, 505; cf. Morris, *John*, 583; Calvin, *Gospel According to John*, 2:143-44).

<sup>55</sup>The mention of “water” in the verse has been debated extensively (see Morris, *John*, 191-193; Carson, *John*, 191-196; Borchert, *John*, 1:174). One popular but less likely view is that water refers to

Leon Morris again summarizes, “Jesus is stressing the truth that spiritual regeneration is indispensable” for all people to know and love God.<sup>56</sup> Perceiving Jesus is dependent upon a new, Spirit-given nature. It is not surprising, therefore, that Nicodemus did “not understand” what Jesus was saying without this new nature (v. 10).

Jesus makes a similar point while discussing the powerful calling of the Father in John 6:44, 65: It is the Father, through the Spirit, who “draws” or “grants” people to Jesus.<sup>57</sup> People do not correctly perceive the person of Jesus unless they, being granted Jesus by the Father, are regenerated by the Spirit (“who gives life” [v. 63]). As Calvin

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the later Christian practice of baptism by water (see John F. McHugh, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on John 1-4*, ed. Graham N. Stanton, ICC [London T & T Clark, 2009], 227-29). Using the “early church” testimony (in 1 Pet 1:3, 23; Titus 3:5), McHugh asserts that new birth comes about by water baptism so that “baptism is the gateway into the kingdom” (ibid., 228). While it is true that water and baptism are easily associated together, Nicodemus would probably not have perceived an allusion to an ordinance that does not yet exist. Moreover, the emphasis of the passage is rebirth by spirit—not by water (vv. 6-8). Therefore, there are two more likely options. First, one might follow Leon Morris and suggest that the water alludes to the natural birth, thus implicating in this present context a new, spiritual birth by water and the spirit (i.e., a spiritual water); indeed, because Nicodemus was a Pharisee, such an allusion would be natural for him (Morris, *John*, 193). Second, a simpler interpretation (which shares the same basic results as Morris) is provided by Calvin, who avers that water is an exegetical insertion that explains “spirit” (Calvin, *Gospel According to John*, 1:111). The two words, water and spirit, thus signify the same reality, namely, regeneration, new birth, or cleansing. Indeed, the mention of water simply drops out of the discussion between Jesus and Nicodemus, while the work of the Spirit (v. 8), Son (vv. 14-15), God (vv. 16-17), and faith (vv. 15-16) remain. Finally, Carson argues that, because the two words signify cleansing or renewal, we ought to translate the passage as “born of water and spirit”—not “Spirit”—because the work of the person of the Holy Spirit is not specifically in view (Carson, *John*, 195). Of course, Carson’s assertion does not eliminate the person of the Spirit from being the implicit center of the spiritual work in the text, for it is the Spirit who cleanses and renews.

<sup>56</sup>Morris, *John*, 194; cf. John 3:34-35; Nelson, “Revelation,” 442; Nicholls, *Revelation in Christ*, 60). As Carson directly draws from the text: “Jesus insists no-one can ‘see’ the saving reign of God at all, including the display of miraculous signs, unless born again” (Carson, *John*, 188; cf. Calvin, *Gospel According to John*, 1:110-11).

<sup>57</sup>The immediate verses apply the drawing and granting (i.e., electing) power to the Father. Jesus says, “No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him” (v. 44), or alternatively, “This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father” (v. 65). In other words, after Jesus says that he is the true bread of life that has come down on this earth (v. 33) and the people grumble and question him (vv. 41-42), Jesus responds that no one can come to him without the Father’s own drawing or granting (vv. 44, 65). “And this is quite reasonable,” reflects Cyril of Alexandria; “After all, ‘If every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights’ (James 1:17), how could recognizing Christ not also be a gift from the right hand of God?” (Cyril of Alexandria, *Commentary on John*, 1:248; cf. Vos, *Biblical Theology*, 392). As Jesus continues in John 6, moreover, this gift is not simply from the Father, but also it is Spirit-borne. Indeed, Jesus ties the drawing and granting role to the Spirit, for “it is the Spirit who gives life” (v. 63; cf. 14:17). In other words, Jesus is the bread of heaven who gives life, and this life is given through the means of the Spirit. (Notice the clear tie to Jesus’s discussions with Nicodemus [see 3:3, 5; cf. Köstenberger, *John*, 121-24]). As Gerhardus Vos notes, while at first John only suggests that the revelatory agency is given to the Father through the Son, he later speaks more proximately about the Spirit’s role in revelation, for, indeed, the Spirit is the greatest of all gifts (Vos, *Biblical Theology*, 347, 392; cf. Luke 11:13). For other Johannine references that closely relate the Spirit to the Father and Son, see John 3:34; 6; 14-16; 19:34; 20:22; cf. 7:37-39.

aply reflects, Jesus thus declares that the gospel “cannot be embraced by all, but that a new understanding and a new perception are requisite.”<sup>58</sup> Or, as John himself writes elsewhere, “Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God” (1 John 5:1). People who have faith—and thus new, spiritual perception to perceive that “Jesus is the Christ”—previously have been born (γενένηται, perfect passive) of God. Therefore, as he regenerates human hearts unto belief, the Spirit internally unveils the true perception of Jesus.

Second, the Spirit illuminates Jesus’ spoken/written words. Indeed, as John implicitly develops the work of the Spirit throughout his Gospel, it is clear that the Spirit discloses Jesus to present day believers in a similar way that he did for the disciples. One particular notion stands out here: the Spirit as a guide.<sup>59</sup> As Jesus states, “He will guide you into all the truth [and] he will declare to you the things that are to come” (16:13). While this “guiding into truth” includes external revelation (through the text of Scripture), it also embraces internal revelation: the Spirit guides by unveiling perception of the truth of Scripture (e.g., illumination). As Carson and Morris argue in this passage, the Spirit does not add a new meaning to Scripture; rather, he unveils the proper perception of it.<sup>60</sup> Theodore of Mopsuestia paraphrases Jesus well: “Things that you

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<sup>58</sup>Calvin, *Gospel According to John*, 1:257. “Therefore,” he concludes, “faith does not depend on the will of men, but that it is God who gives it,” an action of God that it is properly done “by the Spirit” (ibid.). This action is accomplished not “by external force,” but rather by an internal and powerful “impulse” for people who were formerly “unwilling and reluctant” (ibid.). Calvin is describing the powerful work of the Spirit, which “gives life” (John 6:63), and which therefore gives proper perception (that is, faith) of the person of Christ.

<sup>59</sup>One could also add the witness and advocacy of the Spirit. Regarding his witness, as Jesus says, the Spirit “will bear witness [μαρτυρήσει] about me” (15:26). The verb is future tense (μαρτυρήσει), which points to the imminent coming of the Spirit in the future. This promise applies directly to the disciples though “certainly derivatively” to all believers today (Carson, *John*, 529). Therefore, “when Jesus is taken from the earth, the Spirit will continually bear witness concerning him” (Morris, *John*, 606-7; cf. Beasley-Murray, *John*, 277). The Spirit is thus present to believers, and he testifies or witnesses about the person and work of Jesus (Morris, *John*, 606-7; Carson, *John*, 529). Regarding his advocacy, the Spirit “will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment” (16:8). While this kind of advocacy or conviction involves external disclosure (e.g., legal judgment), it also simultaneously entails an internal unveiling of perception (e.g., conviction, ἐλέγξει).

<sup>60</sup>They assert that the Spirit’s guiding or leading should be understood in the sense of “leading into implications of truth” or “illumination of truth” (Carson, *John*, 540; Morris, *John*, 621n31; or, perhaps the “Spirit interprets truth” [see O’Collins, *Theology and Revelation*, 50; cf. Brown, *The Gospel According*

cannot even hear [or] understand—those very things, I say, you will understand when you receive the gift of the Spirit.”<sup>61</sup> The guidance of the Spirit, as described by Jesus, refers to the Spirit’s work of orientating believers to Scripture and God. Therefore, as Köstenberger summarizes, they “provid[e] entrance to the revelatory sphere of God’s character and ways.”<sup>62</sup> All people are blind until they are regenerated and illumined by the Spirit of God;<sup>63</sup> the Spirit illuminates (i.e., unveils) perception of Scripture to believers. This action is internal revelation.

In summation, the synoptic Gospels begin to point towards the reality of spiritual or internal revelation by underscoring that all people are blind to certain gospel realities (vis-à-vis the example of Peter in Matt 16:16-17). The Gospel of John clarifies that the Spirit of God is he who unveils such perception. Indeed, this discussion has indicated that there is an internal revelatory work of the Spirit through (at least) regeneration and illumination. These two works entail the existence of internal revelation: (1) regeneration gives new life, simultaneously produces faith, and thus is indicative of new perception in Christ; (2) illumination, among other things (to be explored later), involves the unveiling of the true perception of Scripture so that the believer grasps that Scripture is from God. These kinds of disclosure involve, not the unveiling of information (as in external revelation), but the unveiling of perception. In both of these spiritual works, the Spirit preserves and continually makes accessible the revelation given

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to John, 714-15]). John elaborates these meanings as he later writes, “You have been anointed by the Holy One, and you all have knowledge” (1 John 2:20; cf. 2:26-27; 3:24). Indeed, as Calvin rightly recognizes, there are some things which, without the Spirit, “we are not yet able to bear” (Calvin, *Gospel According to John*, 2:144), so that the Spirit is the “perfect Master or Teacher of truth” (ibid., 2:143).

<sup>61</sup>Theodore of Mopsuestia, *Commentary on the Gospel of John*, 135.

<sup>62</sup>Köstenberger, *John*, 473. Or Beasley-Murray rightly explains, “The Spirit thus illuminates the hearers’ minds as to the reality of that which is proclaimed by the disciples and brings its truth to bear on their consciences” (Beasley-Murray, *John*, 277; cf. Morris, *John*, 607; cf. John 16:8-11).

<sup>63</sup>These words are a close paraphrase from Calvin: “For all are blind until they are illuminated by the Spirit of God” (Calvin, *Gospel According to John*, 1:276). This action is “the secret revelation of the Spirit”, or as he also calls it here, “illumination” (ibid.). Note once again that Calvin does not separate the idea of revelation and illumination, but he rather conceives of illumination as a (internal) revelation.

in Christ and Scripture. Indeed, it is the person of the Holy Spirit who, while fully correlated to Jesus Christ, is a distinct and crucial factor in understanding revelation in the new covenant.<sup>64</sup>

This kind of revelation is the fulfillment of the promise of the new covenant. Just as Jesus fulfills external revelation, so also he fulfills internal revelation in terms of (1) regeneration and (2) illumination. First, within the Old Testament, God promises to reveal internally by giving believers a new spiritual heart and spirit (Ezek 36:25-27) and putting the law within them so they would know God directly (Jer 31:33). As this section has shown, Jesus fulfills this promise as he points Nicodemus (and us today) to the regeneration by the Spirit of God (John 3:3, 5). Second, while God promised to provide the greater provision of the Spirit to all believers (Isa 59:21), Jesus fulfills this promise in his sending of the Spirit who will permanently indwell, illuminate, and guide all believers into truth (John 16:13; 20:22). In the end, therefore, whereas God is clearly in control of a person's knowledge and perception in the Old Testament (in cases such as Pharaoh and Balaam), Jesus shows that he is the one who actually accomplishes this revelation through his Spirit. Jesus fulfills the stream of covenants in the Old Testament, and so he also fulfills its understanding of internal revelation.

The internal guidance of the Spirit is no small matter. D. A. Carson suggests that the theme of the internal work of the Spirit (in John 16:6-7) helps us to realize that we today are more blessed than the disciples in their own day, for the Spirit specially indwells us today following Pentecost. He indeed explains that this is the very evaluation of Jesus:

That same Jesus insists it is better to be alive now, after the coming of the Spirit. Before the triumphant in-breaking of God's sovereign reign, before the inauguration of the new covenant, millions ignored the claims of the true God. Pentecost transformed that limitation, and millions have been brought to happy submission to the Lord Jesus Christ and to growing obedience by the power of the Spirit whom he

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<sup>64</sup>James Dunn makes a similar point (Dunn, *New Testament Theology*, 32-33).

bequeathed.<sup>65</sup>

In other words, through the Spirit's ministry of indwelling—namely, through his regeneration and illumination—God is applying the work of Christ in greater measure since the Pentecost.<sup>66</sup>

## Conclusion

In the final analysis, the Gospels present revelation in two senses, that is, as external and internal. Reflecting on the data from the Gospels, Nicholls uses similar language: “The objective side of revelation is the Incarnation of God and all that happened through it[;] the subjective side is the presence of the Holy Spirit in the community of believers.”<sup>67</sup> On the one hand, the external dimension of revelation refers to the disclosure of information through external realities such as persons, words, or events. Internal revelation, on the other hand, refers to disclosure that occurs through the Spirit of God within a person. Broadly speaking, this kind of revelation occurs through regeneration and illumination. Regeneration refers to the Spirit of God making the person spiritually alive and thus giving inward faith, and illumination refers to the Spirit of God unveiling a true understanding of gospel realities in Scripture.

Therefore, both dimensions of revelation—external and internal—are properly included within the larger biblical category of revelation. Indeed, revelation, as we have already argued, simply means to unveil or disclose some truth or reality that was previously unknown. External revelation is a disclosure of information (in persons, words, or events) that was previously unknown, and internal revelation is an unveiling of understanding (through regeneration and illumination) that was previously unknown.

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<sup>65</sup>Carson, *John*, 534.

<sup>66</sup>Of course, this idea should not lead us to conclude that no one believed in the true God before the outpouring of the Spirit; much the opposite, people believed and they did so only on account of the work of the Spirit.

<sup>67</sup>Nicholls, *Revelation in Christ*, 59-60.

Scripture, then, presents both realities side by side. The Word and the Spirit go hand in hand.

### **The Apostle Paul**

This chapter will explore the apostle Paul's understanding of revelation as external and internal. Indeed, revelation is a fundamental ingredient in the Pauline corpus. The presupposition of the apostle's argument is that God has revealed himself through his covenants, which have finally and decisively culminated in Jesus Christ.<sup>68</sup>

Tracing Paul's understanding of revelation, this chapter shall now continue its argument by demonstrating that, according to Paul, the idea of revelation contains both external and internal dimensions. It shall argue this thesis, first, by introducing Paul's broader understanding of revelation in the natural world and human conscience; next, by explaining the relationship between revelation as the Holy Scriptures (external word) and as the Holy Spirit (internal illumination); and finally, by explicitly detailing his understanding of the external and internal dimensions.

#### **Introduction: Themes in Creation and Conscience**

This section shall briefly summarize creation and conscience as two modes of revelation. It shall conclude by asserting that, because humans have rebelled and rejected these general forms of revelation, a fuller and special revelation in Scripture (external) and through the Holy Spirit (internal) is necessary.

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<sup>68</sup>L. Cerfaux demonstrates this argument clearly and effectively. See his *Christ in the Theology of St. Paul* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1959), 402-18. Indeed, for the Apostle Paul, the idea of the covenant and revelation were closely tied. In the Pauline corpus, the word, διαθήκη ("covenant"), appears only nine times (Rom 9:4; 11:27; 1 Cor 11:25; 2 Cor 3:6, 14; Gal 3:15, 17; 4:24; Eph 2:12). It is, however, implicitly clear all throughout his writings, undergirding his discussions and themes (for example, Rom 4, 15; cf. Williamson, *Sealed with an Oath*, 186-87). Indeed, for Paul the covenant is an important revelatory marker. He mentions the Noahic and Abrahamic covenants as significant vehicles of revelation in which God discloses himself in nature and for our salvation (see Acts 14:16-17 and Gal 3:6ff./Rom 4:1ff., respectively). And, of course, Paul holds to the high (though temporary) value of the Mosaic covenant (see 2 Cor 3; Gal 3:15-18; Rom 7).

In chapter 1 of the book of Romans (1:18-23), Paul describes the natural awareness of God in every person. He makes several claims that revolve around two basic facts: the world reveals God, and people reject this knowledge.<sup>69</sup> Paul begins by claiming that “the wrath of God is revealed” against unrighteous people who “suppress the truth” (v. 18). Grounding his argument, he declares that God’s “invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made” (v. 20). Here Paul is unambiguous: the world of creation clearly displays some invisible qualities of the God who created it.<sup>70</sup> Paul concludes that, because people have “clearly perceived” this disclosure, “they are without excuse” (v. 20). Indeed, humans have sinned by failing to glorify God and to give him thanks (vv. 21-23). I. Howard Marshall is precise when he declares, “We may speak of a revelation given by God, but one that did not receive recognition by those for whom it was intended.”<sup>71</sup> In other words, even as people refuse to recognize God in creation, Paul argues that the invisible God is disclosed in the external created world.

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<sup>69</sup>The matter of Paul’s audience in these verses has been debated. Some suggest that all people, both Jews and Gentiles, are equally in view (Robert H. Mounce, *Romans*, NAC, vol. 27 [Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1995], 75-76), while others hold that the Gentiles are mainly in view (Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, NICNT [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996], 92-93, 96-98). It is true that Paul speaks not of ἔθνη (“Gentiles”) but rather of ἀνθρώπων (“men”). Moreover, v. 23 clearly alludes to Ps 106:20 and Jer 2:11, both of which refer to the idolatry of Israel. While these arguments would seem to favor the both/and view, Thomas Schreiner notes four main arguments that support that mainly Gentiles are in view: (1) the Jewish context seems to note a Gentile polemic, (2) the overt idolatry depicted by Paul was virtually non-existent in the Jewish world, (3) homosexual relations were not common among Jews, (4) and most Jews would not identify with v. 32 (see Thomas Schreiner, *Romans*, BECNT [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998], 81). It seems reasonable to conclude that, while Paul mainly had the Gentiles in view in 1.19-32, he was preoccupied with the Jews from 2:1-3:8. Of course, a sharp distinction need not be drawn, for the issue is not as divisive as it seems. Either way, Paul’s conclusion starkly applies to both people groups: “both Jews and Greeks, are under sin” (Rom 3:9, cf. 23).

<sup>70</sup>Ambrosiaster beautifully reflects the irony here: “The knowledge of God is plain from the structure of the world. God, who by nature is invisible, may be known even for the things which are visible. His work is made in such a way that it reveals its Maker by its very visibility, so that what is uncertain may be known by what is certain, and everyone may believe that he is God” (Ambrosiaster, *Commentaries on Romans and 1-2 Corinthians*, trans. and ed. Gerald L. Bray, ACT [Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009], 10).

<sup>71</sup>Marshall, *New Testament Theology*, 308.

In chapter 2 (2:14-15), Paul offers another distinct kind of revelation, not in the natural world, *per se*, but in the human person's conscience: "For when Gentiles, who do not have the [Mosaic] law, by nature do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law" (Rom 2:14).<sup>72</sup> As Douglas Moo recognizes, Paul asserts that human beings—the Gentiles in particular—"possess an 'unwritten' or 'natural' law—an innate moral sense of 'right and wrong'"—so that they "have access to knowledge of God's will for them."<sup>73</sup> Indeed, these Gentiles have "the work of the law written on their hearts," so that their "conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them" (v. 15). Thus, although the Gentiles do not have the revealed law, they at times do what the revealed law requires (because they have a law written on their hearts).<sup>74</sup>

Gentiles—and all peoples—have an implanted moral revelation: a "law" (νόμος) or "conscience" (συνείδησις) that corresponds to God's standard (or, in this case, the Mosaic law). This "rule of righteousness," as Calvin so names, is a seed of moral knowledge that is "implanted by nature in the hearts of men."<sup>75</sup> Paul elucidates the revelatory power of this "rule" when he parallels the Gentiles' natural law with the Jew's

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<sup>72</sup>Paul's intent here is to show that Jews who have the law are no better off than the Gentiles who do not have the Mosaic law (see vv. 12-13). The Gentiles described in these and the following verses are unbelieving Gentiles. As Schreiner notes, Paul's use of *ἑαυτοῖς εἰσιν νόμος* ("law to themselves") in v. 14 and *συνείδησέως* ("conscience") in v. 15 points not to a regenerate Gentile but rather to a unbelieving—and ignorant—Gentile (Schreiner, *Romans*, 121-24, cf. 120-21; cf. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 148). For an opposing viewpoint, see F. F. Bruce, *The Letter of Paul to the Romans: An Introduction and Commentary*, in TNTC, vol. 6 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985), 86.

<sup>73</sup>Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 150, 151.

<sup>74</sup>This is exactly Leon Morris' point (Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 126). "Conscience" in v. 15 most probably refers to the individual's reflective mechanism that helps people measure conformity to a norm (Leon Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, PNTC [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988], 152). The term, therefore, is popular and not philosophical in origin (C. E. B. Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans*, ICC [Greenwood, SC: Attic, 1975], 159-60). While the sentence itself is ambiguous, what is not ambiguous is the fact that God has revealed himself through the human consciousness.

<sup>75</sup>Calvin, *Romans*, 96, cf. 98. Calvin sees support for this natural revelation in notions of justice and rectitude among the nations. "For there is no nation so lost to every thing human, that it does not keep within the limits of some laws" (ibid., cf. 97). Therefore, for Calvin, God's revelation in the conscience parallels God's creating people in the image of God (cf. Gen 1:26).

Mosaic law, the revelatory standard of the Old Testament. By paralleling the two, Paul implicitly asserts that, in a similar manner that the Gentiles have an internal law or conscience that guides and obligates them (Rom 2:14-16), the Jews have the external Mosaic law that instructs and guides in the knowledge of God's will (Rom 2:17-20).<sup>76</sup> Robert Mounce summarizes Paul: "Not only did God reveal himself to them in nature (Rom 1:19-20) but he created them with a sense of moral obligation."<sup>77</sup> In summation, then, Paul maintains that God reveals himself (albeit basically) in the innate and internal moral conscience.

In the first two chapters of Romans, Paul affirms two distinct kinds of revelation: the natural world and the human conscience. In order to conclude this discussion, it is necessary to show how this assertion influences the thesis. First and fundamental to the dissertation, the discussion shows that revelation can be categorized as both external and internal. Regarding the external dimension, Paul asserts that the created world is an external display of the eternal power and deity of God. The invisible God is thus disclosed in the visible things that he has made. The implication is central to the thesis: external things indeed reveal God. Regarding the internal dimension, Paul argues that Gentiles have a conscience. This conscience bears witness to God's standard in a similar (though inferior) manner that the external/written law bears witness in the Mosaic covenant. In the end, therefore, the natural world corresponds to the external dimension of revelation, whereas the human conscience corresponds to the internal dimension. Unlike the special internal revelation by the Spirit (e.g., regeneration and illumination), however, the human conscience is simply a general internal revelation.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>76</sup>Paul's point is hard to miss: in a similar manner that the Mosaic law reveals, the natural law also reveals. As Bultmann summarizes this verse, "The will of God revealed to the Christian [or Gentile] is identical with the demand of the Law" (Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, 1:262). Both Moo and Bruce make this point implicitly in their own respective ways (Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 157, cf. 158-63; Bruce, *Romans*, 87-88).

<sup>77</sup>Mounce, *Romans*, 95.

<sup>78</sup>While, according to the apostle Paul, the conscience reveals some kind of internal moral

(Paul will later clarify his understanding of internal revelation through his development of the Holy Spirit, who regenerates, cleanses, and testifies to our spirits.)

Second, the discussion implicitly explains why revelation through these two general mediums ultimately fails to produce faith in people. Regarding the created world, Paul says that people's minds have become futile and their hearts are dark (vv. 21-22), and they exchange the truth of God for a lie (v. 23).<sup>79</sup> Regarding the moral conscience, there is a difference between the knowledge of basic moral categories of right and wrong and the sufficient will to do it.<sup>80</sup> Indeed, Paul nowhere implies that such a feat could be accomplished. He likewise ends his discussion of these two revelatory means by asking, "What then? Are we Jews [or Gentiles] any better off? No, not at all. For we have already charged that all, both Jews and Greeks, are under sin" (Rom 3:9). Therefore, while it is true that God has borne testimony to himself in creation and in humans themselves, people have not responded properly to this revelation. They have rather turned against God and over to themselves. Therefore, God judges both the Jews and the Gentiles. Revelation through creation and conscience is incomplete, and they point toward the need for God's special revelation through (external) Scripture and (internal) Spirit.

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capacity, it is a basic capacity of unrealized faith. As most theologians argue, the conscience includes some shared adherence to a moral code in addition to a moral impulse, that is, a perception of moral understanding (see C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* [New York: Macmillan, 1952], 17-39; Edward Carnell, *Christian Commitment: An Apologetic* [New York: Macmillan, 1957], 80-116). Thomas Schreiner aptly maintains, "The conscience is not the source of moral norms but passes judgment on whether one has abided by those norms" (Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, BECNT [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998], 123; cf. Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 126-27). In other words, the conscience is a God-given capacity to perceive morality, and it includes the awareness of moral norms. Within the idea of revelation, the conscience is the natural or general internal form of revelation, whereas the work of the Spirit is the special internal form of revelation. The former consists of the inward conscience unveiling (moral) perception to the unbeliever and believer, and the latter consists of spiritual regeneration and illumination.

<sup>79</sup>"Paul's purpose is to show that the knowledge of God that all people have through observing the created order is suppressed (v. 18) and distorted (vv. 21-23), so that all without exception have no excuse (v. 20)" (Schreiner, *Romans*, 85; cf. Mounce, *Romans*, 79-82; Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 107-13). Such knowledge is thus limited. Paul continues to suggest that people pervert the order of their natures and decline into what is unnatural from the bodily, sexual, legal, and social point of view (Rom 1:26-30). The ultimate perversion is that man approves and applauds such things (1:32).

<sup>80</sup>Calvin draws out this important distinction (Calvin, *Romans*, 97-98).

## Revelation as Holy Scripture and Holy Spirit

Paul continues to argue that God reveals himself through Scripture and Spirit, that is, the Holy Word of God that is illuminated through the work of the Holy Spirit of God. These latter two constitute the (organically united, but formally distinct) external and internal dimensions of revelation.

**The external dimension: Revelation as Holy Scripture.** God in Christ speaks through the Holy Scripture. Scripture, in this sense, is Jesus' own mouthpiece: the Word of God speaks the words of God through the authorship of the Spirit. This section shall argue that Holy Scripture corresponds to the external dimension of revelation. In other words, Scripture reveals the knowledge of God through the external words of God. This idea shall be argued by summarizing Paul's teaching on Scripture in 2 Timothy, Romans, and 1 Corinthians.

In what has become the *locus classicus* of the doctrine of Scripture, Paul declares, "All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness" (2 Tim 3:16). Several issues need clarification: the term γραφή, the syntax of πᾶσα, and the meaning of θεόπνευστος.<sup>81</sup> First, γραφή refers to the words of the Old Testament.<sup>82</sup> It is also significant that Paul refers

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<sup>81</sup>As Robert Mounce rightly notes, "There are a multitude of exegetical issues to be settled, and often one's decision on a single issue has cascading effect on the others" (William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, WBC, vol. 46 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2000), 565. For further help, cf. Risto Saarinen, *The Pastoral Epistles with Philemon and Jude*, BTCB (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2008), 155; Thomas D. Lea and Hayne P. Griffin Jr., *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, NAC, vol. 34 (Nashville: Broadman, 1992); I. Howard Marshall, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*, ICC (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1999).

<sup>82</sup>In fact, the word (49 instances in all) always delineates the Old Testament (see Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 565; Lea and Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, 235; Warfield, *Inspiration and Authority of the Bible*, 133). Of course, while Paul directly refers to the Old Testament Scripture here, Paul's words here and elsewhere implicate more. First, Paul elsewhere implicitly affirms that the New Testament is included in the category of Scripture. For instance, Paul quotes Jesus's words from the Gospel of Luke as Scripture. He writes, "For the Scripture says, 'You shall not muzzle the ox while he is threshing,' and 'The laborer is worthy of his wages' (1 Tim 5:18; cf. Luke 10:7). Second, in several places Paul understands himself to write the words of God. For instance, he warns that "if anyone thinks he is a prophet or spiritual, let him recognize that the things which I write to you are the Lord's commandment" (1 Cor 14:37). In other words, what Paul writes is divinely binding on believers. Paul maintains elsewhere that even if he "or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we have preached to you, let him be accursed" (Gal 1:8, cf. v. 9). Indeed, because Paul writes and speaks the word of God, it must be accepted "not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God" (1 Thess 2:13).

singularly to “Scripture” and not “the Scriptures” here. In other words, Paul speaks about the book as a whole that was written by God in Christ through the Spirit. Second, the particle, *πάσα*, may render Paul’s words grammatically as either “every Scripture” or “all Scripture.” The former may imply that not all Scripture is inspired, whereas the latter affirms that all is inspired. It is far more plausible that Paul means that latter for two reasons: (1) he views Scripture as a whole, and any idea that *γραφή* is not wholly inspired “seems foreign to the text;”<sup>83</sup> and (2) the grammatical parallel between 2 Timothy 3:16 and 1 Timothy 4:4 strongly supports the conception of totality.<sup>84</sup> Third, *θεόπνευστος* (“God-breathed”) speaks about the divine source of inspiration.<sup>85</sup> In other words, Scripture comes from God and relates to his divinely intended purpose. Thereafter, Paul says that Scripture is not only God-breathed but also *ώφέλιμος* (“profitable, useful”) for teaching and training in righteousness, among other things. Paul uses the word “teaching” (*διδασκαλία*) as a technical term for doctrinal formation and instruction.<sup>86</sup> It thus presupposes that what is inspired is some kind of word-based content. The point is thus clear: As Paul affirms that Scripture is God-breathed, he argues that it reveals the words of God.

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<sup>83</sup>Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 566; cf. Warfield, *Inspiration and Authority of the Bible*, 134.

<sup>84</sup>1 Tim 4:4 reads, *Οτι π̄ν κτίσμα θεοῦ καλόν* (“For everything created by God is good”), and 2 Tim 3:16 reads, *Π̄σα γραφή θεόπνευστος* (“All [or, everything in] Scripture is breathed out by God”). The grammatical construction is the same, implying that the meaning (“all”) is the same as well. Lea and Griffin also note the emphatic position of the particle, which may suggest the stronger “all” over the weaker “every” (Lea and Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, 235). Saarinen disagrees with this latter argument, but he does not give an exegetical or historical reason. He concludes that the Bible is inspired neither in the comprehensive (canonical) sense nor in the smallest (verbal) sense but only the “middle” sense (i.e., *γραφή* is a text or individual book) (see Saarinen, *The Pastoral Epistles with Philemon and Jude*, 156). Marshall rightly concludes that whatever option one chooses, one still arrives at the same conclusion, for “all Scripture” means “every passage of Scripture,” and thus the two are identical (Marshall, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*, 792).

<sup>85</sup>And, as is typical of words ending in *-τος*, the word is passive (“God-breathed”) and not active (“God’s breathing”) (cf. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 566; Saarinen, *The Pastoral Epistles with Philemon and Jude*, 156; Lea and Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, 236; Warfield, *Inspiration and Authority of the Bible*, 132-33). The passivity of the word implicates that Paul here refers to the abiding divine character and origin (and thus inspiration) of the Bible.

<sup>86</sup>Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 570.

Paul supports this argument elsewhere. In the book of Romans, for example, Paul calls Scripture the “oracles [λόγια] of God” (Rom 3:2). Scripture is the divine sayings or words that enshrine God’s disclosure to Moses and the prophets. This explains why Paul often regards Scripture as God’s speech: Scripture can “speak” to Pharaoh (Rom 9:17; cf. Exod 9:16) and, most importantly, “preach the gospel” (Gal 3:8). Indeed, as Paul suggests, the gospel, which God “promised beforehand through his prophets,” is “in the holy Scriptures” (Rom 1:2). This is why, as Paul continues elsewhere, Scripture was “written down for our instruction” (1 Cor 10:11; cf. 15:4) and contrasted with “irreverent babble and contradictions of what is falsely called ‘knowledge’” (1 Tim 6:20). As a result, Warfield concludes, “These ‘Scriptures’ are thus identified with the revelation of God, conceived as a well-defined corpus.”<sup>87</sup> Scripture is an external source of knowledge of the words of God.

In the end, Paul regards Scripture as revealing the words of God. Relating this conclusion more closely to the thesis, revelation may refer to spoken words or a written document. In this case, revelation is an external text (words spoken or written) that encapsulates God’s message. In his attributing revelation to external words, Paul likewise is consistent not only with the Old Testament but also the Gospels.<sup>88</sup>

**The internal dimension: Revelation as Holy Spirit.** Often closely associated with the Word of God—that is, Jesus Christ and/or Holy Scripture—is the work of the Holy Spirit as revelation. This section shall argue that his work corresponds to the internal dimension of revelation. It shall accomplish this thesis by describing the two

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<sup>87</sup>Warfield, *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible*, 101.

<sup>88</sup>Marshall explains, “For all the writers of the Scriptures tell the story of God’s dealing with Israel in time past and they see the contemporary events as foretold in Scripture or following a pattern laid down there” (Marshall, *New Testament Theology*, 473). He continues, “God continues to speak in New Testament times through apostles and prophets. . . . A distinction between the Old and New Covenants was developing, and once Paul saw himself and other missionaries as servants of the latter, the recognition of new covenant revelation by the Spirit alongside the Scriptures of the Old Covenant was a natural development” (ibid.).

basic results of the Spirit's work of revelation, namely, that he unveils (1) Christ and (2) Scripture to the believer. In other words, he internally unveils true perception of the salvific reality of Jesus and the Bible to the believer. The section will conclude by describing Paul's overall understanding of the internal nature of revelation.

First, the Spirit reveals Christ, namely, the true understanding of Jesus as Lord to the believer. As Paul carefully declares, "No one can say 'Jesus is Lord' except in [ἐν, i.e., "by"] the Holy Spirit" (1 Cor 12:3). While there are a plethora of possible interpretations of this verse,<sup>89</sup> Paul's salient point is that no one salvifically knows the identity of Jesus (as Lord) except for those who are in the Spirit. Gordon D. Fee aptly summarizes, "[O]nly one who has the Spirit can truly make such a confession because only the Spirit can reveal its [the confession's] reality."<sup>90</sup> Indeed, Paul elsewhere can say that the Spirit helps believers to cry "Abba! Father!" (Gal 4:6; cf. Rom 8:15-16).<sup>91</sup> The Holy Spirit, as he internally unveils gospel understanding, is the sole causal agent of truly acknowledging and understanding Jesus.<sup>92</sup> It is he who brings salvation-knowledge; it is he who unveils Jesus Christ to the person through his regenerating grace.

Second, and naturally resulting from the first, the Spirit unveils Scripture to the

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<sup>89</sup>For a list of them, see Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 918-25.

<sup>90</sup>Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 582; cf. Leon Morris, *The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians: An Introduction and Commentary*, TNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985), 165.

<sup>91</sup>Paul makes an analogy between humans and God. He thereby shows that just as a person's spirit (i.e., mind) only knows how that person thinks, so also only God's Spirit knows God's thoughts. Because we have God's Spirit, we also have his thoughts. "Therefore," Marshall reflects, "if we are to know [God's] thoughts, [God] must reveal them to [us]" (Marshall, *New Testament Theology*, 273).

<sup>92</sup>In Titus 3:5, Paul claims that God saves us not because of our righteous works preformed but rather "by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit" (Titus 3:5). The Spirit, in other words, performs an internal or spiritual cleansing through regeneration that brings new birth and new life in Christ. Calvin argues this persuasively (Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistles to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon*, trans. William Pringle, The Calvin Translation Society [repr., Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996], 333-34). As Lea and Griffin assert, the Spirit performs an "internal, spiritual cleansing" (Lea and Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, 324). In other words, as the Spirit re-births or regenerates a person, he also necessarily gives faith and thus unveils the salvific knowledge and truth of Christ to the person. In this sense, as the chapter has previously explored in the gospels, the Spirit's work of regeneration entails internal revelation.

believer. This process is called illumination. In some sense, one might wonder why some kind of illuminative revelation is necessary: is not Scripture readable and clear?<sup>93</sup> In a large sense, the answer to this question is yes. However, Paul often notes the failure of Scriptural revelation in light of the (mis)perception of the gospel in Scripture.<sup>94</sup> His answer to the lack of understanding is simple: the necessity of God's Spirit. In 1 Corinthians 2:10-16, Paul discusses the Spirit's special mediation of divine wisdom. He begins, "No one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God (v. 11)."<sup>95</sup> He continues by explaining that God gave us his Spirit "so that we might understand the things freely given us by God" (v. 12).<sup>96</sup> The Spirit, who alone knows the secrets of God, has been given so that his people may know the secrets that he wills to reveal to them. This action is clearly external revelation, as the Holy Spirit unveils the divine mysteries in scriptural words (v. 13); but such external revelation is not complete without the unveiling of understanding through the Spirit of God (i.e., internal revelation).

Following his concise argument, Paul explains why the internal illuminative work of the Spirit is necessary to understand Scripture (vv. 14-16). Paul starkly

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<sup>93</sup>See Gregg Robert Allison, "The Protestant Doctrine of the Perspicuity of Scripture: A Reformulation on the Basis of Biblical Teaching" (Ph.D. diss., Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 1995).

<sup>94</sup>This idea is especially clear within 1 Cor 1-2. For example, he writes, "For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing" (1 Cor 1:18; cf. 19-25), lit. ὁ λόγος γὰρ ὁ τοῦ σταυροῦ ("the word of the cross"). This word includes the "manner and the matter of the apostolic preaching" (Morris, *1 Corinthians*, 43; cf. v. 17 where Paul equates ὁ λόγος and wisdom). Therefore, while Paul does not directly refer to Scripture here, its implication is clear as it is the Word of God. A strong tension is also created between God's word of the cross, on the one hand, and the wisdom of the world, on the other (vv. 17-18; cf. Thiselton, *1 Corinthians*, 154-55). Therefore, Paul is saying by extension that the gospel, which is contained in the Scriptures, is folly to those who are not the children of God, that is, to those who follow the wisdom of this world (cf. v. 17).

<sup>95</sup>In Vos' words, "All spiritual life is by its very nature a hidden life, a life shut up in itself. Such a life we can know only through revelation. If this be true as between man and man, how much more must it be so as between God and man" (Vos, *Biblical Theology*, 3; cf. Vos, "The Eschatological Aspect of the Pauline Conception of the Spirit," 117).

<sup>96</sup>Calvin's paraphrase is helpful (if not creative): "The Spirit of revelation, which we have received, is not of the world, so as to be merely creeping on the ground, so as to be subject to vanity, or be in suspense, or vary or fluctuate, or hold us in doubt or perplexity. On the contrary, it is from God, and hence it is above all heavens, of solid and unvarying truth, and placed above all risk of doubt" (Calvin, *Corinthians*, 1:112).

expounds, “The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned” (1 Cor 2:14). Paul herein argues two distinct ideas: (1) the unbeliever is not able to understand (or believe) the revelation of the gospel, and (2) it is only by the Spirit that one can understand these things.<sup>97</sup> Paul then continues by contrasting the natural person to the spiritual person, that is, the person illumined by the Spirit (i.e., the Christian): “The spiritual person judges all things, but is himself to be judged by no one. ‘For who has understood the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?’ But we have the mind of Christ” (vv. 15-16; cf. Isa 40:13). As Leon Morris summarizes, “the indwelling Spirit *reveals* Christ” to the child of God.”<sup>98</sup> As Florian Wilk correctly asserts, the Spirit-filled person “is endowed with spiritual knowledge” that is only in Christ and through his Spirit.<sup>99</sup> In other words, believers have spiritual knowledge as the Spirit enables them to understand and to accept the realities of the gospel in Scripture.<sup>100</sup> Paul thus clearly refers to the illumination of Scripture by the Spirit. The Spirit internally unveils the truth of the gospel to people.

Later in the Corinthian correspondence, Paul elaborates the Spirit’s unveiling of Scripture to the believer by the contrast between the Mosaic and new covenants (2 Cor

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<sup>97</sup>Gordon Fee summarizes these two ideas well (Fee, *1 Corinthians*, 116). The sole translation issue in the verse is the meaning of the word, ψυχικὸς. While several translations/interpretations of the word can be found in the literature (cf. Thiselton, *1 Corinthians*, 267-69), most commentators take the word to mean something like “the person who lives on an entirely natural or human level,” i.e., “natural” (cf. 1 Cor 15:44-45). Calvin likewise understands the word to refer to the opposite of the person who is guided by the illumination of the Spirit (Calvin, *Corinthians*, 1:115). The meaning of the verse is thus clear: the belief in the gospel “entails the work of the Holy Spirit” (Thiselton, *1 Corinthians*, 271). Consequently, there is a sense in which the reception of revelation is passive, although its emphasis is not great (see Gal 4:9; 1 Cor 13:12; Nicholls, *Revelation in Christ*, 63).

<sup>98</sup>Morris, *1 Corinthians*, 60; cf. Fee, *1 Corinthians*, 117; Ambrosiaster, *Romans and 1-2 Corinthians*, 130-31.

<sup>99</sup>Wilk, “Isaiah in 1 and 2 Corinthians,” 140.

<sup>100</sup>Therefore, it is important to understand Paul’s words correctly: he is not speaking about some deeper movement into spiritual life, as some elitist movements would hold; rather, he is speaking merely about the unveiling of the truth of the gospel to the person at hand (Fee, *1 Corinthians*, 120). God illumines his words through his Spirit. As we are in Christ through the Spirit, we too can participate in this understanding or perception.

3).<sup>101</sup> While this section is not primarily aimed at an understanding of (internal) revelation, the passage contains several important implications. Paul regards the Mosaic covenant as profoundly revelatory, but he claims that its people “were hardened” and so “when they read the old covenant, that same veil remains unlifted” (2 Cor 3:14).<sup>102</sup> In other words, the Mosaic covenant lacked the unveiling power of the Holy Spirit.<sup>103</sup> The new covenant, however, is a “stark antithesis,” as Ralph Martin aptly reflects, as it brings the revelation of the new covenantal realities.<sup>104</sup> Paul explains that in this latter covenant the “the veil is removed,” for “the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom” (vv. 16-17). Leonhard Goppelt’s comments summarize Paul’s words: whereas the “structure of the Old Testament and its meaning were veiled,” now “to the one who ha[s] turned in faith to Christ” through the Spirit, it is unveiled.<sup>105</sup> What is

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<sup>101</sup>For other examples of Paul’s understanding of the Mosaic covenant, the new covenant, and revelation, see Gal 3:15-18 and Rom 7.

<sup>102</sup>See Ralph P. Martin, *2 Corinthians*, 2nd ed., WBC, vol. 40 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014), 204; Mark A. Seifrid, *The Second Letter to the Corinthians*, PNTC [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014], 150-56; Margaret E. Thrall, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, ICC (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1994), 241-78.

<sup>103</sup>Or, as James Scott reflects, “The implication is thus that Paul’s opponents have not yet had the veil of hard-heartedness removed because they are yet not ‘in Christ’ and do not have the Spirit” (James M. Scott, *2 Corinthians*, NIBC [Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1998], 79). The words of v. 14 form a commentary around Exod 34:33, 35. Paul is fundamentally addressing the issue of Jewish (dis)belief in the Christian gospel (cf. Rom 9-11). The verse here, as Harris suggests, points to the reality that the Jews were “deadened in their powers of spiritual perception” (Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 301). They had hardened νοήματα (“minds”) that were insensitive to spiritual matters. Paul uses the verb πωρόω (“hardened”) to emphasize the inability to see or hear in a sinful condition, which is a common biblical theme (cf. Isa 6:9-10; 29:10-12; Jer 5:21-24; Ezek 12:2; Mark 4:10-12; John 12:39-40; Acts 28:25-27, etc.). The covenant indeed contains the death-dealing “ministry of condemnation” that was “carved in letters of stone” (vv. 9, 7). What Paul is describing, therefore, is Israel’s lack of spiritual discernment that is only unveiled through the Holy Spirit (cf. Garland, *2 Corinthians*, 190-93).

<sup>104</sup>Martin, *2 Corinthians*, 202. The new covenant brings righteousness and permanence (vv. 9, 11). The temporary nature of the Mosaic law is fundamental here. As Thomas Schreiner correctly observes, Paul teaches that “the Mosaic covenant was not intended to be in force forever” (Thomas R. Schreiner, *The Law and its Fulfillment: A Pauline Theology of Law* [Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 1993], 132). The important verse is 11 (cf. v. 7): “For if what was being brought to an end came with glory, much more will what is permanent have glory.” Here Paul distinguishes two covenants, one that is “brought to an end” and one that is “permanent.”

<sup>105</sup>Goppelt, *Theology of the New Testament*, 2:52; cf. 1 Cor 2:16. The meaning of ὁ δὲ κύριος τὸ πνεῦμά ἐστιν (“the Lord is the Spirit”) is best captured by the NEB translation: “Now the Lord of whom this passage [Exod 34:34] speaks is the Spirit.” Indeed, Christ and the Spirit are in one sense identical, for all the functions Paul assigns to Christ he also assigns to the Spirit (2 Cor 3:17; cf. Rom 8:15; Gal 4:6). The meaning of freedom that Paul has in mind here is not specifically freedom from the law, but rather freedom from the veil of the old covenant (Garland, *2 Corinthians*, 196-98; Harris, *The Second Epistle to the*

“unveiled,” of course, is the whole corpus of the new covenant, which includes the internal illumination of the Spirit.<sup>106</sup> Whereas the people of the Mosaic covenant were veiled in misunderstanding, the people of the new covenant, through the Holy Spirit, are unveiled to understanding. Therefore, Paul describes a real and distinct form of revelation that emphasizes, not the disclosure of information (as in external revelation), but the disclosure of understanding or perception.

Paul further clarifies his understanding of internal revelation in the new covenant as he continues in the following chapter (2 Cor 4:3-6): “And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing,” that is, to “the unbelievers” (v. 3, cf. v. 4). As Harris summarizes, to people who are perishing, the gospel is “hidden from their understanding.”<sup>107</sup> The veil is not yet lifted from every human heart (cf. 3:14-15), nor has every person turned to the Lord (cf. 3:16). Indeed, Paul continues, “In their case, the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers” so that they cannot perceive “the revealed splendor of the gospel of Christ” (v. 4). Unbelievers, in other words, cannot recognize the glorious revelation of the gospel that proclaims “Jesus as Lord” (v. 5). Thereafter, Paul clarifies how this veil is removed: “For God, who said, ‘Let light shine out of darkness,’ has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (2 Cor 4:6). Because the truth of the gospel is not naturally discerned, God supernaturally enables people to understand the gospel through

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*Corinthians*, 312-13).

<sup>106</sup>Harris makes a good case that the veil here is meant to be ambiguous (Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 312-13). Certainly the veil refers to the hardheartedness of the old covenant (vv. 13-14) and thus spiritual ignorance of the truths of the new covenant (v. 14). The veil thus also indirectly relates to the veil of the law and its effects (v. 6), as well as to the freedom to behold God’s glory uninterruptedly (and so conform to Christ) (v. 18). In the end, the veil can refer to several related new covenantal realities. For the purposes of this dissertation, however, the veil of hardheartedness is the most significant. Unlike persons in the old covenant, whose “minds were hardened” (v. 14a), new covenant members receive freedom from that veil, as Christ takes it away (vv. 14b, 16-17), “for this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit” (v. 18). In other words, people’s minds are no longer hardened, for believers receive internal revelation in the Spirit. For a contrasting perspective, which argues that the veil is simply the veil of the tabernacle, see Seifrid, *The Second Letter to the Corinthians*, 172-74.

<sup>107</sup>Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 327.

his Spirit's regenerating and illuminating action.<sup>108</sup> In the words of Calvin, "His [Paul's] meaning, therefore, is that God has, by his Spirit, opened the eyes of our understandings, so as to make them capable of receiving the light of the gospel."<sup>109</sup> Importantly, the gospel is not only externally proclaimed (in Scripture) but also internally unveiled (through the Spirit). In this manner, Paul again explains the special work of the Spirit that internally unveils the truth of the gospel to the believer.

Paul's argument throughout 1 and 2 Corinthians also accounts for why he, at least in one instance, prays that believers have their hearts and minds opened through the illuminative work of the Holy Spirit. He prays for the Ephesian Christians that God

may give you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, having the eyes of your hearts enlightened ("πεφωτισμένους"<sup>110</sup>), that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe. . . . (Eph 1:17-19)

Paul is not praying that the Ephesians receive further revelations beyond Jesus Christ and his Spirit. Rather, he is praying that they continue to receive "an illuminating work of the Spirit to impress already revealed truth about God into the conscious reflections and heartfelt convictions of the readers."<sup>111</sup> Paul prays that these Ephesian Christians would have the eyes of their hearts enlightened, for this revelation is necessary to understand

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<sup>108</sup>Indeed, Paul parallels this supernatural inward enabling to the supernatural creation of the world ("Let light shine out of darkness") that brought forth something from nothing. Seifrid brilliantly summarizes, "Just as the creation of light is the work of the word of God, so the Gospel is God's effective word that creates light in the darkness of the human heart" (Seifrid, *The Second Letter to the Corinthians*, 200). Therefore, while Paul almost certainly has in mind Gen 1:3, he also may be thinking of Isa 9:1: "The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shone" (Martin, *2 Corinthians*, 224; cf. Garland, *2 Corinthians*, 216-18; Seifrid, *The Second Letter to the Corinthians*, 200-201).

<sup>109</sup>Calvin, *Corinthians*, 2:200.

<sup>110</sup>This verb is a perfect passive participle, which suggests that something has been done and remains in effect.

<sup>111</sup>Clinton E. Arnold, *Ephesians*, ZECNT (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 105. In this sense, Arnold suggests that the content of Paul's prayer here is similar to Paul's (formerly discussed) Corinthian correspondence (ibid., 104). Arnold's basic interpretation—that this prayer refers to spiritual illumination—is affirmed by Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, WBC, vol. 42 (Dallas: Word Books, 1990), 55-61; Peter T. O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, PNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 129-37; among others.

and believe the external letter of Scripture. He prays for their illumination.

To summarize Paul's understanding of internal revelation (in the books to the Corinthians), Calvin is again quotable: "The Spirit of God, from whom the doctrine of the gospel comes, is its only true interpreter, to open it up to us. Hence in judging of it, men's mind must of necessity be in blindness until they are enlightened by the Spirit of God."<sup>112</sup> The Spirit, in other words, internally reveals the reality of Jesus Christ and Holy Scripture to the believer.

### **Conclusion of the Apostle Paul**

This section has argued that Paul's theology inherently assumes both an external and internal form of revelation. He speaks simultaneously of God being revealed externally through creation and Scripture, on the one hand; and internally through the human conscience and the work of the Spirit, on the other. Paul begins by demonstrating that a natural or general revelation (through external creation and internal conscience) is not complete, for such revelation is culpably suppressed without the Spirit. Therefore, Paul makes it particularly clear that revelation does not end with general forms of revelation. Indeed, if it did, then all people would reject that revelation as they reject God (Rom 1:18ff.). Paul therefore continues to speak about the special revelation of God's (external) Holy Scripture and (internal) Holy Spirit. The former is necessary to have a saving knowledge of the gospel, and the latter is necessary to open people's minds to perceive this saving knowledge in a personal manner. At the end of the day, therefore Paul construes revelation both in an external and internal sense.

### **The Rest of the New Testament**

This chapter shall now explore revelation as external and internal within the General Epistles and Revelation. Because the relevant material has been explored

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<sup>112</sup>Calvin, *Corinthians*, 1:117.

throughout the Gospels and Paul, and because these latter books are less lucid on the subject of revelation, this section will remain brief. This section shall argue that, within the General Epistles and Revelation, one can discern revelation in terms of (1) Jesus Christ, (2) Scripture, and (3) the Spirit. These will be explored in order.

First, the author of Hebrews asserts that Jesus Christ is the fullest and most supreme revelation. The author claims that, while God previously spoke to the prophets, “in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son” (Heb 1:1; cf. 1 Pet 1:10-12). This special revelation of God, therefore, takes place in an historical event, in a particular person, and in a datable time and place. The Son, Jesus Christ, is the “heir of all things” and “the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature” (vv. 2-3). The Son of God, therefore, is the revelation of God in external form. He is likewise the “guarantor of a better covenant” (7:22), the “forerunner” of the eschatological Kingdom of God (6:20), and thereby secures an eternal redemption for his people (9:12-14).

Peter and John likewise affirm the special revelation of Jesus Christ. Peter can speak of Jesus Christ’s revelation in the historical sense of his incarnation (1 Pet 1:20) or in the eschatological sense of his consummation (1 Pet 1:7, 13; 4:13; cf. 2 Pet 3:13). John often speaks of Jesus Christ’s revelation in terms of his life being “made manifest” (φανερόω) to the world (1 John 1:2). Jesus came to take away sins (3:5), destroy the works of the devil (v. 8), and thus supremely manifest the love of God (4:9). God is revealed through Jesus’ acts. Indeed, as John continues in his book of Revelation, he asserts that Jesus accomplishes revelation as he “conquered and sat down” on the throne (Rev 3:21; cf. 5:10). The triumph of Jesus Christ, the divine-human warrior, thus leads to his revelation as the Alpha and the Omega (1:8; 21:6; 22:13) and to the restoration of the fallen cosmos (12:1-17). Jesus Christ is the supreme revelation.

Second, both Hebrews and Peter are clear that Holy Scripture is revelation. The author of Hebrews makes this point exceedingly plain: “For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and

of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart” (Heb 4:12). As such, he says, Scripture must be obeyed (cf. 3:7-8). Peter is also clear that the biblical writers (i.e., the prophets) “spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit” (2 Pet 1:21). Peter thus asserts that the Bible is not merely of divine origin (ἀπὸ θεοῦ) but also of divine interpretation, design, and purpose.<sup>113</sup> Scripture is therefore the written word of God.

Third and finally, John briefly attaches the Holy Spirit to central aspects of the process of revelation. For example, John maintains that the anointing of the Holy Spirit implicates that people have “no need that anyone should teach” them; rather, as the Spirit “abides” in them, he teaches people “about everything” (1 John 2:27).<sup>114</sup> The Spirit is a sufficient resource to understand and live the gospel. Elsewhere, John notes that the Spirit speaks the words of God in the angel’s declarations to the various churches. John uses the phrase, “Hear what the Spirit says,” on several occasions (Rev 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22). John does not, however, further elaborate the internal quality of revelation.

Within the General Epistles and Revelation, therefore, the doctrine of revelation can be understood in terms of Jesus Christ, Scripture, and the Holy Spirit. While this was a brief exploration, it minimally shows that the Gospels and Paul are consistent with the rest of the New Testament.

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<sup>113</sup>These ideas are in agreement with Harink and Schreiner, but they are against Bauckham and Bigg. For example, Bauckham argues that the prophecy/revelation merely refers to its origin (not purpose), whereas Bigg goes farther by arguing that the inspired origin of the text merely pertains to the “vision” that the prophets received (i.e., God merely inspired the original vision of the prophet). This latter idea is almost certainly wrong, for Bigg here ignores the conceptual side of interpretation to which Peter refers (i.e., interpretation is from God, v. 1:20). See Douglas Harink, *1 and 2 Peter*, in BTCB (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2009), 160; Thomas R. Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, NAC, vol. 37 (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2003), 324; Richard J. Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, WBC, vol. 3 (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1983), 234; Charles Bigg, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistles of St. Peter and St. Jude*, ICC (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 197), 270; see also Warfield, *Inspiration and Authority of the Bible*, 135-37.

<sup>114</sup>For an excellent theological exploration of this verse in detail, see Michael Allen and Scott R. Swain, *Reformed Catholicity: The Promise of Retrieval for Theology and Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2015), 18-19.

## Chapter Conclusion

Using the New Testament as data, Robert Yarbrough summarizes well the meaning of revelation: “Revelation is the disclosure by God of truths at which people could not arrive without divine initiative and enabling.”<sup>115</sup> Because revelation includes God’s “initiative and enabling,” therefore, it includes what this dissertation calls external and internal revelation. These are the two fundamental dimensions of revelation, neither of which can be humanly attained, and both of which involve a divine disclosure. As René Latourelle, the distinguished Jesuit theologian and historian, aptly summarizes, “This activity [of revelation] is accomplished by the external testimony of Christ and the apostles and the interior testimony of the Spirit.”<sup>116</sup>

In some sense, revelation begins when God spoke the cosmos into existence, continues after the fall as God initiates the scheme to redeem fallen humanity, and culminates at the revelation of God’s own Son and Spirit. It is in this latter clause, one that is reflective of the new covenant, that one sees most clearly and decisively that revelation includes both dimensions. While internal revelation is already present in the Old Testament (cf. the prophets and psalms), its explicit nature is clarified in the new covenant.

Revelation, succinctly, is Word and Spirit. First, the Word corresponds to the external dimension of revelation. This dimension refers to revelation through realities that are external to the human person: persons, words, or events. Paul especially ties the reality to Scripture. The work of the Spirit, secondly, refers to internal revelation. This dimension of revelation occurs through the Holy Spirit of God unveiling understanding or perception within a person. Broadly speaking, this kind of revelation occurs through regeneration and illumination. Regeneration refers to the Spirit of God making the person

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<sup>115</sup>Yarbrough, “Revelation,” 732.

<sup>116</sup>René Latourelle, *Theology of Revelation* (New York: Staten Island, 1966), 78-79.

spiritually alive, and illumination refers to the Spirit of God unveiling a true and spiritual understanding of gospel realities. The Spirit does this work through his witnessing, advocating, and guiding the believer. Paul also adds the conscience of the person to the mixture, suggesting that humans have an intuitive, inward sense of right and wrong.

As this chapter provides ressourcement for a distinctively evangelical theology of revelation as external and internal, it concludes by proposing that both dimensions of revelation should properly be included within the larger biblical category of revelation. Indeed, revelation, as we have already argued, simply means to unveil or disclose some truth or reality that was previously unknown. External revelation is a disclosure (in persons, words, or events) that was previously unknown, and internal revelation is an unveiling of understanding (through regeneration and illumination) that was previously unknown. It does not suffice to say that internal revelation is not properly “revelation” but simply “illumination.” As the exegesis of the applicable Johannine and Pauline passages shows, regeneration and illumination are described as an unveiling of understanding or perception. Indeed, commenting on such illumination in 1 Corinthians 12:3, Leon Morris expresses this well: “The Lordship of Christ is not a human discovery. It is a discovery that is made and can be made only when the Spirit is at work in the heart.”<sup>117</sup> As it is perceptive unveiling, so also it is revelation.<sup>118</sup> Scripture, then, presents both realities of revelation side by side. The Word and the Spirit go hand in hand.

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<sup>117</sup>Morris, *1 Corinthians*, 165.

<sup>118</sup>It is therefore unsurprising that Scripture can use the same words and concepts for external or internal revelation. The chapter has already suggested that the words for revelation translate as something like “to unveil,” “to uncover,” “to make known,” “to appear,” or “to manifest.” In other words, the concept refers to the state or act of uncovering something that was previously hidden, making something appear, making known an otherwise unknown reality, or manifesting that which is unseen. Therefore, not only are the words for revelation virtually indistinguishable, but also the concept of revelation is bigger than any usage that the words suggest. Therefore, at the same time that Scripture can speak about the unveiling of God through creation or Scripture, it can also talk about the unveiling of truth through the illumination of Scripture (especially in the Johannine literature). Granted that these kinds of revelation are distinguishable (because the external form unveils knowledge and the internal form unveils understanding or perception); however, the fact of the matter remains that the internal form is indeed revelation. The argument that the Spirit’s internal work—in illumination, regeneration, testimony, etc.—should in fact be properly included within revelation will be made in detail in chap. 5.

Of course, it has been the presumption that these two dimensions are inseparably tied together in an organic unity based upon God in Christ. After the Word of God, Jesus Christ, enters the narratives, he (through his Spirit) writes the Scriptures, and he (through the same Spirit), regenerates and illumines believers as they read the Scriptures. As Vos concludes, revelation “derives its organic unity from the fact that it centers in God and in Christ.”<sup>119</sup> The Spirit-filled life of a Christian is a Spirit-filled life in Christ; it is a life in the Spirit to the same extent as it is a life in Christ.<sup>120</sup> The external and internal dimensions thus cannot be separated. In the same way that two dimensions of a square—height and length—can be formally distinguished but not materially separated, so also the two basic dimensions of revelation can be formally distinguished—external and internal—but not materially separated. To do so, of course, would be to abstract the Spirit from Christ (or vice versa). (This dissertation shall more explicitly explore the organic unity of revelation in chap. 5.)

While there are several issues that could be addressed at this point in the dissertation, the project shall first survey various historical perspectives. Then, it shall proceed to address various theological and practical issues that arise in light of this thesis.

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<sup>119</sup>Geerhardus Vos, “The Theology of Paul,” in *Redemptive History and Biblical Interpretation: The Shorter Writings of Geerhardus Vos*, ed. Richard B. Gaffin, Jr. (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 1980), 357. While in context Vos speaks of the cognitive apprehension of Christianity, he implicates revelation throughout this discussion.

<sup>120</sup>See Vos, “The Eschatological Aspect of the Pauline Conception of the Spirit,” 113.

## CHAPTER 4

### A HISTORICAL THEOLOGY OF REVELATION

This dissertation heretofore has sought to provide an evangelical ressourcement for a theology of revelation by arguing that revelation includes external and internal dimensions that are organically united in the triune God. It has supported this argument thus far by appealing to the Old and New Testaments, demonstrating that Scripture uses words and concepts that convey the idea of revelation in both of these basic categories: revelation as (1) external to the human individual in creation and Scripture, and (2) internal to the human individual in the form of regeneration and illumination. This dissertation shall now argue that belief in the external and internal nature of revelation is implicitly or explicitly evident throughout the history of the church. While the emphasis is somewhat implicit in the early and medieval churches, it becomes more explicit within strands of theology in the Reformation, Post-Reformation, and modern era. This thesis will be demonstrated by surveying the development of Christian thought from the early church through today. It will then summarize the church's historical insights with regard to an external/internal distinction and an organically united understanding of revelation.

#### **The Early Church**

Although Avery Dulles affirms a kernel of truth as he perceives that “revelation did not emerge as a major theological theme until after the Enlightenment,” it is likewise true that several leaders in the early church spoke incessantly about the issue.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Avery Dulles, *Revelation Theology: A History* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1969), 31. For an excellent and intriguing summary and evaluation of the major early fathers, apologists, and theologians, see René Latourelle, *Theology of Revelation* (New York: Staten Island, 1966), 87-150.

Following in the wake of the Johannine and Pauline texts, these early leaders averred that the external Word of God is only apprehended through the internal Spirit of God.

Therefore, the early church implicitly developed an external/internal distinction that finds expression in some of its major thinkers. For the sake of space and relevance, this section shall only address Origen, Jerome, and Augustine.

Origen argued for an external and internal form of revelation. External revelation is based upon a transcendent God,<sup>2</sup> who, perpetually overflowing with goodness, created the spiritual world and then physical world from eternity.<sup>3</sup> The world is fashioned after God through his *Logos*. Following Plato, Origen suggests that the *Logos* is the exemplar of the world.<sup>4</sup> The matter of the world, indeed, reveals its creator as the

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<sup>2</sup>“We hold that the great God is in essence simple, invisible, and incorporeal, himself pure intelligence, or something transcending intelligence and existence” (Origen, *Against Celsus*, trans. Frederick Crombie, in vol. 4 of *ANF* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982], 7:38). Origen even argued, paralleling Plotinus, that God, as *monas* and *enas*, “is the mind and source from which all intellectual nature or mind takes its beginning;” as such, God is above truth, essence, being, and reason (Origen, *De Principiis*, trans. Frederick Crombie, in vol. 4 of *ANF* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982], 1:1.6). “Origen’s system,” as Latourelle rightly notes, “is built up with God as a starting point” (Latourelle, *Theology of Revelation*, 113). There is no doubt that Origen, as Copelston summarizes, “attempted a fusion of Christian doctrine with Platonic and neo-Platonic philosophy” (Frederick Copleston, *A History of Philosophy* [New York: Doubleday, 1946-1955], 2:28; cf. Benjamin P. Blosser, *Become Like the Angels: Origen’s Doctrine of the Soul* [Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2012], 2-13). The question, of course, is just how far his Platonism went. (For a comprehensive survey of Origen’s relationship here, see Mark Julian Edwards, *Origen Against Plato* [Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2002].) Whatever the case may be, while Origen certainly found himself within the middle-platonic tradition, his uncritical appropriation of Plato has certainly been exaggerated in the past (*ibid.*, 1-9). As Origen himself writes in *Against Celsus*, while Plato perhaps had the philosophical knowledge of ideas and philosophical illumination, this knowledge “did not at all help his readers to attain to the pure worship of God, nor even himself, who could philosophize so grandly about the ‘chief good,’ whereas the simple language of the holy Scriptures has led to their honest readers being filled with a divine spirit” (Origen, *Against Celsus*, 6:5).

<sup>3</sup>Because Origen argued for the eternity of the world, the “then” here is a logical (and not temporal) step. The spiritual world corresponds to Gen 1, whereas the physical world corresponds to Gen 2. The strong influence of Plato should be obvious. Regarding the former, as he argues, God must create the world from eternity; otherwise, in the moment when there was no world (which he argues is absurd), then “God was not omnipotent” but only “became so afterwards” (Origen, *De Principiis*, 1:2.10). Therefore, in Gen 1:1, “Scripture is not speaking of an temporal beginning, but it says that the heaven and earth and all things which were made ‘in the beginning,’ that is, in the Savior” (Origen, *Homilies on Genesis and Exodus*, trans. Ronald E. Heine, *The Fathers of the Church*, vol. 71 [Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1982], 1:1). Regarding the latter physical creation, as he writes, “I cannot understand how so many distinguished men have been of opinion that this matter, which is so great . . . was uncreated, i.e., not formed by God himself” (Origen, *De Principiis*, 2:1.4). As he continues, because God is “the creator of all things,” he goes on to defend why God (eternally) created matter (*ibid.*).

<sup>4</sup>He is the “substance of substances,” “the idea of ideas,” and thus “the principle of all things” (Origen, *Against Celsus*, 6:65; cf. Latourelle, *Theology of Revelation*, 113-15; Dulles, *Revelation Theology*, 34). As the exemplar, the *Logos* is thus the mediator of God and creation. Origen discusses this vividly and excellently (Origen, *De Principiis*, 2:6.1).

rays of light reveal its source.<sup>5</sup> Indeed, just as the external world reveals God, so does his external Word in Scripture.<sup>6</sup> Origen, therefore, affirms an external dimension to revelation.

Because of God's utter transcendence, Origen continues to elaborate the necessary internal dimension of revelation. He begins by suggesting that all people can know God as they—or rather, their eternal, “heavenly and rational” soul/spirit—intuit the truth of God through the created world.<sup>7</sup> However, he is also clear that only believers can rightly perceive the truth of God. He explains,

Since we hold that the great God is in essence . . . pure intelligence, or something transcending intelligence and existence, we can never say that God is apprehended by any other means than through the intelligence which is formed in his Image [namely, Christ through his Spirit].<sup>8</sup>

He likens this internal apprehension to a light that is kindled in the soul.<sup>9</sup> Without this fire, people would remain blind, unable to perceive correctively and redemptively the text of Scripture. Indeed, “the truth of the Word” is “completely covered under the veil of the

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<sup>5</sup>See Origen, *Commentary on John*, trans. Allen Menzies, in vol. 10 of *ANF*, 5th ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 1:24. In other words, Origen suggests that the natural world itself reveals God. His “acts” indeed reveal him (Origen, *Homilies on Genesis*, 1:7, cf. 1:5-6). Moreover, the acts of the saints—Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel—also “shine and enlighten” the truth of God (*ibid.*).

<sup>6</sup>As he suggests, God did not leave us without certain and true (external) knowledge of him, but rather he revealed himself in Scripture (Origen, *De Principiis*, 4:1.1; cf. Gregg R. Allison, *Historical Theology: An Introduction to Christian Doctrine* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011], 60). Origen believed that Scripture has a divine character and thus all of it is true and applicable in some way. The Scriptures were “divine writings” that are “inspired” and “profitable” (*ibid.*, cf. 4:1.6; 4:1.2-15). The Old Testament, indeed, was “composed by the aid of heavenly grace” (*ibid.*, 4:1.6). In other words, the Scriptures reveal God. For a good discussion of Origen's hermeneutic, see Elizabeth Ann Dively Lauro, *The Soul and Spirit of Scripture within Origen's Exegesis*, *The Bible in Ancient Christianity*, vol. 3 (Boston: Brill Academic, 2005).

<sup>7</sup>Origen, *De Principiis*, 3:4.3; cf. Origen, *Commentary on Matthew*, trans. John Patrick, in vol. 10 of *ANF*, 5th ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 14:3. For a fascinating interpretation, see Blosser, *Become Like the Angels*, 17-59, 145-82.

<sup>8</sup>Origen, *Against Celsus*, 7:38.

<sup>9</sup>In *Against Celsus*, he writes, “But that light is suddenly kindled in the soul, as by a fire leaping forth” (Origen, *Against Celsus*, 6:5). Using Hos 10:12 and John 1:3-4, he then goes on to show that the Word himself is this “light of knowledge” and this Word “shone in our hearts” this knowledge (*ibid.*). He then writes, “And the Logos, exhorting us to come to the light, says, in the prophesies of Isaiah: ‘enlighten yourself, enlighten yourself, O Jerusalem; for your light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon you’” (*ibid.*; cf. Isa 60:1).

letter.”<sup>10</sup> Quoting Paul (2 Cor 3:16-17), Origen avers that the Holy Spirit must remove all spiritual obstacles so that “we might behold the spiritual and wonderful knowledge of the Law.”<sup>11</sup> Without this spiritual light, the reader is unable to see spiritual truth in the text.<sup>12</sup> The conclusion of his argument is apparent: because God is utterly transcendent, there is and must be an external and internal dimension to revelation.

Jerome, while seldom using the terminology, also argued for the external and internal dimensions of revelation. Indeed, he in many ways follows Origen.<sup>13</sup> On the external end, he focuses on the Word of God, which first and foremost refers to Jesus Christ.<sup>14</sup> Christ wrote Scripture, which is therefore “the very Word of God” in written

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<sup>10</sup>Origen, *Homilies on Leviticus 1-16*, trans. Gary Wayne Barkley, The Fathers of the Church, vol. 83 (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1990), 1:1.4.

<sup>11</sup>He writes in full: “the Holy Spirit himself must be entreated by us to remove every cloud and all darkness which obscures the vision of our hearts hardened with the stains of sins in order that we might behold the spiritual and wonderful knowledge of the Law” (Origen, *Homilies on Leviticus 1-16*, 1:1.4; cf. Origen, *De Principiis*, 3:6.3). For a more free translation, see Gary Wayne Barkley, “Origen’s Homilies on Leviticus: An Annotated Translation” (Ph.D. diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1984), 25-26. As Latourelle rightly argues, however, Origen is inconsistent about the monergism of the Spirit in this context: sometimes Origen speaks as if the Spirit removes all spiritual obstacles, and other times he speaks as if there are spiritual objects for which not even the Spirit can remove (Origen, *Homilies on Genesis*, 1:7-8; cf. Latourelle, *Theology of Revelation*, 116).

<sup>12</sup>For example, in his *Homilies on Genesis*, he affirms that the only way that a person can see the truth of God spoken in the text is through the Holy Spirit. He says, “We should pray the Father of the Word during each individual reading ‘when Moses is read’ that he might fulfill even in us that which is written in the Psalms: ‘Open my eyes and I will consider the wondrous things of your Law.’ For unless he himself opens our eyes, how shall we be able to see these great mysteries?” (Origen, *Homilies on Genesis*, 12:1, see also 1:5-6).

<sup>13</sup>As he writes in the preface to his Galatians commentary, because “I am more cautious and timid because I have recognized the scantiness of my own abilities,” I have “followed the commentaries of Origen” (Jerome, *Commentary on Galatians*, trans. Andrew Cain, The Fathers of the Church [Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2010], 57). While Jerome and Origen certainly have different styles, most Jerome scholars agree that he “owes a great deal to his exegetical master, Origen” (Thomas P. Scheck, “Introduction,” in Jerome, *Commentary on Matthew*, trans. Thomas P. Scheck, The Fathers of the Church [Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2008], 31, see also 19-23; cf. Andrew Cain, “Introduction,” in Jerome, *Commentary on Galatians*, trans. Andrew Cain, The Fathers of the Church [Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2010], 27-30; Megan Hale Williams, *The Monk and the Book: Jerome and the Making of Christian Scholarship* [Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2006], 133-66; Adam Kamesar, *Jerome, Greek Scholarship, and the Hebrew Bible: A Study of the ‘Quaestiones Hebraicae in Genesim* [Oxford: Clarendon, 1993], 98-103).

<sup>14</sup>All throughout his *Commentary on Matthew*, for example, he argues that Jesus reveals the Triune God. Commenting on Matt 1:1, he mentions that Matthew’s proclamation of the gospel begins with fleshly matters, “so that through the man [Jesus] we might begin to become acquainted with God” (Jerome, *Commentary on Matthew*, trans. Thomas P. Scheck, The Fathers of the Church [Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2008], 54). The triune God, he continues, is further revealed through Christ in his baptism (Matt 3:16), his ministry of exorcism (12:28), and Peter’s confession (16:17).

form.<sup>15</sup> On the internal end, Jerome often refers to the necessary spiritual unveiling through the Spirit. Commenting on Matthew 16:17, he declares, “What flesh and blood are not able to reveal, the grace of the Holy Spirit has revealed.”<sup>16</sup> As he later explains to Paulinus, Bishop of Nola, the Holy Spirit’s personal revelation is necessary because the gospel is spiritually discerned.<sup>17</sup> Moreover, because a spiritual veil covers all of human eyes so that they cannot see the truth in Scripture, they need a spiritual unveiling through the Spirit.<sup>18</sup> Jerome uses words for revelation while referring to both dimensions, and he places the internal spiritual dimension in the closest possible relation to the external word of Scripture.<sup>19</sup> In other words, as far as revelation is concerned, both the external Word and internal Spirit are required.

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<sup>15</sup>He argues this idea in his *Commentary on Matthew* as he contrasts the human documents of the heretics to Scripture itself (Jerome, *Commentary on Matthew*, 54). Or, as he says in his preface to his *Commentary on Galatians*, Scripture consists in the “divine books” (Jerome, *Commentary on Galatians*, 56). Therefore, Michael Graves perceptively writes, “Jerome’s extensive knowledge of the Bible was central to the shape of his life and thought” (Michael Graves, *Jerome’s Hebrew Philology: A Study Based on his Commentary on Jeremiah*, Supplements to *Vigiliae Christianae: Texts and Studies of Early Christian Life and Language*, vol. 90 [Boston: Brill, 2007], 1). For the method and philology of Jerome adeptly explained, see *ibid.*, 13-199; Williams, *The Monk and the Book*, 63-132; Susan Weingarten, *The Saint’s Saints: Hagiography and Geography in Jerome*, *Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity*, vol. 108 [Boston: Brill, 2005], 75-80, 219-60; Kamesar, *Jerome, Greek Scholarship, and the Hebrew Bible*, 41-72).

<sup>16</sup>Jerome, *Commentary on Matthew*, 191.

<sup>17</sup>He writes, quoting Rom 7:14, “For ‘the law is spiritual’ and a revelation is needed to enable us to comprehend it and, when God uncovers his face, to behold his glory” (Jerome, *The Letters of Saint Jerome*, trans. W. H. Fremantle, in vol. 6 of *NPNF* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983], 53.4). He ties this revelation with the Word in the beginning, which refers to “word and reason and reckoning and the cause of individual things,” and the Holy Spirit himself, both of which open up the wisdom of God to the believer (*ibid.*).

<sup>18</sup>Jerome argues that one can only read Scripture as he or she, like David, asks God to open his eyes to perceive the things in it (*ibid.*; cf. Ps 119:18). Jerome thus starkly rebukes, “Now, if so great a prophet confesses that he is in the darkness of ignorance; how deep, think you, must be the night of misapprehension with which we, mere babes and unweaned infants, are enveloped!” (*ibid.*, 58:9). In other words, “This veil rests not only on the face of Moses, but on the evangelists and the apostles as well” (*ibid.*). To paraphrase him, then, one might say that no one understands the Word of God without the Spirit of God. The truth of the gospel must be “opened by him [God];” indeed, if God so chose, “nay, if even his fingers were but passed over your work, there would be nothing finer than your volumes, nothing more learned, nothing more attractive, nothing more Latin” (*ibid.*).

<sup>19</sup>Their close relation is seen as Jerome explains to Paulinus “how you are to walk in the Holy Scriptures” (Jerome, *The Letters of Saint Jerome*, 58:9). His answer is not a hermeneutical method (though he elaborates this elsewhere), but rather his answer is the Holy Spirit who “opens” and does not “shut” spiritual truth (*ibid.*). In other words, both the external and internal dimensions of revelation are important to Jerome.

Augustine also argued for both dimensions of revelation. He affirms that the external object of revelation is the Word of God himself, outside of whom human beings are incapable of knowledge: “He [the Word] condescended to make himself manifest to the outward eye of those who inward sight is weak and dim.”<sup>20</sup> The Word thus revealed himself as “outward sound” and is thus “called speech” so that we could know God.<sup>21</sup> Thereafter, because words are transitory by nature, Christ the Word wrote the verbal word of Scripture using the human writers, “as if they were his own hands.”<sup>22</sup> Moreover, he avers that just as God wrote Scripture, which therefore reveals him, so also he created the universe, so that it thereafter reveals him.<sup>23</sup> In summation, then, revelation contains an external dimension, namely, God’s works through his Word.

While revelation’s external form is the Word, revelation’s internal form is the person, or the illumined person. Augustine never explicitly calls this process “internal revelation,” but he implicitly assumes this idea throughout. For example, in the *City of God*, he claims that this spiritual disclosure of the Spirit is necessary: “But, owing to the liability of the human mind to fall into mistakes, this very pursuit of knowledge may be a snare to him unless he has a divine master, who he may obey without misgiving.”<sup>24</sup> In

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<sup>20</sup>Augustine, *Christian Doctrine*, trans. J. F. Shaw, in vol. 2 of *NPNF* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 1:11.11; cf. Augustine, *Christian Doctrine*, trans. J. F. Shaw, in vol. 2 of *NPNF* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983], 1:2.2).

<sup>21</sup>Augustine, *Christian Doctrine*, 1:13.12; see also 1:34.38.

<sup>22</sup>Augustine, *Harmony of the Gospels*, trans. S. D. F. Salmond, ed. M. B. Riddle, in vol. 6 of *NPNF* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 1:35.54. In *The Enchiridion*, he maintains why these verbal words are authoritative (Augustine, *The Enchiridion*, trans. J. F. Shaw, in vol. 3 of *NPNF* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980], 3:238; see also Allison, *Historical Theology*, 82).

<sup>23</sup>In other words, Augustine avers that the human person can have knowledge only inasmuch as he or she intuits truth through the instantiation of the Word in creation or conscience. Creation, he suggests, “shows” or “declares” the glory of the Word who made them to the human person (Augustine, *Expositions on the Book of Psalms*, ed. A. Cleveland Coxe, in vol. 8 of *NPNF* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983], Psalm 19:2). This kind of revelation is an external transfer of information inasmuch as “the Spirit gives out the fulness [sic] of the unchangeable Wisdom of God” to the “spiritual” (*ibid.*, v. 3). Beyond attributing creation to the Word, Augustine explains why the universe reveals its maker: it contains the forms (i.e., ideas, universals) of God (Augustine, *On the Holy Trinity*, trans. Arthur West Haddan, in vol. 3 of *NPNF* [Grand Rapids: Eermans, 1980], 4:1.3).

<sup>24</sup>Augustine, *City of God*, trans. Marcus Dods, *NPNF*, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 19:14. Augustine is careful to note that such illumination does not reduce the human freedom of the

other words, a person needs an epistemic master, the Word, who will make luminous the truths of reality.<sup>25</sup> As he continues his logic in *On the Holy Trinity*, Augustine asserts that a person who receives such illumination is able to “gaze upon indestructible truth” that “consists in an unchangeable eternity.”<sup>26</sup> On account of the mind’s mutability, temporality, and sinfulness, the person must be enlightened in order to experience immutable and certain truth.<sup>27</sup> Indeed, God illuminates the mind’s activity in such a way

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knowing subject: just as a person needs a master who must be obeyed, so “at the same time” this master would “give him such help as to preserve his own freedom” (ibid.).

<sup>25</sup>“The Word,” he writes, “might care for these and heal them,” namely, by allowing them to redemptively partake in the Word and receive “enlightening,” something that they were “utterly unfit” (Augustine, *On the Holy Trinity*, 4:2.4). In this sense, as Latourelle summarizes Augustine, “The word of Christ [Scripture] is not a human word: it is endowed with a double dimension, external and internal, by reason of the grace which accompanies and vivifies the doctrine it announces” (Latourelle, *Theology of Revelation*, 139). For an excellent and rounded discussion of Augustine’s theory of illumination, one that properly puts Augustine in the context of his overarching theology (rather than merely his neo-platonic background), see Lydia Schumacher, *Divine Illumination: The History and Future of Augustine’s Theory of Knowledge* (Chichester, England: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 25-65.

<sup>26</sup>Augustine, *On the Holy Trinity*, 9:6.9. Through this divine illumination, the person epistemically and spiritually ascends, something analogous to the Neo-Platonic ethical or spiritual ascent unto knowledge. This is clear on account of the fact that he: (1) analyzes a seven-step schematization of the soul’s ascent that is reminiscent of Plato and the Neo-Platonic tradition; (2) intends to bring the reader into an upward meditative (and not merely doctrinal) philosophy; and (3) differentiates between the material and spiritual, sensual and intelligible, and sign and thing, continually arguing that one must attain the latter (see Frederick Van Fleteren, “The Ascent of the Soul in the Augustinian Tradition,” in *Paradigms in Medieval Thought, Applications in Medieval Disciplines*, ed. N. VanDeusen [Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen, 1990], 110; Robert McMahan, *Augustine’s Prayerful Ascent: An Essay on the Literary Form of the Confessions* [Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1989]; Canlis, *Calvin’s Ladder*, 33). In other words, he simultaneously insists that the person is unable to know and yet, through God, able to know. The person seeks not only knowledge through illumination, but also tranquility of mind and the contemplation of God through the soul’s ascent (Augustine, *On Grace and Free Will*, trans. Peter Holmes and Robert Ernest Wallis, rev. Benjamin B. Warfield, in vol. 5 of *NPNF* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971], 2:12.33). As much as Augustine is drawing from Scripture here, he is also using Platonic philosophy. Indeed, there is a sense in which “illumination in Augustine’s thought takes the place of ‘recollection’ in Plato’s system” (George L. Abernethy and Thomas A. Langford, *Introduction to Western Philosophy: Pre-Socratics to Mill* [Belmont, CA: Dickenson, 1970], 109), or, better yet, “Recollection is really nothing more than a statement of the view that knowledge requires divine illumination” (Robert Miner, “Augustinian Recollection,” *Augustinian Studies* 38, no. 2 (2007): 435, cf. 435-50, where Miner helpfully argues not only from specific passages, but also from the structure of the *Soliloquies*). These analyses give some insights into what Augustine meant by illumination, though he is “notoriously unclear as to the actual mechanics of this ‘illumination’” (Mendelson, “By the Things Themselves,” 484, cf. 467-89). On possible interpretations, see Ronald Nash, *The Light of the Mind: St. Augustine’s Theory of Knowledge* [Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1969], 94-124).

<sup>27</sup>In *On Christian Doctrine* he compares illumination to a “journey or voyage” in which “the soul must be purified that it may have power to perceive that light” (Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine*, 1:10.10). Therefore, Augustine can affirm that, while God was with him before his regeneration, he was unaware and unloving of this kind of presence until God “called, and cried aloud, and forced open my deafness” and then “chased away my blindness;” it was only then that he understood and “burned” for his peace (Augustine, *The Confessions of Saint Augustine*, trans. Edward B. Pusey, *NPNF*, vol. 1 [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983], 10:27.38).

that it can discern the approximation of the object to the standard. Copleston ably summarizes Augustine: “As the sunlight makes corporeal things visible to the eye, so the divine illumination makes the eternal truths visible to the mind.”<sup>28</sup> In this manner, Augustine’s conception of illumination helpfully brings the external object and internal subject into an organic unity based upon God: namely, God reveals through his Word and Spirit. The concept of revelation includes both the revelatory act of God and the illuminative action in people.<sup>29</sup> It includes, therefore, the external and internal dimensions as one.<sup>30</sup>

In summation, while the early church theologians did not systematically reflect

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<sup>28</sup>Copleston, *A History of Philosophy*, 2:62-63, cf. 64; see also Jean-Yves Lacoste, “Revelation,” in *Encyclopedia of Christian Theology*, ed. Jean-Yves Lacoste (New York: Routledge, 2005), 3:1385. Copleston here is probably paraphrasing Augustine’s words in the *Soliloquies*: “For as the earth is visible, so is light; but the earth, unless illumined by light, cannot be seen. Therefore, those [spiritual] things which are taught in the schools . . . which no one understands . . . we must believe to be incapable of being understood, unless they are illumined by someone else” (Augustine, *Soliloquies*, trans. Charles C. Starbuck, in vol. 7 of *NPNF* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983], 1:15). Illumination, as Schumacher clarifies, is clearly the “source of an intrinsic cognitive capacity” rather than a source of “extrinsic” information (Schumacher, *Divine Illumination*, 62, cf. 65). God, in other words, illuminates or unveils truth to a person’s intellect.

<sup>29</sup>As Latourelle and Dulles comment on Augustine, they argue the same. Latourelle notes that, for Augustine, “The external Word of Christ and the illumination and inspiration of the Spirit compose the one single Word of God” (Latourelle, *Theology of Revelation*, 143). Indeed, Dulles continues, revelation and illumination are barely distinct concepts in Augustine: “Augustine uses the term ‘revelation’ more widely to designate any divine illumination which comes to the mind through prayerful study and consideration of things obscurely known” (Dulles, *Revelation Theology*, 37). He continues, “Augustine’s theology of revelation is closely bound up with his doctrine of illumination, which centers about God as the light of truth. It is not surprising, therefore, that he uses the term ‘revelation’ not so much for the external communication of the gospel as for the inner light by which men are enabled to believe it” (ibid.).

<sup>30</sup>The helpfulness of Augustine at his juncture does not depend upon the reader’s adversity or attraction towards Augustine’s Platonism. While Augustine is clearly dependent upon neo-platonic philosophy, he goes little further than his early mentor, Ambrose of Milan, and Scripture itself. For example, Ambrose, following Scripture, also argues for the Spirit’s internal illumination and regeneration (Ambrose, *On the Holy Spirit*, trans. H. De Romestin, in vol. 10 of *NPNF* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983], 2:4.29-31; cf. 1:4.55-61; 1:15.171-75). Namely, he claims that it is the Spirit who “works life;” indeed, the Spirit “quickens as does the Father and as does the Son” (ibid., 2:4.29). Therefore, using Ps 119:17, he suggests that, whereas the Spirit beforehand did not reveal who God is to the person (as he “had not life”); afterwards (i.e., in the new covenant), he “received the privilege of having it [life]” (ibid.). In other words, as he explains later, the Spirit unveils who God is by his granting life, namely, through the process of regeneration (ibid., 2:7.62-69). This work in the “inner man,” Ambrose explains, is “regeneration,” whereby truth is unveiled to our understanding as it is “renewed in the spirit of [our] mind[s],” renewed in our “inward affections,” and we, by the Spirit, “lay aside the oldness of the outer man” in favor of the “new man” (ibid., 2:7.65). In this way, “the Spirit has revealed the things of God” (and then he continues to speak about the Spirit’s illumination in John 14-16) (ibid., 2:11.130). Augustine, therefore, while certainly depended upon neo-platonic philosophy, clearly uses concepts and formulations that are already found in Scripture and Ambrose beforehand.

upon the idea of revelation, they conceived of revelation in terms of external and internal dimensions. Implicitly following the Triune God's united economy (the Father sends his Word and Spirit), they held that the unveiling of information is intimately tied to the unveiling of perception. While it may be argued that, for some of them (especially Jerome), this dual conception was merely implicit, this kind of argument makes no difference to the thesis. The fact is, as we have seen from these men, revelation can and must be conceived in both external and internal terms—whether implicitly or explicitly. Otherwise, as they argued, one cannot account for a unified theory of knowledge and revelation. Without the internal dimension, therefore, the person cannot apprehend the object of the standard (whether this is God, his creation, or his Scripture). Both forms of revelation—unveiling of (external) information and unveiling of (internal) perception—are necessary.

### **The Middle Ages**

Following Augustine, several figures in the Middle Ages argued that revelation includes both the external and internal dimensions. These medieval thinkers, while assuming the basic reality of external revelation, continued to clarify and expound the nature of interior revelation.<sup>31</sup> For the purposes of space, we shall elaborate two of the most influential medieval theologians/philosophers, i.e., the Angelic Doctor and the Seraphic Doctor: Thomas of Aquino and Giovanni di Fidanza Bonaventura, respectively.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>31</sup>As Dulles suggests, “The term ‘revelation,’ in most of the medieval writers, continues to be used, as in St. Augustine, to designate any kind of divine illumination, including what we should now regard as falling within the ambit of purely natural knowledge” (Dulles, *Revelation Theology*, 38).

<sup>32</sup>For other examples, see Robert Grosseteste, who explicitly emphasizes the internal dimension in knowledge by arguing, reminiscent of Augustine, for the necessity of illumination (Robert Grosseteste, *Selections for Medieval Philosophers*, trans. R. McKeon [New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1929], 1:138-281). See also Anselm, *Proslogium*, in *St. Anselm: Proslogium; Monologium: An Appendix In Behalf Of The Fool By Gaunilo; And Cur Deus Homo*, trans. Sidney Norton Deane (repr., Chicago: Open Court, 1926), chap. 1. In many cases, it seems that Anselm followed Augustine in his theory of illumination (see Schumacher, *Divine Illumination*, 82-83). Indeed, in Anselm's mind, Scripture is the objective norm, while faith (*intellegentia fidei*) is the subjective norm (Lacoste, “Revelation,” 3:1385-86). This can also be seen, to a lesser extent, in Hugh of St. Victor as he reflects, “But, though the *oculus contemplationis* has

In the wake of the new synthesis between Augustine and Aristotle,<sup>33</sup> Thomas Aquinas continues to argue for both dimensions of revelation. First, he attaches the external dimension to God's revelation in himself. In the *Summa Theologica*, he begins logically by discussing the divine intelligence.<sup>34</sup> God created the natural world intelligently, that is, not by chance but according to God's exemplary idea.<sup>35</sup> Therefore, a

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been darkened by sin, the mind, under the supernatural influence of grace, can ascend by degrees to contemplation of God in himself. Thus supernatural mysticism crowns the ascent of knowledge in this life" (quoted in Copleston, *A History of Philosophy*, 2:178). In other words, following Augustine, Pseudo-Dionysius, and John Scotus Eriugena before him, Hugh suggests that the internal dimension of knowledge is just as important to revelation.

<sup>33</sup>The fondness of Thomas for Aristotle is usually exaggerated. Copleston is right to suggest that, while Thomas incorporated Aristotelian vocabulary and concepts, the theologian "was no blind worshiper of the Philosopher" (Copleston, *A History of Philosophy*, 2:323). Bauerschmidt argues similarly (Frederick Christian Bauerschmidt, *Holy Teaching: Introducing the 'Summa Theologiae' of St. Thomas Aquinas* [Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2005], 14, 21-22). Thomas often either attempts to explore and explain Augustine through the Aristotelian categories, or he interprets Aristotle in a manner that is consonant with Augustine (ibid., cf. Copleston, *A History of Philosophy*, 2:312-22, 423-34; Schumacher, *Divine Illumination*, 154-60). For an excellent translation and survey of biographical documents surrounding Thomas's life, see Kenelm Foster, trans. and ed., *The Life of Saint Thomas Aquinas: Biographical Documents* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1959).

<sup>34</sup>Norman Kretzmann explicitly argues for this logic (Norman Kretzmann, *The Metaphysics of Creation: Aquinas' Natural Theology in Summa Contra Gentiles II* [Oxford: Clarendon, 1998], 33-35). Indeed, the divine intelligence, as Thomas says, must be attached to the perfections of God, which are the logical assumption of the rest of theology (Thomas of Aquinas, *The Summa Theologica*, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province, rev. ed. [New York: Benziger Brothers, 1920], 1:4). He thereafter continues to elaborate the idea of the good in general, God's goodness, infinity, existence, immutability, and eternity (ibid., 1:5-10). His philosophy/theology thus begins with God himself. However, his logic more specifically begins with the divine intelligence. For a comprehensive logical or topical overview of the *Summa Theologica* itself, see Martin Grabmann, *Introduction to the Theological Summa of Thomas Aquinas* (St. Louis: B. Herder, 1930). For a more chronological approach, see Edward J. Gratsch, *Aquinas' Summa: An Introduction and Interpretation* (New York: Alba House, 1985).

<sup>35</sup>In other words, the "ideas" (see Plato, Augustine) are in the divine mind. He writes, "As then the world was not made by chance, but by God acting by his intellect . . . there must exist in the divine mind a form of the likeness of which the world was made" (Thomas, *Summa Theologica*, 1:15.1). Or, as he more succinctly suggests earlier: *necesse est ponere in mente divina ideas* ("It is necessary to suppose ideas in the divine mind") (ibid.). He continues, "Hence by ideas are understood the forms of things, existing apart from the things themselves" (ibid.). In this way, Thomas, while usually favoring Aristotle, is able to incorporate the thoughts of both Plato and Augustine—a noticeable feat, indeed—by suggesting that the universal ideas are indeed in the mind of God. Of course, he also rightly criticizes Plato for postulating the existence of ideas apart from a (divine) mind (ibid.; see also Thomas, *Truth*, trans. Robert W. Mulligan [Indianapolis: Hackett, 1954], 2.1, 3.1; cf. Copleston, *A History of Philosophy*, 2:359-60). For his defense of the (plural) ideas in the mind of God along with God's own simplicity, see Thomas, *The Summa Theologica*, 1:15.1-3; idem, *Summa Contra Gentiles: On the Truth of the Catholic Faith*, trans. Anton C. Pegis (Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Company, 1955), 1:53-54. Therefore, while finite minds and their language compel us to speak in terms of subject and predicate, and while we apprehend the divine intellect in piecemeal, no such distinction exists in the simple mind/nature of God (Thomas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, 1:31). The exemplary idea, as he continues, is Christ himself. While it is true that Thomas does not explicitly say that the ideas are in the Son, the implication of his theology leads to this reality in two ways. First, just as Thomas before argues that the ideas are in the intellect of God (Thomas, *The Summa Theologica*, 1:15.1), so also by calling Christ the emanation of the intellect, he suggests that the ideas are in Christ by extension. As he writes, using Aristotle and Augustine, the Word corresponds to the "concept of the intellect" within God (ibid., 1:34.1; cf. Thomas, *Truth*, 4.1, cf. 3.1). Or he says later: Christ is the

person, using an *a posteriori* method, can discern the existence and (basic) nature of God in the natural world. Thomas is attempting to clarify how general revelation in the natural world discloses God's "power" and "nature" (Rom 1:20). The world reveals God, as the ideas of God found in the world are comprehended by the intellect of a person.<sup>36</sup>

Furthermore, in a similar manner to God's revelation in the natural world, Scripture reveals God through words.<sup>37</sup> As in the natural world, there must be correspondence

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"emanation of the intellect," and, by way of this emanation, he "is called the Son" (Thomas, *The Summa Theologica*, 1:34.2). Second, Thomas often associates the Son with the mind of God. Namely, just as the "exterior vocal sound is called a word from the fact that it signifies the interior concept of the mind," so also "first and chiefly, the interior concept of the mind is called a word" (ibid., 1:34.1). In other words, as the Son is called the Word, the biblical witness means to point us to the reality that he is himself the intellect of God. Therefore, again by extension, Thomas suggests that the ideas are in the Son. Therefore, while at the beginning of his theology, he may be faulted for being less than Christocentric (see ibid., 1:1-26, 44-119), he later overturns this problem.

<sup>36</sup>He fundamentally argues this idea by appealing to his doctrine of analogy for knowledge (Thomas, *Summa Theologica*, 1:13.5; cf. Bauerschmidt, *Holy Teaching*, 68). Regarding the existence of God, he induces the necessity of God's existence via the five ways: from (1) motion, (2) efficient cause, (3) possibility and necessity, (4) gradation, and (5) governance (ibid., 1:2.1-3; cf. 1:12-15; Thomas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, 1:13.1-35). Regarding the nature of God, he suggests that God's perfections may be induced from the natural world "by cause, by way of excess, and by removal of" (lit. *ut causam, et per excessum, et per remotionem* [Thomas, *Summa Theologica*, 1:84.7, 3]). He thereafter posits the nature of God in terms of his perfections, goodness, infinity, existence, immutability, eternity, oneness, knowledge, truth, life, will, love, justice, mercy, providence, predestination, power, and beatitude (see ibid., 1:4-26). To bring Thomas' thought together, it seems that the world reveals to us (1) the kind of relationship that God has with the world, (2) that God is not part (but rather cause) of the world, and (3) that God's not being in the world is a result of his transcendence and not imperfection (ibid., 1:12.12; cf. Bauerschmidt, *Holy Teaching*, 62n5). For an excellent discussion of the natural theology inherent within Thomas' discussions here, see Bruce D. Marshall, "Quod Scit Una Uetula: Aquinas on the Nature of Theology," in *The Theology of Thomas Aquinas*, ed. Rik Van Nieuwenhove and Joseph Wawrykow (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005), 1-35.

<sup>37</sup>Theology or sacred doctrine, Thomas writes, "properly uses citations from the canonical Scriptures when arguing from necessity, whereas it uses citations from other doctors of the Church as if arguing from what is properly its own, though with probability. For our Faith is based on the revelation made to the Apostles and Prophets who wrote the canonical books and not on any revelation that might have been made to the other doctors" (Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, 1:1.8). As he continues, "Holy Scripture" reveals God through words so that "spiritual truths are fittingly conveyed with bodily metaphors" (ibid., 1:1.9). As Bauerschmidt summarizes, the point of the Scriptures is "for God to teach us" and "like any good teacher, God adapts his methods to the requirements of his students" (Bauerschmidt, *Holy Teaching*, 40n34; see also Thomas, *Summa Theologica*, 1:1.8-10; 1:13.5). While Thomas' understanding of Scripture and relation to theology is notoriously difficult and complex, it is important to note that, for Thomas, Scripture, tradition, and theology are overlapping and interdependent concepts (Valkenberg, *Words of the Living God*, 11; see also Christopher T. Baglow, "Sacred Scripture and Sacred Doctrine in Saint Thomas Aquinas," in *Aquinas on Doctrine: A Critical Introduction*, ed. Thomas G. Weinandy, Daniel A. Keating, and John P. Yocum [London: T & T Clark, 2004], 1-25; Bauerschmidt, *Holy Teaching*, 37n24). For Thomas' own "biblical theology," or at least the closest he comes to laying out one, see Thomas, *Summa Theologica*, 3:27-59; cf. Valkenberg, *Words of the Living God*, 20. Especially within Protestant circles, Thomas' commentaries have been overlooked in favor of his philosophical theology in his two *Summas*. For a helpful introduction to his exegesis, see Thomas G. Weinandy, Daniel A. Keating, and John P. Yocum, eds., *Aquinas on Scripture: An Introduction to his Biblical Commentaries* (London: T & T Clark, 2005); Thomas Prügel, *Thomas Aquinas as Interpreter of Scripture*, in *The Theology of Thomas Aquinas*, ed. Rik Van Nieuwenhove and Joseph Wawrykow (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame

between the ideas in Scripture and the ideas in the knowing person.<sup>38</sup> In other words, similar to Augustine, Thomas holds to an external form of revelation whereby outward objects, such as the natural world and Scripture, realistically reveal God through their signs or ideas.

Second, Thomas (implicitly) argues for an internal sense of revelation. As he explains in the *Summa Contra Gentiles*, “There is still another knowledge of God, in one sense superior to the aforementioned knowledge,” wherein “God is known to men through faith.”<sup>39</sup> As he continues, such a “noble vision” of faith in God cannot be attained

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Press, 2005), 386-415.

<sup>38</sup>Namely, in the natural world, revelation is through “things,” that is, events; whereas in Scripture, revelation is through “words” (Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, 1:1.10; cf. Bauerschmidt, *Holy Teaching*, 43n41). The manner in which Thomas argues for revelation in the natural world and Scripture is both technical and dense. While this section cannot comprehensively elaborate his arguments here, it shall explain, first, the knowledge that may be gleaned from sensible objects and, second and more pertinently, the revelation-knowledge that may be gleaned from immaterial or spiritual objects, i.e., God’s revelation in creation or Scripture. First, Thomas holds that, while the concrete particular is always in view in knowledge (cf. his contrast between the concrete/particular of something and its concept/idea [ibid., 1:5.2]), the direct object of such knowledge is the form or universal within the concrete body: “So, then, our intellect understands the universal itself directly through the intelligible species, whereas it indirectly understands the singulars that the phantasms are phantasms of” (Aquinas, *Treatise on Human Nature: The Complete Text (Summa Theologiae I, Questions 75-102)*, trans. Alfred Freddoso [South Bend, IN: St. Augustine, 2010], 1:86.1). The point of knowledge for him, therefore, is for the mind to abstract the universal form from the individualizing matter. In this manner, following Aristotle, he is able to say simultaneously that the mind has knowledge of the particular *and* the universal (ibid., 1:86.3). Notice, therefore, that Thomas’ epistemology leads him to implicate a sort of *tabula rasa* of the mind as sense-perception is the only source of knowledge. Reminiscent of Aristotle, he writes that “our natural knowledge begins from sense [i.e., perception]. Hence our natural knowledge can go as far as it can be led by sensible things” (ibid., 1:12.12; cf. 1:84.7; 1:88.1; Bauerschmidt, *Holy Teaching*, 40n33; Copleston, *A History of Philosophy*, 2:392, see also 388-93). Second, he continues to define just how a person knows invisible or immaterial objects in particular (which include God’s revelation through the natural world and Scripture). His basic argument is this: a person’s idea (from the natural world or Scripture) is true inasmuch as it correlated with the divine idea (in the natural world or Scripture). Namely, while we cannot sense immaterial objects, he follows Averroes by suggesting that we have an “active intellect” that allows us to see God in natural objects (Aquinas, *Treatise on Human Nature*, 1:88.1). Indeed, as he suggests, the primary object of the intellect is being (ibid., 1:79.7; 1:5.2). Incorporating some insights from Plato, Aristotle, and Augustine, he continues to explain, however, that there is a difference between our *sensory* and *intellectual* capacities: the former roughly correspond to material objects, whereas the latter correspond to spiritual objects (ibid., 1:84.6). In this manner, he answers his original question—how then does a person know the immaterial, spiritual, or divine?—by turning to intellectual cognition. As he states, “It seems that intellectual cognition is not taken from sensible things” (ibid., 1:84.6). In other words, part of the rational faculty of people includes the ability to induce God through analogy from the natural world and Scripture. Therefore, as sensible cognition is not the sum of a person’s mental capacity, “it is nothing to be astonished at if intellectual cognition extends further than sensible cognition” so that we may have a sort of “knowledge of invisible things” (ibid., 1:84.6). In the end, he explains that, in the natural world, we can know God through nature “by cause, by way of excess, and by removal of” (lit. *ut causam, et per excessum, et per remotionem*, ibid., 1:84.7, 3); and, in Scripture, God can be known through the fourfold senses of his Word (ibid., 1:1.10; cf. Bauerschmidt, *Holy Teaching*, 43n41-44).

<sup>39</sup>Thomas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, 3:40:1; cf. idem, *Summa Theologica*, 1:12.13. The superior kind of knowledge for which Thomas speaks is direct revelations through miraculous oracles (e.g.,

naturally, for there is an infinite qualitative distinction between God and humans.<sup>40</sup>

Therefore, as he writes in his *Summa Theologica*, the only way to comprehend God is through a divine revelation whereby there is “the union of the thing seen [i.e., God] with the visual power [i.e., person].”<sup>41</sup> He often likens this divine revelation to a spiritual light whereby the Holy Spirit unites us to God so that we may understand him.<sup>42</sup> Through the “instigation” or “instinct” of the Spirit, Thomas clarifies, the person “is helped by certain

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Balaam’s donkey speaking [Num 22]; see also Thomas, *Summa Theologica*, 1:12.13; Bauerschmidt, *Holy Teaching*, 64n9). In contrast, the aforementioned knowledge to which Thomas speaks is knowledge through demonstration of God through nature (Thomas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, 3:39.1-7). Thomas begins to explain that, through this new knowledge of faith, we know some things about God that “demonstrative reason cannot attain” (ibid; cf. idem, *Summa Theologica*, 1:1.1). The knowledge of faith, he clarifies, is basically one of assent: one “gives assent to things that are proposed to him by another person” (Thomas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, 3:40.4, see also 2-3).

<sup>40</sup>Thomas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, 3:40:1, see also 3:47.1. As he explains, people cannot apprehend “the divine essence” because it “transcends all separate substances” (ibid., 3:47.1). In other words, the “divine essence is not known through such a type of knowledge” (ibid., 3:49.2). Among other doctrines, it is not necessarily “evidently true” but only “evidently credible” (Thomas, *Summa Theologica*, 2-2:1.5.2). It is only faith that can apprehend this kind of divine truth on the basis of divine authority, “for faith does not assent to anything except on the ground that it has been revealed by God” (ibid., 2-2:1.1; cf. Thomas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, 1.9). Therefore, while believing is indeed an intellectual act, it presumes a bending of the will, a predisposition given by grace (Thomas, *Summa Theologica*, 2-2:1.3).

<sup>41</sup>Thomas, *Summa Theologica*, 1:12.2; see also Lacoste, “Revelation,” 3:1386. Or, as Thomas writes in *Contra Gentiles*, the substances of God and humans are wholly distinct, so that, “it is no possible for what is the proper form of one thing to become the form of another unless the latter thing participates some likeness of the thing to which the form belongs” (Thomas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, 3:53.2). While Thomas is dense here, he is simply suggesting that, because “the divine essence is a higher form than any created intellect,” it is necessary for the human intellect to receive some illumination in order to raise that mind to comprehension (ibid., 3:53.3). The only way that the person can receive illumination is “by means of a change in the created intellect,” namely, “a new disposition” (ibid., 3:53.4). It is, in other words, divine illumination. Of course, Thomas did not hold onto the same understanding of illumination as Plato. For because Plato held that “the immaterial subsistent forms . . . are the proper object of our intellect,” he also held that the “more the soul has been purified, the more it perceives the intelligible truth that belongs to the immaterial things” (ibid., 1:88.1). Thomas rejects this idea outright.

<sup>42</sup>“Now, the aforementioned light is a certain principle of divine knowledge, because the created intellect is elevated by it to the seeing of the divine substance” (Thomas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, 3:55.2; see also idem, *Summa Theologica*, 1:12.1-2, 3, 6-7). As Thomas draws this comparison of illumination-revelation and light, he quotes the Apostle Paul approvingly: “No man knows the things of a man, but the spirit of man that is in him. So the things also that are of God, no man knows, but the Spirit of God (Thomas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, 3:59.10; cf. 1 Cor 2:11). In this sense, as Thomas relates in his *Summa Theologica*, as the Spirit makes known God to the believer, the Holy Spirit can be said “to belong to someone” (Thomas, *Summa Theologica*, 1:38.1). “Hence, when the active intellect has been perfectly united with us in such a way that we are able to have perfect intellectual understanding through it, then we will understand separated substances through the passive intellect that is united with us” (ibid., 1:88.1). In other words, through this internal revelation, people may understand things that are only spiritually discerned. It is also important to note that, for Thomas, such internal revelation does not reveal the divine substances perfectly. He says again, “So, it is impossible for the created intellect, by means of the aforementioned light, to see the divine substance as perfectly as its perfect capacity to be seen permits,” so that “it is impossible, then, for the created intellect to comprehend the divine substance” (ibid., 3:55.2).

effects of divinity in tending towards divine fulfillment” of knowledge.<sup>43</sup> Therefore, like Augustine before him, Thomas conceives of illumination that unveils true and proper cognition; in fact, as Gabriel Moran succinctly summarizes Thomas: “Revelation was conceived of as an illumination, an imprint of the divine intellect upon man’s knowing power.”<sup>44</sup> Moran’s insight here also explains Thomas’ own definition of theology: theology “is taught by God, teaches God, leads to God.”<sup>45</sup> In the end, therefore, Thomas understands revelation in both its external and internal dimensions.

Bonaventure, Thomas’ Franciscan contemporary at the University of Paris, more clearly and profoundly elaborates the relationship between external and internal revelation. First, he asserts that the Triune God reveals himself externally through his Word.<sup>46</sup> As he offers in his *Breviloquium*, the logical starting point of theology is “the

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<sup>43</sup>Thomas, *Summa Theologica*, 2-2:1.1; cf. 2-2:2.9. Several Latin versions use “affects” (instead of “effects”) depending upon the emphasis given in Thomas. See Thomas, *On Faith: Summa Theologica, Part 2-2, Questions 1-16 of St. Thomas Aquinas*, trans. Mark D. Jordan (London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1990), 33n4. Or, as Thomas explains hereafter, “One who believes does have a sufficient motive for believing, namely, the authority of God’s teaching, confirmed by miracles and—what is greater—the inner inspiration of God inviting him to believe. Thus he does not give credit lightly” (Thomas, *Summa Theologica*, 2-2:2.9). In other words, anticipating John Calvin later, Thomas affirms the inner testimony of the Spirit that sparks a certain unveiling of knowledge. Indeed, even faith requires an act of God “moving inwardly through grace” (ibid., 1:62.2.3, see also 2-1:109.6; 2-2:6.1). As Herman Bavinck comments on Thomas and Catholic theology (Vatican I), he concludes that he “in fact adopts the same subjective standpoint [i.e., illumination] as the churches of the Reformation . . . It is the Spirit of God alone who can make a person inwardly certain of the truth of divine revelation (Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, ed. John Bolt, trans. John Vriend [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003], 1:578-79).

<sup>44</sup>Gabriel Moran, *Theology of Revelation* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1966), 82; see also Latourelle, *Theology of Revelation*, 166, 377, 381-83; Schumacher, *Divine Illumination*, 176. While it is true that Thomas sometimes argues against forms of illumination, he is targeting Bonaventure’s Franciscan brand of illumination, whereby the knower is able to transcend the finite and know infallibly (Schumacher, *Divine Illumination*, 174-75). Thomas and other contemporaries also taught that people are illumined with God’s revelation in the sacraments. For a fascinating discussion, see F. X. Durrwell, *In the Redeeming Christ* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1963), 226-28.

<sup>45</sup>Thomas, *Summa Theologica*, 1:1.7; lit., *a Deo docetur, Deum docet, ad Deum ducit*. The succinct and beautiful translation above can be found in Francis Turretin (*Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, trans. George Musgrave Giger, ed. James T. Dennison, Jr. [Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 1992], 1:1.7 [topic:question.paragraph]) and Geerhardus Vos (*Biblical Theology*, v).

<sup>46</sup>While Bonaventure generally ties revelation to the Word or Scripture, it is true that he also spoke of the world as external revelation of God. As he comments in Luke 9:28, for example, he asserts that a mountain is “suitable for contemplation and prayer” and is thus naturally “fitting for divine revelation” in its own right, namely, as it reflects the glory of God through its elevation, beauty, and splendor (Bonaventure, *Commentary on the Gospel of Luke*, trans. Robert J. Karris [Saint Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute, 2001-2004]: 2:9.46 [v. 28]).

Most Blessed Trinity,” the source of all creation and truth.<sup>47</sup> The Triune God reveals himself through his threefold Word: the Uncreated, the Incarnate, and the Inspired Word.<sup>48</sup> Within this context, he especially ties revelation to the third sense, that is, the inspired Word of Holy Scripture: “Scripture does not take its starting-point in human inquiry; rather it flows from divine revelation.”<sup>49</sup> As Zachary Hayes notes, “Thus, in Bonaventure’s view, we must begin with faith in the revelation given us in Christ [i.e., Scripture]. From there, we can proceed to philosophy [and] theology.”<sup>50</sup> Bonaventure elaborates the external form of revelation in terms of the Word of God.

Second, Bonaventure argues that this external dimension of revelation is not the total sum of revelation. He asserts that Scripture is the means by which the Spirit is poured into our hearts; this Spirit, moreover, reveals inward understanding to believers as

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<sup>47</sup>Bonaventure, *Breviloquium*, trans. and ed. Dominic V. Monti (Saint Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Publications, 2005), prologue, 0.1. Bonaventure begins his discussion here by quoting Paul’s words in Eph 3:14-19, and applying these words to the Triune God in revelation. It ought to be noted that his *Breviloquium* is unique among the mediaeval books. Namely, on the one hand, it offers a more fully synthesized method of thought than anything previously in the Middle Ages (Thomas included), and on the other, it uses a purely deductive form of reasoning whereby self-evident first principle proceed to particulars (see Dominic V. Monti, “Introduction,” in *Breviloquium*, trans. and ed. Dominic V. Monti, *Works of St. Bonaventure*, vol. 9 [Saint Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Publications, 2005], xxii-xxxviii). As Alexander Gerken has observed, “its literary genre is matched by nothing comparable in the whole of the Middle Ages” (Alexander Gerken, “Identity and Freedom: Bonaventure’s Position and Method,” trans. Myles Parsons, *Greyfriars Review* 4, no. 3 [1990]: 95). Or, as the distinguished late historian, Henri de Lubac, once said, in his “harmonious density, [Bonaventure] exhibits an overall synthetic power that was perhaps never equaled” (Henri de Lubac, *Medieval Exegesis: The Four Senses of Scripture*, trans. E. M. Macierowski [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998- 2009], 3:317; cf. idem, *Exégèse médiévale*, part 2 [Paris: Aubier, 1961], 425).

<sup>48</sup>Bonaventure’s understanding of the Word is rich and textured. In *On the Six Days of Creation*, for example, Bonaventure states, “The key of contemplation [of the Word] is a three-fold understanding—that of the Uncreated Word through which all things were made, that of the Incarnate Word through which all things are restored, and that of the Inspired Word through which all things are revealed” (Bonaventure, *On the Six Days of Creation*, trans. Jose De Vinck [Paterson, NJ: St. Anthony Guild, 1970], 3.2, cf. 9:1-8; idem, *Breviloquium*, 4.1).

<sup>49</sup>Bonaventure, *Breviloquium*, 0.2. Or, as he writes beforehand, Paul “intimates that Scripture takes its origin from an inflowing of the Most Blessed Trinity; that its manner of proceeding corresponds to the demands of our human capacities; and that its purpose or fruit is a superabundance of overflowing happiness” (ibid., 0.1). While a full explanation of Bonaventure’s hermeneutical method would be helpful to show his position on its revelatory value, such a description would be voluminous (see Bonaventure, *Breviloquium*, 0.3-6.6). For a helpful introduction, see J. Guy Bougerol, *Introduction to the Works of Bonaventure*, trans. Jose de Vinck (New York: St. Anthony Guild, 1964).

<sup>50</sup>Zachary Hayes, *What Manner of Man? Sermons on Christ by St. Bonaventure* [Chicago: Franciscan Herald, 1974], 6-7; cf. George H. Tavard, *Transiency and Permanence: The Nature of Theology According to St Bonaventure* (St. Bonaventure, NY: The Franciscan Institute, 1954), 33-34.

he ties them to Christ and, thus, into the Father.<sup>51</sup> Therefore, the Incarnate Word through the Spirit is the “interior teacher and no truth is known except through Him, not by His speaking as we speak, but by His enlightening us interiorly.”<sup>52</sup> “Revelation is,” as Latourelle summarizes him, “light to the mind.”<sup>53</sup> Revelation is necessary because, according to Bonaventure, true knowledge requires both immutability on the part of the external object (that is, God or Scripture) and infallibility on the part of the internal subject (that is, an illumined person).<sup>54</sup> Illumination, in this sense, bonds the person to the

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<sup>51</sup>“It is from him [the Father], through his Son, Jesus Christ, that the Holy Spirit flows also into us. It is through that same Spirit, who apportions gifts and allots to each one according to his will, that faith is given, and it is through faith that Christ dwells in our hearts. This is the knowledge of Jesus Christ, from which source the authority and the understanding of all Sacred Scripture flow. Hence no one can begin to comprehend it, unless that person has been first infused with faith in Christ [by the Spirit]—the lamp, the door, and the very foundation of all Scripture.” (Bonaventure, *Breviloquium*, 0.2). By “infused,” Bonaventure in this case means “supernatural illuminations” that unveil the reality of Scripture to the believer (ibid.).

<sup>52</sup>Bonaventure, *On the Six Days of Creation*, 12.5. Moreover, he continues, “by his most clear ideas He shines upon the dark ideas of our minds” (ibid.; cf. Copleston, *A History of Philosophy*, 2:289; Lacoste, “Revelation,” 3:1386). In other words, Jesus Christ is the exemplary (and efficient) cause of knowledge, the one who illumines within. Bonaventure also begins with Christ as the exemplary cause of knowledge in the *Journey of the Mind into God*: “In this way . . . He [Christ] might give illumination to the eyes of our mind to point our feet in the direction of peace, which reaches beyond perception [namely, the ascent]” (Bonaventure, *Journey of the Mind into God*, trans. Opera Omnia S Bonaventurae [Grand Rapids: Christian Classics Ethreal Library, 2002], accessed February 6, 2014, [http://www.documentacatholicaomnia.eu/03d/12211274,\\_Bonaventura,\\_The\\_Journey\\_Of\\_The\\_Mind\\_Into\\_God,\\_EN.pdf](http://www.documentacatholicaomnia.eu/03d/12211274,_Bonaventura,_The_Journey_Of_The_Mind_Into_God,_EN.pdf), 0.1). For a good discussion of Bonaventure and the centrality of Christ in metaphysics, which includes illumination and the soul’s ascent, and also speaks about its contemporary applications, see Ilia Delio, “Theology, Metaphysics, and the Centrality of Christ” *Theological Studies* 68 (2007): 254-73.

<sup>53</sup>Latourelle, *Theology of Revelation*, 155. He continues, “Reveal means thus to illuminate the mind on a subject which was darkness, secret, mystery” (ibid., 156). In other words, “Revelation, according to Saint Bonaventure, designates in the first place the illuminating activity of God or the subjective illumination which results from this activity” (ibid., 158).

<sup>54</sup>Bonaventure, *Disputed Questions on the Knowledge of Christ*, trans. and ed. Zachary Hayes (Saint Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Publications, 2005), 4:17-34.121-26. His basic point is that objects of knowledge must be “immutable” and judgments of the mind must be (somehow) “infallible” or else the “mind is capable of being deceived” (ibid., 4:17-21.121). Bonaventure does not imply that all such knowledge is immutable/infallible, but rather that there is something that must be fixed on both ends for actual knowledge to happen (see Bonaventure, *Journey of the Mind into God*, 0.1, 1.8). In other words, Bonaventure, like Augustine before him, who he incessantly follows, does not deny Aristotle’s and Aquinas’ concept of abstraction, but he does say that abstraction is not enough without illumination (Copleston, *A History of Philosophy*, 2:289). Bonaventure therefore (again) follows Augustine by positing the necessity of spiritual illumination on account of people’s sin. See Bonaventure, *The Threefold Way*, in *Writings on Spiritual Life*, trans. and ed. F. Edward Coughlin (Saint Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Publications, 2006), 83-87, 97, 98-99, 101. However, there is at least one notable difference between Augustine and Bonaventure on the issue of illumination; namely, whereas the former argued that illumination began a cognitive growth process, the latter argued that, through illumination, the person could know something infallibly, given the fact that God impressed that *a priori* concept onto the mind (Schumacher, *Divine Illumination*, 143-53). Indeed, it is likely Bonaventure’s exceedingly high standard of knowledge (as infallible) that led to the death of the Augustinian concept of illumination (see ibid., 234-39).

object in a way that he or she can make true, stable, and necessary judgments concerning an object in the world.<sup>55</sup> In the end, therefore, Bonaventure elaborates both dimensions of revelation while also emphasizing that the two dimensions are one organic act of the Triune God (Father→Son→*Spirit*→Son→Father). In this manner, Bonaventure paves the way for a more united understanding of revelation as external and internal.

In conclusion, the two University of Paris theologians assert that revelation contains an immutable, external object (that is, God) and an infallible, internal subject (that is, an illumined person). For Thomas, revelation is conceived of a divine act whereby the Spirit of God illuminates the human mind to understand the exemplary idea (*Logos*) of God. Bonaventure more explicitly relates this conception to the Trinity of God, so that revelation is an organic act of the Triune God wherein the Word and Spirit mutually lead to the knowledge of God. For both writers, revelation consists of the two basic dimensions, the external Word and the internal Spirit.

### **The Reformation and Post-Reformation Eras**

In many ways, the external/internal distinction reaches its zenith in the Reformation and post-Reformation. While Gabriel Moran argues that the Reformers fail “to carry the revelatory action [of Scripture and preaching] beyond verbalization to a completion which Scripture itself indicates,”<sup>56</sup> this kind of argument is unjustifiable. While the Reformers at times emphasized the external Word, they simultaneously brought out the necessity of the internal Word; thus, in many ways, they explicitly

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<sup>55</sup>As Bonaventure forcefully writes, “For if to have real knowledge means to know that a thing cannot possibly be otherwise, it is necessary that [God] alone should cause us to know, who knows the truth and has the truth in himself” (Bonaventure, *On the Six Days of Creation*, 12:5). As White says, illumination for Bonaventure gives “the archetypal source of both the being of the object and the person’s knowledge” (John R. White, “Divine Light and Human Wisdom: Transcendental Elements in Bonaventure’s Illumination Theory,” *IPQ* 48, no. 2 [2008]: 183). This is clearly a supernatural grace (Bonaventure, *Collations on the Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit*, trans. and ed. Robert J. Karris [Saint Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Publications, 2008], 83-104, 161-80).

<sup>56</sup>Moran, *Theology of Revelation*, 124. Dulles makes this same error (Dulles, *Revelation Theology*, 48-49).

synthesized the past understandings of revelation into two *principia*, an external and an internal.<sup>57</sup> In other words, these Reformers contended for both dimensions of revelation. This chapter shall describe the views of important contributors and contributions: John Calvin, the Reformed confessions, and Francis Turretin.<sup>58</sup>

John Calvin, “preeminently a theologian of revelation,” argues clearly for a distinction between these two forms of revelation.<sup>59</sup> Before addressing these explicitly, however, it is important to understand the Genevan Reformer’s explicit epistemological starting point:

Our wisdom, in so far as it ought to be deemed true and solid wisdom, consists almost entirely of two parts: the knowledge of God and of ourselves. But as these are connected together by many ties, it is not easy to determine which of the two precedes and gives birth to the other.<sup>60</sup>

Human wisdom includes both knowledge of God and knowledge of ourselves.<sup>61</sup> While

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<sup>57</sup>As Otto Weber rightly notes, the Reformers and Post-Reformers argued for the twofold distinction because of the problems associated with the authority of the church in Catholicism, on the one hand, and the significance of the “inner word” in Protestantism, on the other. The response, therefore, was to tie as closely as possible the external and internal (Word and Spirit) into one organic relationship in God (see Otto Weber, *Foundations of Dogmatics*, trans. Darrell L. Guder [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981], 1:228-29).

<sup>58</sup>There are many other notable Reformed and Post-Reformed theologians who would affirm the substance of the thesis. For example, Henry Bullinger can also speak about the internal foundation of revelation (that is, faith) simultaneously as he speaks about its external foundation (that is, the Word) (cf. Henry Bullinger, *The Decades of Henry Bullinger*, ed. Thomas Harding [Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage, 2004], 1:1-5.36-104). In the context of the Word of God given (see 1:1.36-80), Bullinger avers that the Word is only believed as God’s “Holy Spirit inspireth faith into our hearts” and so “God is the cause of all goodness” (ibid., 1:2.84).

<sup>59</sup>Dulles, *Revelation Theology*, 47.

<sup>60</sup>John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeil, trans. Ford Lewis Battles, The Library of Christian Classics (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1960), 1:1.1. As E. A. Dowey remarks, “Calvin’s thought has its whole existence within the realm of God as revealer and man as knower” (E. A. Dowey, Jr., *The Knowledge of God in Calvin’s Theology* [New York: Herder, 1952], 3).

<sup>61</sup>Such knowledge is, of course, attained through the faculties of the human soul. These include, among other things, the five senses, fantasy (i.e., the faculty that “distinguishes those things which have been apprehended by common sense”), reason, and understanding; and then also the appetitive faculties, which are will, anger, and desire (Calvin, *Institutes*, 1:15.6). In the end, therefore, the understanding leads and governs the soul, and the will, the foremost appetitive faculty, follows its judgment (ibid.). The fall left human understanding and judgment in a weakened, depraved, and corrupted—but not obliterated—state (ibid., 1:15.8; 2:2.12, 25). “But I leave it to the philosophers to discuss these faculties in their subtle way,” he elaborates, “for the upholding of godliness a simple definition [of the soul] will be enough for us. I, indeed, agree that the things they teach are true, not only enjoyable, but also profitable to learn, and skillfully assembled by them. And I do not forbid those who are desirous of learning to study them” (ibid.; cf. Paul Helm, *John Calvin’s Ideas* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004], 133-37).

Calvin elaborates his central epistemological statement in many ways, the most crucial implication for this discussion is that he combines both the external and internal aspects of revelation into one.<sup>62</sup> In other words, in order to know God and self correctly, one must receive the disclosure of God through the Word and the work of the Spirit.

First, he stresses the external dimension of revelation in God's self-disclosure that is perceived in the world. The source of this revelation is the Triune God, and it is exemplified in his Word.<sup>63</sup> God reveals himself in the things that he has made so that the disclosure of God is clear in the natural world and the human conscience. Commenting on Romans 1:20, Calvin affirms that, through the "manifestation of God" in the natural world, "we can arrive at the knowledge of his [God's] eternal power and divinity."<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>62</sup>For example, Paul Helm helpfully discusses Calvin's understanding of revelation largely in terms of the external and internal proofs (Helm, *John Calvin's Ideas*, 246-81). Abd-el-Masih Istafanous likewise displays the balance inherent in Calvin's argument as he shows Calvin's use of Word and Spirit throughout his discussions of revelation, illumination, sealing, and inspiration (Abd-el-Masih Istafanous, *Calvin's Doctrine of Biblical Authority* [Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2010], 93-172). Istafanous also correctly notes Calvin's main intention in opening up his *Institutes* with the knowledge of God and of ourselves: it is to show that the knowledge of God (as creator and redeemer) and the knowledge of ourselves (as created and redeemed) closely corresponds so that faith (which consists in the illumination of the mind and sealing of the heart) is at the "basis" of this twofold knowledge (ibid., 3-36, 119). Therefore, while Calvin certainly discusses revelation in its external and internal forms, as Edward Adams notes, he also offers a "somewhat more sophisticated and interesting" account that is "philosophically informed as well as biblically based" (Edward Adams, "Calvin's View of Natural Knowledge of God," *IJST* 3 [2001]: 292, cf. 287-88).

<sup>63</sup>In his comments on John 1:1-3, for example, Calvin argues that God supernaturally and naturally reveals himself through his *Logos*, for "Speech is said to be among men the image of the mind, so it is not inappropriate to apply this to God, and to say that he reveals himself to us by his Speech (Calvin, *The Gospel According to John*, trans. William Pringle, The Calvin Translation Society [repr., Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996], 26). Indeed, because God is invisible, only his image could reveal him to us, thus expressing Calvin's distinction between God *in se* and God *quoad nos* (see Calvin, *Institutes*, 1:2.2; 1:5.1; 1:11.2-3; cf. Helm, *John Calvin's Ideas*, 11-16; for a fuller understanding of the Triune God's involvement here, see Calvin, *Institutes*, 1:13.1-18; 3:21.5). Commenting on Colossians 1:15, Calvin explains further the revelation of/by the *Logos*: "that it is in him alone that God, who is otherwise invisible, is manifested to us" (Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistle of Paul to the Philippians, Colossians, and Thessalonians*, trans. and ed. John Pringle, The Calvin Translation Society [repr., Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996], 149). He later continues, "For in Christ he shows us his righteousness, goodness, wisdom, power, in short, his entire self" as he is a "mirror" of God (ibid., 150). The Word is, in other words, the perfect revelation of God.

<sup>64</sup>Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Romans*, trans. and ed. John Owen, The Calvin Translation Society (repr., Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), 71, 70. He continues by explaining why the knowledge of God's power and divinity is clear from creation: "for he who is the framer of all things, must necessarily be without beginning and from himself. When we arrive at this point, the divinity becomes known to us, which cannot exist except accompanied with all the attributes of God, since they are all included under that idea" (ibid.).

Regarding the human conscience, Calvin plainly avers that even the Gentiles have a “natural light” that is “imprinted on their hearts” that allows people to know the difference between right and wrong.<sup>65</sup> However, Calvin is adamant that these means of revelation ultimately fail to produce personal knowledge of the Creator and Redeemer.<sup>66</sup> Therefore, God reveals himself more clearly in Scripture, which, for the regenerate, is the “spectacles” or “light of his Word” by which the created world and human conscience is understood.<sup>67</sup> Indeed, God speaks to us in Scripture as the writers are “organs of the Holy Spirit” and thus speak only God’s words.<sup>68</sup> In other words, Calvin closely attaches three

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<sup>65</sup>He suggests this in the context of his comments on Rom 2:14-15 (Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Romans*, 97). He elaborates in his *Institutes*: “There is in the human mind, and indeed by natural instinct, an awareness of divinity. This we take to be beyond controversy” (Calvin, *Institutes*, 1:3.1; cf. Helm, *John Calvin’s Ideas*, 222-24, see also 225-45). This “awareness of divinity” may also express itself as “anxiety of conscience” (ibid., 1:3.2). While it is true that Calvin does not use the word, “revelation,” in the context of the discussion in his commentaries or *Institutes*, he neither does so with regards to Scripture (Helm, *John Calvin’s Ideas*, 246). Indeed, for both creation and Scripture, while Calvin does not use the word, he uses similar conceptions to revelation. Following the Stoic dogma of “preconception of God,” Calvin suggests that Paul understands that this kind of general revelation is “implicated by nature in the hearts of men,” namely, they have “notions of justice and rectitude” so that “they are yet by no means wholly destitute of the knowledge of what is right and just” (Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Romans*, 96-97; cf. Adams, “Calvin’s View of Natural Knowledge of God,” 284-85n14-15). Therefore, even for the Gentiles, Paul shows that “ignorance is in vain pretended as an excuse” (Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Romans*, 96; cf. idem, *Institutes*, 1:3.2). By the “revelation” of creation/conscience, therefore, people know something about God and themselves.

<sup>66</sup>As he writes, “on account of our blindness, it [the “manifestation of God” in creation] is not found to be sufficient” (Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Romans*, 71). He summarizes well in his *Institutes*: “As experience shows, God has sown a seed of religion in all men. But scarcely one man in a hundred is met with who fosters it . . . much less shows fruit in season” (Calvin, *Institutes*, 1:4.1, cf. 1:6.1).

<sup>67</sup>Calvin, *Institutes*, 1:5.4-5; 1:6.1; cf. 1.4.1. Karl Barth has argued that the Reformed emphasis on the existence and nature of God discernible in nature has led to a rationalizing tendency in natural theology, especially in the post-Reformation era (Karl Barth, *The Knowledge of God and the Service of God according to the Teaching of the Reformation*, trans. J. L. M. Haire and Ian Henderson [London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1938], 57; cf. idem, *Church Dogmatics* [New York: T & T Clark International, 2004], 2.1:127). However, this kind of argument misses the mark; for Calvin, the Reformed, and post-Reformed theologians have always argued that, while something can be discerned from the natural world, such knowledge is suppressed and twisted by sinful minds until the fuller revelation of Christ (see Calvin, *Institutes*, 1:2.1, 4.1; 2:6.1; cf. Muller, *Unaccommodated Calvin*, 133-38; idem, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics: The Rise and Development of Reformed Orthodoxy, ca. 1520 to ca. 1725*, 2nd ed. [Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003], 153-54; idem, “Duplex cognition Dei in the Theology of Early Reformed Orthodoxy,” *Sixteenth Century Journal* 10, no. 2 [1979]:51-61; Downey, *The Knowledge of God in Calvin’s Theology*, 41-49).

<sup>68</sup>God speaks to us in Scripture, for “the prophets did not speak at their own suggestion, but that, being organs of the Holy Spirit, they only uttered what they had been commissioned from heaven to declare” (Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistles to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon*, trans. William Pringle, The Calvin Translation Society [repr., Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996], 248-49). Or, as he says in his *Institutes*, “Scripture, gathering up the otherwise confused knowledge of God in our minds, having dispersed our dullness, clearly shows us the true God.” If we turn aside from this revelatory “rule of eternal truth,” then

realities to revelation: the external objects of the natural world, human conscience, and Scripture. These things are external objects for a person to know and understand.

Second, revelation includes an internal dimension. Indeed, following his delineation in the opening of his *Institutes*, Calvin avers that there are two sorts of knowledge to be had: the first corresponds to external knowledge about who God the creator is, and the second corresponds to “inner knowledge” that knows God as mediator and redeemer.<sup>69</sup> Calvin elsewhere more clearly identifies this latter kind of knowledge as the internal dimension, which includes the illumination, testimony, and/or sealing of the Spirit through Scripture.<sup>70</sup> In each case, Calvin refers to the work in which the Spirit,

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we shall be found in an “inexplicable labyrinth” of our own error (Calvin, *Institutes*, 1:6.1, see also 2-4; 1:5-6). In this manner, Calvin is affirming the principle of *sola scriptura*, namely, that Scripture has authority over tradition and thus interprets itself. The function of this principle before the Reformation is summarized well by Heiko Oberman, *The Harvest of Medieval Theology*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967), 201, 361-63, 377, 380-90. Of course, as Calvin declares throughout, even while the Scriptures truly and accurately communicate God’s divine revelation, there is also a sense in which God’s revelation to us is accommodated due to his qualitative distinction to us (see Calvin, *Institutes*, 1:13.1; 1:17.12-13; cf. Helm, *John Calvin’s Ideas*, 184-208).

<sup>69</sup>“First in order came that kind of knowledge by which one is permitted to grasp who that God is who founded and governs the universe. Then that other inner knowledge was added, which alone quickens dead souls, whereby God is known not only as the Founder of the universe and the sole Author and Ruler of all that is made, but also in the person of the Mediator as the Redeemer” (Calvin, *Institutes*, 1:6.1). Paul Helm suggests that Calvin here is following Thomas Aquinas (and other medieval scholastics) by insisting upon a distinction between “external proofs” and “internal proofs”: the external proofs are evident or reasonable opinion that supports divine revelation in some manner (e.g., God as creator or Scripture as authoritative), whereas the internal proofs are the testimony of the Spirit whereby the divinity of revelation (e.g., Scripture) is not opinion but certainty (Helm, *John Calvin’s Ideas*, 248, cf. 248-81; for an example of Calvin’s distinction between “opinion” and “certainty,” see Calvin, *Institutes*, 1:7.4).

<sup>70</sup>“Therefore, the Spirit, promised to us, has not the task of inventing new and unheard-of revelations, or of forging a new kind of doctrine, to lead us away from the received doctrine of the gospel, but of sealing our minds with that very doctrine which is commended by the gospel” (*Institutes*, 1:9.1; cf. Istafanous, *Calvin’s Doctrine of Biblical Authority*, 95). Calvin here and elsewhere closely ties the three conceptions together, although he generally attaches testimony to the Scriptures, illumination to the mind, and sealing to the heart (Istafanous, *Calvin’s Doctrine of Biblical Authority*, 94-95). The testimony, Calvin says, refers to the believer’s assent and yielding to Scripture and it consists in being “inwardly taught” or “instructed by the Spirit” (Calvin, *Institutes*, 1:7.4-5; 1:8.11; 1:1.4; cf. 1:7.4-5; 1:8.1; R. C. Sproul, “The Internal Testimony of the Holy Spirit,” in *Inerrancy*, ed. Norman L. Geisler [Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 1980], 341). The testimony is therefore also a “seal” and “guarantee” that engrafts the believer in Christ and thus confirms the faith of the elect (Calvin, *Institutes*, 1:7.4; 3:1.1; cf. Robert L. Reymond, “Calvin’s Doctrine of Holy Scripture,” in *A Theological Guide to Calvin’s Institutes: Essays and Analyses*, ed. David W. Hall and Peter A. Lillback [Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2008], 49). The testimony and seal, therefore, are assenting realities that transcend reason (Calvin, *Institutes*, 1:7.4-5; 1:7.1), “for as God alone is a fit witness of himself in his Word, so also the Word will not find acceptance in men’s hearts before it is sealed by the inward testimony of the Spirit” (Calvin, *Institutes*, 1:7.4). This idea does not implicate that the testimony is contrary to reason; rather, the testimony transcends it or goes beyond it (Calvin, *Institutes*, 1:8.1-13; cf. Sproul, “The Internal Testimony of the Holy Spirit,” 341-43; Reymond, “Calvin’s Doctrine of Holy Scripture,” 51).

acting against darkened and sinful people, rejuvenates the human soul (i.e., understanding and will, or mind and heart) and gives faith.<sup>71</sup> This action, as he elsewhere clarifies, is precisely revelation, for it is the unveiling or disclosure of personal perception to our soul so that “we are lifted up in mind and heart above our understanding.”<sup>72</sup> Therefore, Calvin holds that the external revelation (Word) and internal revelation (work of the Spirit) are joined by a “mutual bond.”<sup>73</sup> He cogently reflects the argument of this entire project:

The testimony of the Spirit is more excellent than all reason. For as God alone is a fit witness of himself in his Word, so also the Word will not find acceptance in men’s hearts before it is sealed by the inward testimony of the Spirit. The same Spirit, therefore, who has spoken through the mouths of the prophets must penetrate into our hearts to persuade us that they faithfully proclaimed what had been divinely

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<sup>71</sup>First, he refers to illumination as the rejuvenation of the mind (Calvin, *Institutes*, 3:2.33), for it has to do with knowledge and understanding and thus judgment (ibid., 2:2.20-21). Second, he refers to illumination as the rejuvenation of the will, for it has to do with desire, aspiration, morality, and obedience (ibid., 2:2.26; 2:7.12). Third, illumination refers to the Spirit giving the believer faith (ibid., 3:1.4). As Parker duly notes in the *Institutes*, faith is the primary result of the Spirit’s work in regeneration, justification, prayer, and election, each of which follows the illumination of the Spirit (Parker, *Calvin*, 78-84). Indeed, this work is so necessary because people are sinful and need “the renovation of the whole nature” (Calvin, *The Gospel According to John*, 108). Illumination thus makes the person a new creature and gives the person certain knowledge (Calvin, *Institutes*, 3:1.4). This is why Calvin’s most clear definition of faith is grounded in the illumination of the Holy Spirit: faith is “a firm and certain knowledge of God’s benevolence toward us, founded upon the truth of the freely given promise in Christ, both revealed to our minds and sealed upon our hearts through the Holy Spirit” (ibid., 3:2.7). See also John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Catholic Epistles*, trans. and ed. John Owen (repr., Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), 390; cf. Wendel, *Calvin*, 157; Sproul, “The Internal Testimony of the Holy Spirit,” 341.

<sup>72</sup>Calvin writes, “As we cannot come to Christ unless we are drawn by the Spirit, so when we are drawn we are lifted up in mind and heart about our understanding. For the soul, illumined by him, takes on a new keenness, as it were, to contemplate the heavenly mysteries, whose splendor had previously blinded it. And man’s understanding, thus beamed by the light of Holy Spirit, then at last begins to taste those things which belong to the kingdom of God.... Accordingly, it [the Word] cannot penetrate into our minds unless the Spirit, as the inner teacher, through his illumination makes entry for it” (Calvin, *Institutes*, 3:2.34; cf. 3:2.36; Allison, *Historical Theology*, 485-87). In other words, God removes the veil from peoples’ eyes so that they can discern the truth. As he comments in Ps 119:17-18, “the prophet here means that we are blind amid the clearest light, until he [the Spirit] remove [sic] the veil from our eyes. When he [the believer] confesses that his eyes are veiled and shut, rendering him unable to discern the light of the heavenly doctrine [of the gospel], until God, by the invisible grace of his Spirit, open them, he speaks as if he were deploring his own blindness, and that of the whole human race” (Calvin, *Commentary on the Book of Psalms*, trans. James Anderson, The Calvin Translation Society [repr., Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996], 2:413). This “illumination of the Spirit of God” is not against “the external word,” but rather it “enables us to discern the light of life, that God manifests by his word” (ibid.).

<sup>73</sup>Calvin, *Institutes*, 1:9.1-3. Indeed, the end of this mutual bond is that the Word is confirmed by the Spirit, and the Spirit “shows forth his power” when the Word received its due recognition (ibid.). “Therefore, Scripture will ultimately suffice for a saving knowledge of God only when its certainty is founded upon the inward persuasion of the Holy Spirit” (ibid., 1:8.13; cf. Helm, *John Calvin’s Ideas*, 280-81). In other words, the church should “be taught by the Holy Spirit through God’s Word” (ibid., 4:8.13, see also 4:8.11). The authority of revelation is thus Word and Spirit. For a succinct explanation of Calvin that properly ties both these dimensions together with regard to the authority of Scripture, see Allison, *Historical Theology*, 89-90, 485-89.

commanded.<sup>74</sup>

The revelatory work of God includes both the Word and the work of the Spirit in inseparable unity. It includes God speaking words to people and his sealing of its reality in their hearts. For Calvin, there is an external and internal dimension of knowledge and revelation.

Following in the wake of Calvin and other Reformed theologians, the post-Reformed confessions and theologians likewise speak of revelation primarily in terms of the Word of God. Two understandings of the Word are especially pertinent: the scriptural Word and the inward Word.<sup>75</sup> The former corresponds to the external dimension of revelation, while the latter corresponds to the internal dimension of revelation.

First, the confessions construe revelation externally. As they assert, revelation is a divine work of the Triune God.<sup>76</sup> They then naturally proceed to understand God by

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<sup>74</sup>Calvin, *Institutes*, 1:7:4. Paul Helm helpfully reminds the reader that Calvin, in this assertion, is not “new” but following the “old” medieval distinction (cf. Thomas, *Summa Theologica*, 2-2:2.9). What makes Calvin unique is the fact that he brings the internal proofs (i.e., the testimony of the Spirit) “to the forefront and stresses [it]” (Helm, *John Calvin’s Ideas*, 252).

<sup>75</sup>According to the Second Helvetic Confession, for example, the Word may refer to Christ, Scripture, or inward illumination (Second Helvetic Confession, chap. 1, in *The Creeds of Christendom, with a History and Critical Notes*, ed. Philip Schaff, 6th ed. [1931; repr., Grand Rapids: Baker, 1983], 3:831-33). This kind of distinction is also clear in the beginning of the Gallican Confession (Gallican Confession, art. 1-5, in *Creeds*, 3:360). Richard Muller expands on the threefold conception and argues that there was a fourfold understanding of the Word: (1) the eternal Word of God in the personal and archetypal knowledge of God, (2) the unwritten revelation of God in the prophets and apostles, (3) the written Word of God in Scripture, and (4) the inward Word of the Spirit that testifies to the truth of Scripture (Richard A. Muller, “Christ—the Revelation of the Revealer? Brunner and Reformed Orthodoxy on the Doctrine of the Word of God,” *JETS* 26, no. 3 (1983): 311-15; idem, *PRRD*, 2:155). For the sake of simplicity and relevance, this discussion has reduced these four to three. As Muller himself recognizes, the important point is to acknowledge the fact that, while the Reformed and post-Reformed theology did not purely equate the Word and Scripture, neither did they deny that the Scripture itself is (one unerring form of) the Word (Muller, *PRRD*, 2:182-83).

<sup>76</sup>The various confessions establish this idea in one of two ways: (1) they begin with God himself and nearly simultaneously proceed to God’s revelation of himself, or (2) they begin with God’s revelation and proceed to God himself. The Gallican and Belgic Confessions favor the first approach (Gallican Confession, art. 2, in *Creeds*, 3:359-60; Belgic Confession, art. 1-2, in *Creeds*, 3:383-84), whereas the First and Second Helvetic Confessions favor the second (First Helvetic Confession, art. 1-2, in *Creeds*, 3:211-12; Second Helvetic Confession, chap. 1, in *Creeds*, 3:831-33). Muller calls the former approach “more straightforward” on account of (1) theological and (2) historical reasons. The theological reason is that the Gallican and Belgic Confessions rightly tie the two *principia* (God and revelation) closely. These confessions juxtapose the doctrine of God with the doctrine of Scripture so that the *principium cognoscendi* of revelation and the *principium essendi* of theology are brought together (Muller, *PRRD*, 2:151; cf. Belgic Confessions, art. 8, in *Creeds*, 3:389: “According to this truth and this Word of God, we believe in one God who is one single essence, in whom there are three persons, really, truly and eternally distinguished according to their incommunicable properties, namely, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit”). The historical reason is that, before the Reformation, it has been the custom of the church to

his works of revelation. We can therefore speak of a first form of revelation whereby God discloses himself “in his works, in their creation, as well as in their preservation and control.”<sup>77</sup> God thereafter more fully reveals himself in Scripture, the written Word of God.<sup>78</sup> In all these ways, the confessions affirm an external dimension to revelation.

The confessions also refer to the internal dimension of this revelation. For example, in the same introductory chapter wherein the Second Helvetic Confession addressed the outward Word, it also addresses the inward Word. It asserts, with the inauguration of the new covenant, “The instruction in true religion depends on the inward illumination of the Spirit.”<sup>79</sup> This kind of illumination is an unveiling perception for people as they are “inwardly lightened by the Holy Spirit.”<sup>80</sup> The confession also refers to illumination as “opening hearts” or “minds” and is contrasted with the “outward” ministry of preaching and Scripture.<sup>81</sup> The Gallican and Belgic Confessions likewise aver that regeneration and illumination are necessary to unveil the true reality of the gospel

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begin with God in his eternity and only briefly discuss the issue of revelation (see Muller, *PRRD*, 2:152). While this order was reversed with Polanus, Cocceius, and Turretin (in addition to the First and Second Helvetic confessions), it was never the case, as Charles McCoy argues, that the post-Reformed era began with the doctrine of God or “the Eternal Decree of predestination,” and from it “deduced their systems” (Charles S. McCoy, “Johannes Cocceius: Federal Theologians” *SJT* 16 [1963]: 369).

<sup>77</sup>“As such this God reveals himself to men; firstly in his works, in their creation, as well as in their preservation and control” (Gallican Confession, art. 2, in *Creeds*, 3:360). The Belgic Confession follows this confession closely (Belgic Confession, art. 2, in *Creeds*, 3:384; see also Westminster Confession, 1.1, in *Creeds*, 3:600-601).

<sup>78</sup>As the Second Helvetic Confession asserts, the Scripture is the “true Word of God” and “have sufficient authority of themselves” (Second Helvetic Confession, chap. 1, in *Creeds*, 3:831). Scripture therefore supersedes all human authority in “the confirmation of doctrines” and “the confutation of all errors” (ibid.; cf. Belgic Confession, art. 3, in *Creeds*, 3:385), for as the Gallican Confession expands, this Word is seen “more clearly” as it was “afterward committed to writing in the books we call the Holy Scriptures” (Gallican Confession, art. 2, in *Creeds*, 3:360). Therefore, because “we believe that the Word contained in these books has proceeded from God, and receives its authority from him alone,” even the creeds “should be examined, regulated, and reformed according to them” (Gallican Confession, art. 5, in *Creeds*, 3:362; cf. Belgic Confession, art. 2-5, in *Creeds*, 3:384-87; Westminster Confession, 1.1-1.9, in *Creeds*, 3:601-5).

<sup>79</sup>Second Helvetic Confession, chap. 1, in *Creeds*, 3:832. The confession quotes Jer 31:34, 1 Cor 3:7, and John 6:44 at this juncture.

<sup>80</sup>Ibid.

<sup>81</sup>Ibid.

contained in the Word.<sup>82</sup> The Westminster Confession, following the Second Helvetic Confession, synthesizes both dimensions under the chapter on revelation: “We acknowledge the inward illumination of the Spirit of God to be necessary for the saving understanding of such things as are revealed in the Word.”<sup>83</sup> In this manner, as Richard Muller concludes, “The orthodox also [like Calvin] find a similar internal-external distinction in the revelatory work of Christ [the Word].”<sup>84</sup> Indeed, if God must be the sole foundation of all revelation, then God must unveil both external information and internal understanding.<sup>85</sup> The confessions articulate revelation in both these capacities.

As he synthesizes much of the Reformed tradition before him, Francis Turretin likewise argues for external and internal dimensions to revelation. In his *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, Turretin defines theology in terms of a *principium externum* and *internum*.<sup>86</sup> The *principium externum* corresponds to the Word that reveals itself through

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<sup>82</sup>Indeed, following revelation of the external Word, the Gallican Confession states that the divinity and necessity of Scripture is known “not so much by the common accord and consent of the Church, as by the testimony and inward illumination of the Holy Spirit, which enables us to distinguish them from other ecclesiastical books upon which, however useful, we cannot find any articles of faith” (Gallican Confession, art. 4, in *Creeds*, 3:361-62). As the Belgic Confession clarifies, on account of this spiritual unveiling, “the very blind are able to perceive that the things foretold in them are fulfilling” (Belgic Confession, art. 5, in *Creeds*, 3:387). In other words, the Gallican Confession continues later, this internal dimension means that “we are enlightened in faith by the secret power of the Holy Spirit” (Gallican Confession, art. 21, in *Creeds*, 3:371). It continues, “By this faith we are regeneration in newness of life,” so that we may accept “the promise which is given to us by the Gospel” (ibid., art. 22, 371-72).

<sup>83</sup>Westminster Confession, 1.6, in *Creeds*, 3:603-4. In other words, “Our full persuasion and assurance of the infallible truth [of the Scripture], and divine authority thereof, is from the inward work of the Holy Spirit, bearing witness by and with the Word in our hearts” (Westminster Confession, 1.5, in *Creeds*, 3:603; for an insightful and balanced refinement of Westminster here, see John Frame, *The Doctrine of the Word of God: A Theology of Lordship* [Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2010], 312-14). The confession notably speaks about these dimensions of revelation before it proceeds to elaborate the doctrinal substance of theology. In other words, it includes the discussion of the work of the Spirit on the human heart here under the umbrella of revelation (Westminster Confession, 1.1-1.10).

<sup>84</sup>Muller, *PRRD*, 2:203. Indeed, central to these confessions and thinkers, as Muller concludes, is the fact that the “Word, in order to be effective, must not only be objectively given but also subjectively received” (ibid.).

<sup>85</sup>Or, as Muller summarizes, “For all the Reformed confessions, then, the sole foundation of all true knowledge of God is God’s own revelation” (Muller, *PRRD*, 2:153).

<sup>86</sup>The word, *principia* (sing. *principium*), is the Latin rendering of the Hebrew ראשית (“beginning”) or Greek, ἀρχή, (“beginning”), a term that Aristotle used to denote the primary source, ground, or cause of all being (*principia essendi*) or knowledge (*principia cognoscendi*). The latter will be explored in the present section, and the former will be explored in the proceeding section. In English, therefore, the term is best translated as “foundations,” but also it carries a range of meaning that the words, “foundations” and, worse yet, “principles,” cannot maintain. For clarity’s sake, therefore, the dissertation

creation, providence, conscience, and Scripture. In the works of creation and providence, God “had already clearly manifested himself,” yet “this real revelation could not be sufficient for salvation.”<sup>87</sup> In other words, while God has manifested himself in the natural order of things, this “light of nature” is insufficient for the direction of life, obtainment of happiness, and salvation itself.<sup>88</sup> Therefore, it was necessary that God should reveal himself more clearly in the Word of Scripture, which is “authentic and divine.”<sup>89</sup> It is therefore the basis of a Christian’s knowledge and obedience.<sup>90</sup> Therefore,

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will continue to use the original, *principia*, rather than translate it. For discussions of the definition of *principia*, see Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, trans. E. W. Webster et al., in vol. 8 of *Great Books of the Western World*, ed. Robert Maynard Hutchins (Chicago: William Benton, 1952), Book 1; for a more theological description, see Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 1:207-8; or Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 1:93. The nature of the *principia* in relation to Christian theology is aptly summarized by Muller: “When the question of *principia* is considered casually, we again raise the question of an essential or external foundation since theology obviously is not self-caused. In addition to this external ground, all disciplines also have their own inward or internal basis, a principium belonging to that discipline itself” (Muller, *PRRD*, 1:440; see 440ff.).

The *principia* can also refer to more narrow realities; for example, they can refer to the specific *principia* of Christian theology as inspired Scripture (*principia theologiae specialis*), or they may denote mathematical principles undergirding reality (i.e., *principia mathematica*). For the former, see Kuyper, *Principles of Sacred Theology*, 355-56, see also 341-563 (who also can speak of the *principia* in terms of general and special [see 348-405]). For the latter, see John Craige, a friend of Isaac Newton, in John Craige, *Theologiae Christianae Principia Mathematica* (London: House, 1699); cf. Richard Nash, *John Craige’s Mathematical Principles of Christian Theology* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1991). As Turretin asserts in the Reformed context, “The principle [of theology] is both external (the word of God which embraces the law and the gospel—the former setting forth the things to be done, the latter those to be known and believed, hence called the ‘mystery of godliness’ and ‘the word of life’) and internal (the Spirit who is a Spirit of truth and sanctification, of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord, Is. 11:2)” (Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, trans. George Musgrave Giger, ed. James T. Dennison, Jr. [Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 1992], 1:7.6). (Turretin asserts this twofold truth in the context of establishing that theology is both theoretical and practical, or rather, “theoretico-practical” [see *ibid.*, 1:7.1-15].) Muller also explains that, by the two *principia* of theology, external and internal, Turretin means that there are two “foundations,” for “theology obviously is not self-caused” (Muller, *PRRD*, 1:440, see also 430-50; 2:202-5).

<sup>87</sup>He uses Paul’s specific form of argument in Rom 1:19-20 (Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, 2:1.5).

<sup>88</sup>“Therefore, they [unbelievers] give as their opinion that reason (or the light of nature) is abundantly sufficient for the direction of life and the obtainment of happiness” (Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, 2:1.1; cf. 1:8.4). He immediately follows, “But the orthodox church has always believed far otherwise, maintaining the revelation of the Word of God to man to be absolutely and simply necessary for salvation,” so that the revealed Word is a seed of regeneration, the light of direction, the nourishment of our souls, and the foundation of our rest (*ibid.*, 2:1.2). In this manner, not only revelation is necessary, but also the specific form of revelation in God’s Word (and thus Scripture) is necessary (*ibid.*, see also 2:1.1-2; 2:2.1-13). For further arguments for the necessity of revelation beyond the testimony of Scripture and the church, see *ibid.*, 2:1.3-6.

<sup>89</sup>Indeed, he staunchly asserts, “Just because [the Scriptures] are from God, they must be authentic and divine” (*ibid.*, 2:4.1). “Therefore it was necessary that the defect of the former revelation (made useless and insufficient by sin) [that is, natural revelation] should be supplied by another more clear (not only as to degree, but also as to species), not only that God should use mute teachers, but that his sacred voice should also declare the excellence of his attribute, but open to us also the mystery of his will in order to our salvation” (*ibid.*, 2:1.5). For a comparison between Francis and Jean-Alphonse Turretin’s

for Turretin, there is an external principle or foundation of theology that corresponds to the Word or revelation.

The *principium internum* corresponds to the Spirit. Indeed, as Turretin incessantly argues, the internal principle of theology must be the Spirit, for God and his revelation cannot be judged by reason but only by the Spirit (through faith).<sup>91</sup> Therefore, as he begins his discussion of revelation in the Word of Scripture, he ends the topic by elaborating the necessary unveiling of the Spirit for Scripture. In other words, in the same manner that he discusses the authenticity and divinity of Scripture, Turretin discusses the testimony of the Spirit. As he asserts, the Holy Spirit testifies the reality of the Scripture to people; he does so both externally in the words of Scripture and internally in the hearts of believers.<sup>92</sup> His conclusion is rich: “Hence, we must understand by the Holy Spirit, the

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views, see Jean-Alphonse Turretin, *Cogitationes de variis theologiae capitibus*, in *Cogitationes et dissertationes theologicae. Quibus principia religionis, cum naturalis, tum revelatae, adstruuntur et defenduntur* [Geneva: Geneva House, 1737], 34-35; cf. Martin I. Klauber, *Between Reformed Scholasticism and Pan-Protestantism: Jean-Alphonse Turretin (1671-1737) and Enlightened Orthodoxy at the Academy of Geneva* (London: Associated University Press, 1994), 10, 16, 70-72, 76, 109-12.

<sup>90</sup>These books, therefore, have the “right and dignity” to be “most worthy of faith with regard to the things which they propose to be believed and of our obedience in those things which they command us to omit or to do” (Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, 2:4.3). In other words, Scripture is not like other books (i.e., atheistic view), on the one hand, or depending upon human tradition (i.e., Roman Catholic view), on the other (see *ibid.*, 2:4.2-3). He defends this claim “intrinsically and extrinsically”: “The former is the credulity in itself of the word which is always equal and consistent with itself, whether it has the testimony of men or not. The latter is the estimation or judgment of men in relation to the Scriptures, which is different as the subjects are different” (*ibid.*, 2:4.3). He thereafter defends the Scriptures extrinsically and intrinsically (*ibid.*, 2:4.4-27).

<sup>91</sup>Turretin asserts this truth in the context of a polemic against the Socinians. He asks an important question, that is, “is human reason the principle and rule by which the doctrines of the Christian religion and theology (which are objects of faith) ought to be measured?” (*ibid.*, 1:8.1). He answers his question by pointing out that the use of reason in theology is “manifold” and thus some—the Anabaptists, Lutherans, and papists—“err in defect” as they “underrate it” (*ibid.*, 1:8.2-3; cf. 1:9.1-18 for his response to these theological positions). Indeed, reason is useful as “the instrument by which or the medium through which we can be drawn to faith” (*ibid.*, 1:8.4). Reason is not, however, the first principle from which doctrines are proved or the foundation on which they are built (*ibid.*). Others affirm this falsity and thus “err in excess who attribute to reason in matters of faith more than its due (as the Socinians)” (*ibid.*, 1:8.2). Against these men, he declares that (1) “reason of unregenerate man is blinded,” (2) “the mysteries of faith are beyond the sphere of reason,” (3) “faith is not ultimately referred to reason, so that I ought to believe because I so understand,” (4) “the Holy Spirit directs us to the word alone,” (5) religion is not purely natural (as the Socinian implies), and (6) faith judges reason and not vice versa (*ibid.*, 1:8.5). In other words, the Holy Spirit, faith, or divine revelation is the first principle—not reason (*ibid.*, 1:8.5, 7-8, 16, 23).

<sup>92</sup>Turretin writes, “Therefore he [the Spirit] is said properly to testify in the word objectively after the manner of an argument on account of what we believe. In the heart, he is also said (but with less propriety) to testify efficiently and after the manner of a first principle, by the power of which we believe. In this sense, the Spirit (who is reckoned among the witnesses of the divinity of Christ and of the truth of

Spirit's speaking both in the word and in the heart. For the same Spirit who acts objectively in the word by presenting the truth, operates efficiently in the heart also by impressing that truth upon our minds."<sup>93</sup> The Spirit, to elucidate his former words, "speaks" (i.e., reveals) both through the Word of Scripture and the Spirit of testimony. If it were not so, a person would be wholly devoid of understanding or perception.<sup>94</sup> In the end, therefore, Turretin offers that, in a similar way that theology has an external and internal principle (i.e., the external Word and the internal Spirit), so also revelation has both external and internal senses.

As these Reformed and post-Reformed theologians and confessions articulate, revelation is properly construed as external and internal. For Calvin, revelation includes Word and Spirit; for the confessions, the threefold Word encapsulates revelation, which helpfully reduce to two, the outward and inward Word; for Turretin, revelation follows the basic structure of the two *principia*—*externum* and *internum*—so that revelation is

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the gospel) is said to 'bear witness that the Spirit is truth' (1 John 5:6), i.e., the Spirit working in the hearts of believers bears witness that the doctrine of the gospel delivered by the Spirit is true and divine" (ibid., 2:6.13). He notes this idea in a polemic against the Roman Catholics, some of whom "speak roughly and others more calmly on this subject" (ibid., 2:6.2). He continues, "The Holy Spirit is the efficient cause and principle [cf. *principium internum* (ibid., 1:7.6)] from which I am induced to believe. But the church [against the Catholics] is only the instrument and means through which I believe" (ibid., 2:6.6). In other words, Turretin is elaborating Calvin's understanding of the internal testimony of the Spirit who unveils, assists, and enlightens us as he is "persuading us of the authority of the Scriptures" (ibid., 2:6.7). In this sense, Turretin often subordinates the Spirit's role to that of Scripture because the Spirit principally uses Scripture itself to convince us of its own authority (ibid., 2:6.9). This action recalls the "intrinsic" proof of Scripture (ibid., 1:4.3).

<sup>93</sup>Ibid., 2:6.14. Turretin shows his natural propensity of distinction here: he calls the Scripture the material cause and the Spirit the efficient cause. In other words, "This he [the Spirit] is very different from a Spirit of enthusiasm" (ibid.). He goes on to show the necessary repercussions of this biblical understanding of the work of the Spirit in the believer (ibid., 2:6.15-26).

<sup>94</sup>As Turretin writes, even while Scripture is revelation, it "is obscure to unbelievers and the unrenewed," so that "the Spirit of illumination is necessary to make them [the Scriptures] intelligible to believers" (ibid., 1:17.2). He argues this idea in the context of the perspicuity of Scripture. He writes later, "The question here is not Do men need the light of the Holy Spirit in order to understand the Scriptures? (which we willingly grant); but Are the Scriptures obscure to a believing and illuminated man?" (ibid., 1:17.13). The answer is, of course, no. Namely, while Scripture is "so perspicuous in things necessary to salvation" that it needs no "external help" from tradition or ecclesiastical authority, it does need internal help in the regeneration and illumination of the Spirit (ibid., 1:17.1). This argument he affirms against the papists. The question here "concerns the obscurity or perspicuity of the object or of the Scriptures" and not the subject or the (un)illuminated person (ibid., 1:17.2). Here again the careful reader can see Turretin's distinction between external revelation (i.e., Scripture) and internal revelation (which in this instance he calls illumination).

external and internal. In other words, these theologians/confessions are explicit that, ensuing from the disclosure of the Word, revelation is external; and, from the unveiling of the Spirit, it is internal.<sup>95</sup>

One helpful post-Reformed theologian, Amandus Polanus von Polansdorf, well-known for his logical distinctions, summarizes these views:

The foundation of our theology is the Word of God. That Word, the thing and its substance, is one and simple, but the mode of revelation is twofold: *endiatheton* and *prophorikon*, which is to say, internal (*internum*) and external (*externum*). Wherefore the Word of God is called scripture: the internal Word is indeed the scripture of the heart; the external [Word] is the scripture of both testaments.<sup>96</sup>

In summation, the Word is united, foundational to theology, and—most pertinently to the thesis—expressed in two modes, external and internal. This kind of twofold emphasis is the common and decisive ingredient to Post-Reformation dogmatics of revelation.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>95</sup>John Owen (whose discussion was excluded from the sake of space) clarifies this inward illumination and/or testimony of the Spirit. Paralleling the Spirit's inspiration and testimony, he says, "God speaking in the penmen of Scripture (Heb 1:1), his voice to them was accompanied with its own evidence, which gave assurance unto them; and God speaking by them or their writing unto us, his word is accompanied by its own evidence, and gives assurance to us" (John Owen, *Of the Divine Original of the Scriptures*, in vol. 16 of *The Works of John Owen*, ed. William H. Goold [New York: Johnstone and Hunter, 1850-53; repr., Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1967], 307). Therefore, Scripture is self-authenticating, first, "by way of testimony" of the Spirit, and second, "by way of deductions and inferences," that is, intrinsically and extrinsically (*ibid.*, 313, 309). Moreover, "We say not that this spirit ever speaks to us of the Word but by the Word" (*ibid.*, 325-26). Therefore, the authority of all revelation—including creation, providence, conscience, and Scripture—is an authority "in itself towards us" (*ibid.*, 309-11). It is all an external disclosure that is simultaneously internally self-authenticating. Owen concludes that all of God's revelation, both general and special, has "such an impression of his authority upon it, as undeniably to evince that it is from him," that to ignore his testimony in all these things leaves one "without excuse" (*ibid.*, 312). In this manner, Owen clarifies and unites much of the post-Reformation theology before him.

<sup>96</sup>Amandus Polanus von Polansdorf, *Syntagma theologiae christianae*, 4th ed. (1609; repr., Geneva, Geneva House, 1617), synopsis libri 1; quoted in Muller, *PRRD*, 2:155-56. By the "heart of scripture" Polanus indicates "the inward 'writing' of the Spirit on the hearts of God's elect, namely, the internal testimony of the Spirit necessary to the reception of Scripture," which, of course, "stands subordinate to the written text of Scripture" (Muller, *PRRD*, 2:156). For similar reasons, Johannes Maccovius identified the Word of God as "the internal principle of theology" (Johannes Maccovius, *Loci communes theologici* [Amsterdam: Franeker, 1660], i-ii). In this theological wake, Edward Leigh, a seventeenth century English writer and thinker, suggests also that Christ taught (or revealed) both externally and internally: externally in his person by preaching "the saving knowledge of God and Christ," and internally in his Spirit by the Spirit's illumination (Edward Leigh, *A Systeme or Body of Divinity* [London: 1664], 300).

<sup>97</sup>By this common distinction, these theologians are not separating the two dimensions as in a dualism; rather, they argue that both elements are organically united in one act. Richard Muller is helpful here: "it is not as if the Spirit testifies inwardly to the truth of Scripture apart from actual encounter with the scriptural Word" (Muller, *PRRD*, 2:184). As he says, "Indeed, the inseparability of the external Word of Scripture from the internally known Word was integral to the Reformed response to Roman Catholic emphasis on an internal Word of spiritual tradition known to the heart of believers" (*ibid.*).

## The Modern Era

While the modern era may be characterized by a plethora of different viewpoints on revelation (see chap. 1), this chapter shall describe the views of three pertinent individuals who each represent (more or less) unique perspectives on theology: Herman Bavinck, Donald Bloesch, and John Frame.<sup>98</sup> Each of these men explicitly contends that revelation is external and internal, or, in their own words, objective and subjective.

Herman Bavinck was the great Dutch Reformed systematizer. Following the Reformed tradition along with his mentor and exceptionally eclectic colleague, Abraham Kuyper, Bavinck clarifies the external and internal nature of revelation—or, as he preferred to refer to them, the objective and subjective aspects.<sup>99</sup> Bavinck argued that the

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<sup>98</sup>It is perhaps notable that, while the proceeding sections of this chapter have followed the most productive and influential theologians/philosophers in each period (Origen, Augustine, Thomas, and Calvin), the modern period is, in many ways, characterized by a fragmentation of thought. While the section could have elaborated the views of the period's most significant writers—Schleiermacher, Ritschl, or Barth—it was decided to cover more pertinent, albeit lesser-known, writers. (For an excellent and nearly comprehensive survey of the major thinkers of revelation since 1800, see Dulles, *Revelation Theology*, 62-182. Another good historical summary of revelation, from the seventeenth through the twentieth centuries, can be found in John Baillie, *The Idea of Revelation in Recent Thought* [New York: Columbia University Press, 1956], 3-18.) The decision not to introduce Barth at this point was simple: while Karl Barth made a significant attempt to understand the organic unity of revelation, and while he succeeded in various ways, his theology ultimately reduced to human subjectivity. Of course, he sought in every way to avoid this very problem—for, indeed, human subjectivity was the very difficulty that he sought to overcome through his “Theology of the Word” (Karl Barth, *Karl Barth's Table Talk*, rec. and ed. John D. Godsey, *Scottish Journal of Theology Occasional Papers*, vol. 10 [London: Oliver and Boyd, 1963], 27 [7.4.3-4])—but he ultimately failed: he stresses that Scripture and even Christ become revelation only by a present event to a person (*ibid.*, 26 [6.4.1-2]) so that, as Gregg Allison notes, his understanding of Scripture becomes “instrumental” (Allison, *Historical Theology*, 95). Barth himself reflects this idea as he asserts, “For me [as opposed to the “fundamentalists”] the Word of God is a *happening*, not a thing. Therefore, the Bible must *become* the Word of God, and it does this through the work of the Spirit” (*ibid.*, 26 [6.4.2]; cf. *idem*, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of Reconciliation*, vol. 4.3.1, ed. G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance [Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1961], 11). In this manner, because the being of Scripture only “becomes” to/for us, he suggests that God's revelation cannot be possessed and/or manipulated by humans. This is why, as he writes elsewhere, “Revelation takes place in and with reconciliation” (Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, 4.3.1, 8, cf. 180). For an excellent and succinct evaluation of his doctrine of Scripture, see Frame, *The Doctrine of the Word of God*, 36-37, 41-43.

<sup>99</sup>As Kuyper himself writes, revelation is “the inworking and manifestation of God in man's hidden being” and thus includes both “God's objective self-disclosure and a person's subjective appropriation” (Abraham Kuyper, *Principles of Sacred Theology*, trans. J. Hendrik de Vries [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1954], 276). Revelation is the manifestation of God to the person through the inworking reality of the Spirit (*ibid.*, 250). Indeed, he suggests that revelation assumes three aspects: (1) one who reveals himself, (2) one to whom he reveals himself, and (3) the possibility and actuality of the relation between these two (*ibid.*, 257). As Harriet A. Harris summarizes, “Revelation, as Kuyper argued, is not simply self-communication from God but also its reception in humans” (Harriet A. Harris, “A Diamond in the Dark,” in *Religion, Pluralism, and Public Life: Abraham Kuyper's Legacy for the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Luis E. Lugo [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000], 128).

objective dimension “is to be differentiated into” general and special revelation.<sup>100</sup> The subjective dimension, answering and completing both general and special revelation, corresponds to the regeneration and illumination of the Spirit of God.<sup>101</sup> The twofold dimensions to revelation account for why he elaborates both *principia* in his prolegomena to theology: the *principium cognoscendi externum* and the *principium cognoscendi internum*, the former of which refers to God’s objective revelation and the latter of which refers to his subjective revelation. The latter is necessary because “the nature of religion requires of theology its own epistemology,” which then necessarily includes the internal dimension of faith.<sup>102</sup> Therefore, “God’s objective revelation in Christ, recorded in Scripture, is the prior external source of religious knowledge (*principium cognoscendi externum*); the Holy Spirit is the internal source of knowledge (*principium cognoscendi internum*).”<sup>103</sup> Later Dutch Reformed and neo-Reformed theology followed this basic distinction in revelation/method.<sup>104</sup> Central to these Dutch Reformed theologians, as

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<sup>100</sup>Bavinck writes, “The revelation that thus comes to us objectively from the side of God is to be differentiated into a general and special one” (Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 1:350.). Or, as he says later, “Both this general and special revelation are primarily objective” (ibid.). General revelation corresponds to “the conscious and free act of God by which” he reveals himself “by means of nature and history” (ibid.). Special revelation is “that conscious and free act of God by which he, in the way of a historical complex of special means (theophany, prophecy, and miracle) that are concentrated in the person of Christ, makes himself known—specifically in the attributes of his justice and grace, in the proclamation of law and gospel—to those human being who live in the light of this special revelation in order that they may accept the grace of God by faith in Christ or, in the case of impenitence, receive a more severe judgment” (ibid.).

<sup>101</sup>Bavinck summarizes, “Corresponding to this objective revelation, general as well as special, there is subjective revelation” (ibid., 1:350, cf. 505-6). Indeed, “This objective general and special revelation always was and is accompanied by the subjective illumination of the Spirit of God and the Spirit of Christ” (ibid.). The subjective revelation, “answering to the general and special revelations,” consists of an “illumination of the Logos (John 1:9), or of the Spirit of God, in intellect, conscience, heart, and mind of human beings, such that they can understand God’s general revelation in nature and history” and “special revelation of God” (ibid.). For the sake of clarity, however, he concedes that subjective revelation may be described simply as illumination (ibid.).

<sup>102</sup>Ibid., 1:497, cf. 505.

<sup>103</sup>Ibid. Indeed, as he suggests, “Revelation must be received [internally] as well as given [externally]” (ibid., 1:497). The *principium externum* deals with the idea of revelation in terms of general and special revelation (ibid., 1:283-498). The *principium internum* deals with faith, its ground, and the theological method (ibid., 1:497-622).

<sup>104</sup>For example, Louis Berkhof later argues that knowledge of God corresponds both to the external object (chiefly Scripture) and the internal subject (chiefly faith), and these two dimensions may be distinguished as the *principium cognoscendi externum* and *principium cognoscendi internum* (Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 1:116-41; 170-85). And so, as Berkhof summarizes both revelatory dimensions

Richard Muller discerns, is the fact that the “Word, in order to be effective, must not only be objectively given but also subjectively received.”<sup>105</sup> Revelation includes an external and internal aspect.

Donald Bloesch, the influential progressive evangelical theologian from the University of Dubuque Theological Seminary, also contends incessantly for the external and internal dimensions of revelation.<sup>106</sup> Reacting primarily against Karl Barth, Bloesch calls for a theology of Word and Spirit, attempting to harken back to Reformed theology.<sup>107</sup> Bloesch’s most notable student, Elmer Colyer, summarizes his mentor’s idea: “It is the action of the Spirit that brings the Word of God (Jesus Christ) present, yet hidden, in Scripture to light so that people hear and respond in faith. This theme is so

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together, he writes, “We believe Scripture . . . through the testimony of the Holy Spirit” (ibid., 1:185).

<sup>105</sup>Muller, *PRRD*, 2:203.

<sup>106</sup>While dated, Stanley Grenz’s words still aptly apply: “[Bloesch] belongs to a select group of pioneers whose example has given younger conservative thinkers permission to explore new vistas while self-consciously maintaining their moorings within the evangelical movement” (Stanley Grenz, “‘Fideistic Revelationalism’: Donald Bloesch’s Antirationalist Theological Method,” in *Evangelical Theology in Transition: Theologians in Dialogue with Donald Bloesch*, ed. Elmer M. Colyer [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1999], 36). Indeed, since Bloesch’s rise in the academic world, he has been called one of America’s foremost theologians and his seven-volume systematic theology has been hailed as the evangelical *summa* of the twentieth century (Elmer M. Colyer, ed., *Evangelical Theology in Transition* [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999], backcover preface). Moreover, his fourth volume, *Jesus Christ*, received great acclamation, even being compared to Barth in its biblical and historical richness, intellectual satisfaction, and spiritual exhilaration (Donald Bloesch, *Jesus Christ: Savior and Lord*, Christian Foundations, vol. 3 [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1996], backcover).

<sup>107</sup>Bloesch summarizes, “When I speak of Word and Spirit, I am not thinking primarily of a book that receives its stamp of approval from the Spirit, though I affirm [this]. . . . I am thinking mainly of the living Word in its inseparable unity with Scripture and church proclamation as this is brought home to us by the Spirit in the awakening of faith. It is not the Bible as such but divine revelation that confronts us in the Bible that is the basis and source of spiritual authority. . . . Scripture is the Word of God to those with the eyes to see and ears to hear. . . .” (Donald G. Bloesch, *A Theology of Word and Spirit: Authority and Method in Theology*, Christian Foundations, vol. 1 [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1992], 14). In some sense, Bloesch certainly follows his theological master here. However, unlike the Basel theologian, who emphasizes a theology of the Word—that is, the objective pole of revelation to the exclusion of the subjective pole—Bloesch asserts that “both revelation and salvation have to be understood as objective-subjective” (Bloesch, *A Theology of Word and Spirit*, 15; for another interesting and sympathetic reaction to Barth, see Alister E. McGrath, *The Science of God: An Introduction to Scientific Theology* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004], 210, where he argues that revelation is indeed a divine, objective act (Barth) but revelation also leaves, to use Barth’s language, shell-holes and craters in history, making a scientific theology possible—a conclusion that Barth rejected.) It is also notable that Bloesch’s two poles, Word and Spirit, reflect his idea of paradox in his (dialectical) theology. This is not paradox through abstraction and speculation but paradox based in the nature of Jesus and his self-revelation (see David Parker, “Donald G. Bloesch, Evangelical Theologian of Word and Spirit,” in *From East to West: Essays in Honor of Donald G. Bloesch*, ed. Daniel J. Adams [Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, 1997], 6-7).

pervasive that it occurs at nearly every crucial point of Bloesch's theological method."<sup>108</sup>

According to Bloesch's own discussions, revelation ought to be construed as conceptual and existential, referring to its objective and subjective poles.<sup>109</sup> The objective pole of revelation denotes "the disclosure of meaning in the historical events mirrored in the Bible and also in the biblical testimony itself."<sup>110</sup> The subjective pole denotes "the mystical and inward illumination of the Holy Spirit."<sup>111</sup> In short, revelation includes the

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<sup>108</sup>Elmer M. Colyer, "A Theology of Word and Spirit: Donald Bloesch's Theological Method," *Journal for Christian Theological Research* 1, no. 1 (1996): 1-88, accessed 27 August 2010, <http://www2.luthersem.edu/ctrf/jctr/Vol01/Colyer.htm>; Internet. See also Donald Bloesch, *The Crisis of Piety: Essays toward a Theology of the Christian Life*, 2nd ed. (Colorado Springs: Helmers and Howard, 1988), 4. He later says, "I hold that the orientation of the biblical Christian will be both inward and outward" (ibid., 103). Because he believes that this method is rare in evangelical circles, he articulates the need for a better, more biblical way to do theology in order to understand the gospel, which he says is the transforming message of the redemption procured through the cross and resurrection of Christ and sealed within people by the Holy Spirit. See, for example, Donald G. Bloesch, "Reclaiming the Gospel," in *Story Lines: Chapters on Thought, Word, and Deed, For Gabriel Fackre*, ed. Skye Fackre Gibson (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 13, cf. 14.

<sup>109</sup>Conceptual revelation corresponds to the external Word communication in Christ and Scripture, whereas existential revelation corresponds to the internal Spirit of regeneration and illumination. He reflects, "As I see it, revelation is God's self-communication through his selected instrumentality, especially the inspired witness of his prophets and apostles. This act of self-communication entails not only the unveiling of his gracious and at the same time awesome presence but also the imparting of the knowledge of his will and purpose for mankind" (Donald Bloesch, *Holy Scripture: Revelation, Inspiration, and Interpretation*, Christian Foundations, vol. 2 [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1994], 48). In this way, Bloesch argues that revelation is both conceptual and existential. In other words, revelation is both "a rational apprehension and a redeeming experience" (ibid., 20, 48). This allows Bloesch to fix, on the one hand, liberals who insist that revelation is merely existential, and on the other, fundamentalists who insist that revelation is merely conceptual (ibid.). For, as he says elsewhere, "Those who define revelation as exclusively propositional nearly always depict faith as predominately a rational act" (Bloesch, *Essentials of Evangelical Theology: Two Volumes in One* [Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2006], 1:242).

<sup>110</sup>Donald Bloesch, *The Ground of Certainty: Toward an Evangelical Theology of Revelation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), 70. The result of the objective pole of revelation is that that revelation "must be able to [be] expressed in propositions" (Bloesch, *Holy Scripture*, 39). He does not mean that the propositions of the Bible are equated with the conceptual pole of revelation. He says, "These objective statements are not themselves revelation but the vehicle and outcome of revelation" (Bloesch, *Holy Scripture*, 52). Or, he says, "The propositions in the Bible are the result of revelation" or "the concrete embodiment of revelation" (ibid.). Biblical propositions are only revelatory in two senses: (1) They are the vehicle/mode by which the Word and Spirit—that is, the two poles inexorably comprising revelation—encounter and transform the reader; and (2) they are the outcome/result of divine revelation to the prophets and apostles in the biblical era. Such language means, "None of us can actually know the Word of God [revelation] until God personally reveals himself to us." It is only when both poles of revelation—Word and Spirit, conceptual and existential—meet us that we become "contemporaneous with the moment of revelation" (ibid., 53, 56).

<sup>111</sup>Bloesch, *The Ground of Certainty*, 70. The result is that revelation stands not merely—or primarily—in propositions but it "takes root in the interiority of our being and shapes human life and character" (Bloesch, *Holy Scripture*, 39). Bloesch here does not mean that the general experience of humankind or even religious experience is the ground of theology (contra Schleiermacher and the Ritschlian hermeneutic) (Donald G. Bloesch, "Reclaiming the Gospel," in *Story Lines: Chapters on Thought, Word, and Deed, For Gabriel Fackre*, ed. Skye Fackre Gibson [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002], 13). Instead, this existential pole of revelation refers to the reality and acts of God in the covenantal history

external disclosure by the Word and the internal reception through the Spirit.<sup>112</sup> It uses and involves both the mind (objective/conceptual) and the will/affections (subjective/existential). In this manner, therefore, Bloesch affirms that revelation is, in the words of this dissertation, external and internal.

John Frame also argues for the two dimensions of revelation. He begins with the person and nature of God. In some sense, “God is revelation,” for God “in his very nature is communicative.”<sup>113</sup> As a communicative God, he is the Word: the controlling power, meaningful authority, and personal presence of the cosmos.<sup>114</sup> Frame’s insightful threefold interpretation of the Word of God explains his understanding of revelation: the former two elements loosely correspond to the external dimension, and the latter one corresponds to the internal dimension.<sup>115</sup> As he asserts, “There is both objective and

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of believers, which “transcends every human formulation but is nonetheless inseparable from the New Testament kerygma or evangelical proclamation” (Bloesch, *A Theology of Word and Spirit*, 12-13, 19). Bloesch is always clear that conceptual revelation is primary whereas existential is secondary (see Bloesch, *Essentials of Evangelical Theology*, 1:86n101; *Holy Scripture*, 284).

<sup>112</sup>Bloesch does unhelpfully explain that if revelation is only conceptual or only existential, then no revelation is to be had, for “it is much more than this. It is an act of communication by which God confronts the whole person” (Bloesch, *Holy Scripture*, 39, 48). It is at this juncture that Bloesch errs. While he can argue for an external (conceptual) and internal (existential) understanding of revelation, he fails to say that Scripture itself is revelation. He rather prefers to speak of the Bible as a witness or vehicle of revelation. As he sums up his understanding of the Bible and its relationship to revelation, he writes, “The Bible is both the revelation and the means and bearer of revelation” (ibid., 63). While his words seem promising, he continues to explain what he means: “It [the Bible] is revelation cast in written form and the original witness to revelation. It is a component of revelation and a vehicle of revelation. It objectively contains revelation in the sense that its witness is based on revelation, but it becomes revelation for us only in the moment of decision, in the awakening to faith” (ibid.). In this sense the Bible is “revelatory” but not “revealed” (ibid., 66); it is “the concrete embodiment and vehicle of revelation” (ibid.).

<sup>113</sup>John Frame, *The Doctrine of the Word of God: A Theology of Lordship* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2010), 42: “It is theologically right to say that in a sense God is revelation. God is a being who in his very nature is communicative.” As he asserts later, “This communication [within the Trinity] is essential to God’s nature. He is, among all his other attributes, a speaking God” (ibid., 48).

<sup>114</sup>Ibid., 50-70. These three Word attributes parallel God’s Lordship itself (i.e., power, authority, presence), for, “when God speaks to us, he speaks as Lord” (ibid., 50; cf. idem, *The Doctrine of God: A Theology of Lordship* [Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2002], 21-118). First, his Word as a controlling power reminds us that God’s word is his omnipotence itself (Frame, *The Doctrine of the Word of God*, 53). Second, his Word as a meaningful authority highlights the meaningful or epistemological content of God’s supremely authoritative words (ibid., 54-55, 62). Third, his Word as personal presence underlines God’s nearness with his creation (ibid., 64, 68). In other words, the Word itself is God; for “God’s word is God, and God is his word” (ibid., 48).

<sup>115</sup>Frame nowhere explicitly reflects this idea, but the conclusion can be drawn inferentially. God’s Word as powerful and authoritative fundamentally reflects this dissertation’s conception of external revelation, whereas God’s Word as presence reflects the internal dimension of revelation.

subjective revelation;” namely, God reveals himself objectively in creation and Scripture, and he reveals himself subjectively by the illumination of human hearts and minds.<sup>116</sup> In this manner, revelation itself is simply divine communication; like all communication, there is an objective component (the content and transmission) and a subjective component (the hearing and response).<sup>117</sup> Consequently, Frame can say that there is a sense in which the Spirit’s internal work completes the Word’s external work.<sup>118</sup>

According to Frame, revelation is both external and internal.

### Conclusion

This chapter has sought to provide an evangelical ressourcement of church history for a theology of revelation. It has argued that the external and internal nature of revelation is implicitly or explicitly evident throughout the history of the church. The thesis was demonstrated by traversing through time: Origen, Augustine, Bonaventure,

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<sup>116</sup>Frame, *The Doctrine of the Word of God*, 37. As he writes in the context of a polemic against Brunner and Barth, “God reveals himself in creation and Scripture, objectively. But that objective revelation is of no use to us unless the Holy Spirit illumines our hearts and minds. As sinner, we suppress God’s revelation (Rom 1). It is the gracious, regenerating work of the Spirit that enables us to understand, believe, and obey” (ibid.). Therefore, revelation itself can mean many things, both in the biblical and secular senses. Whatever is the case, Frame is certainly right: “The term *revelation* has various uses, some objective, some subjective” (ibid.). As he continues, he suggests that we can distinguish three kinds of revelation in Scripture: “(1) objective revelation, (2) subjective revelation received in unbelief, and (3) subjective revelation received in faith” (ibid., 38).

<sup>117</sup>He writes again, “All true communication is objective (the content and the transmission) and subjective (the hearing and the response)” (ibid, 39). Frame implicitly reflects the former dimension as he elaborates the Word through chaps. 12-40 and as he speaks about God’s Word through the media of events and words (i.e., external); he explicitly reflects the latter in chaps. 41-44 as he elaborates the person-media of the Word (cf. ibid., 37n6; 304). Regarding the latter internal dimension, the demonstration of the Spirit “does not convey truth content in addition to that of Scripture itself. Rather, it persuades us to embrace the content of the word itself” (ibid., 309, see also 298, 300). “Without him [the Spirit],” he continues, “we cannot gain spiritual knowledge from the Bible” (ibid., 308, see also 307-10). The revelation of the Spirit includes his inspiration, illumination, demonstration, and indwelling, among other things (Ibid., 307-15). Therefore, as Frame concludes earlier, “There is really a subjective element in God’s revelation, for God intends his words to be apprehended and understood” (ibid., 39). Indeed, “In Scripture, subjective revelation is the Spirit’s illumination of objective revelation. It brings the objective truth of Scripture into our hearts, communicating to us a vital personal relationship with Christ” (ibid., 36). Frame writes these latter words in the context of interacting with Kierkegaard’s more one-sided emphasis in the subjective aspects.

<sup>118</sup>“So on the Reformed view [his view], there is a sense in which revelation is not completed until it becomes subjective by the Spirit’s work” (Frame, *The Doctrine of the Word of God*, 37). Unlike Bloesch (and Barth and Brunner), however, Frame contends this argument without ignoring the truthfulness and authority of the Scriptures (see ibid., 163-76).

Calvin, and others each variously show that revelation was conceived in this basic twofold framework. The chapter has thus displayed that the twofold understanding of revelation has strong precedents in the past.

The external/internal distinction in revelation developed slowly. The early church contributed a basic understanding of revelation in Johannine or Pauline terms: revelation is a reality that includes the *Logos* of God being comprehended through the Spirit of God. The Middle Ages included further systemization in Thomas and further explication in Bonaventure. Indeed, the latter Franciscan shows how revelation, first given by the Father through the Son, finds its understanding and perception (and thus completion) in the Spirit. The Reformation and post-Reformation tended more clearly to define and elaborate the two distinct dimensions, arguing that the Word, while united and foundational to revelation, must be understood in two modes, the external and the internal. The external dimension is best epitomized by the Word itself (in Christ, creation, and Scripture), and the internal by the Spirit (in illumination, testimony, and assurance). The Post-Reformation and modern eras, while sometimes using objective/subjective terminology, expanded the discussion by including the twofold distinction within their respective prolegomenas; namely, whereas Calvin's treatment of the Word and Spirit was sprinkled throughout his entire *Institutes* (and commentaries) without a formal discussion, later thinkers, from the Reformed confessions onward, began to place the doctrine of revelation proper within prolegomena discussions of the twofold *principia externum* and *internum*. This latter development can be seen implicitly in the Reformed confessions (when they include both dimensions of revelation within the first and second articles) and more explicitly in Turretin, Bavinck, Bloesch, and Frame.<sup>119</sup>

Indeed, in some sense, one can discern a clear trajectory of the development of

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<sup>119</sup>It is also true that some theologians (Bavinck, Bloesch, and Frame) prefer the objective/subjective distinction, but they clearly use the distinction in an analogous, if not identical, way that the dissertation uses it.

the external/internal distinction. It began as a simple discussion of revelation in which both the external and internal dimensions were implicit but nonetheless present (early church and Thomas), then it included the basic terminology without a fuller discussion (Bonaventure, Calvin, and the Reformed confessions), and finally it explicitly used the distinction and applied it within discussions of the theological prolegomena (Turretin and the modern era).

The following chapter will apply some of these historical insights to a contemporary systematic theology of revelation. Whereas the dissertation has thus far simply described what the Bible and some significant theologians say about revelation as external and internal, the following chapter will begin to organize and categorize this important doctrine in more systematic terms.

## CHAPTER 5

### A SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY OF REVELATION

At this stage in the argument, it remains for the dissertation to develop a systematic explanation of the thesis that defines and categorizes the biblical and historical data, including some of which that has been heretofore set aside. The dissertation so far has sought to provide a contemporary evangelical ressourcement for the doctrine of revelation as external and internal, contending that the concept of revelation includes God's self-disclosure both in the sense of external phenomena as well as internal perception. The locus of this divine action has been attached variously to Scripture, the world, the conscience, and inner illumination. Therefore, as John Webster aptly perceives, "Developing a concept of revelation will involve steering a path through a number of hermeneutical problems concerning the relation of the givenness of revelation (whether in events of the past or in inherited documents) with its reception and appropriation."<sup>1</sup>

The present chapter will continue to provide directions and resources for an evangelical theology of revelation. Using insights from Scripture, Reformed theology, and speech act theory, the chapter will argue that revelation properly includes both external and internal dimensions, which are moreover grounded within the organic unity of the triune God. It shall systematically demonstrate this thesis, first, by summarizing the nature of external and internal revelation as it relates to Christ, Scripture, and creation; second, by averring that these twofold dimensions correspond to the twofold *principia*

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<sup>1</sup>John B. Webster, "The Concept of Revelation," in *The Blackwell Encyclopedia of Modern Christian Thought*, ed. Alister E. McGrath (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993), 561; idem, *Holy Scripture: A Dogmatic Sketch* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

*cognoscendi* in both science (via general revelation) and theology (via special revelation); third, by grounding the *principia cognoscendi* and thus revelation itself within the *principium essendi* (that is, God); and fourth, by responding to some of the most pertinent objections.

### **The External and Internal Dimensions of Revelation**

As John Frame correctly notes, “The term revelation has various uses, some objective, some subjective.”<sup>2</sup> Accordingly, it is crucial to understand God’s revelation both externally (Word) and internally (Spirit). Following the data from the biblical and historical study, this section shall systematically summarize each dimension in terms of person, word, and event; specifically, in terms of Christ, Scripture, and creation. It shall first summarize the triune God’s external work of revelation in each of these media, then it shall explore the corresponding internal work of the Spirit as the completion of the triune activity.

#### **The External Dimension of Revelation**

Revelation includes an external dimension. Examples of this dimension include Jesus Christ, Scripture, and creation. These three media will be briefly summarized in order.

First, Jesus Christ externally reveals God. He is, indeed, the Word of God. As the apostle John glimpses the risen Lord in heaven, he cries, “The name by which he is called is the Word of God” (Rev 19:13; cf. John 1:1). Because Jesus is the Word of God, he perfectly and completely reveals God to us. The Son “has the role of communicating the character of God to us and of expressing the will of God for us.”<sup>3</sup> In other words, the

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<sup>2</sup>John Frame, *The Doctrine of the Word of God: A Theology of Lordship* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2010), 37.

<sup>3</sup>Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity, 1994), 47. Therefore, as Millard Erickson argues, the incarnation is “the most complete modality of revelation” (Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 2nd ed. [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998], 215).

incarnate Son, Jesus Christ, is the external display of the nature of God among us. He embodies God and performs actions that only God can do; he also perfectly images God the Father (Col 1:15; Heb 1:3; cf. Phil 2:6-11). Therefore, he is the external revelation of God.

Second, God reveals himself externally in his written Word, namely, Scripture. The concept of the written Word of God significantly develops throughout the Old Testament: the prophets understood their special divine purpose and thus began to distinguish sharply their own words from God's words and, following God's calling, to speak and write the words of God.<sup>4</sup> In the words of Herman Bavinck, inscripturation is God's way of adapting himself to human language, so that "revelation assumes the form and fashion of Scripture."<sup>5</sup> Consequently, as the Apostle Peter elaborates, "No prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit" (2 Pet 1:20-21). Peter asserts that the Bible is of divine origin, interpretation, design, and purpose. God is the author of Scripture, which is an external text that reveals God to the human reader. As the written Word of God, therefore, Scripture is a form of external revelation.

Third, creation, including the activity and providential care of the world, reveals the triune God externally. Just as God the Father, through his Word and Spirit, created the world, so also the world and its activity reveal him. As David contends, "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork" (Ps 19:1); Paul likewise asserts that God's "invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power [ἀίδιος

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<sup>4</sup>See, for example, Num 16:28; 24:13; 1 Kngs 12:33; Neh 6:8; Ps 41:6-7; see also Exod 3; 1 Sam 3; Jer 1; Ezek 1-3; Amos 3:7, 8; 7:15. Some writing, in fact, came directly from God himself (Exod 31:18; cf. 32:16; 34:1, 28), whereas Moses and later writers also wrote the law (Deut 31:9-13; Josh 24:26; Isa 30:8; Jer 30:2; 36:2-4, 27-31; 51:60).

<sup>5</sup>Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, ed. John Bolt, trans. John Vriend (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 1:380.

αὐτοῦ δύνამις] and divine nature [θείότης, i.e., deity], have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made” (v. 20). David and Paul are unambiguous: creation visibly displays some invisible qualities of the God who made it. God’s providential care also reveals God: God “gives to all mankind life and breath and everything . . . having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, that they [people] should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him” (Acts 17:25-27; cf. 14:17). Indeed, as Abraham Kuyper echoes, the entire created order is “a visible curtain behind which the exalted working of divine thought [i.e., revelation] shines forth.”<sup>6</sup> Creation itself, and all that is in it, points in a revelatory way to God. Or, as Bavinck more broadly suggests, “All things reveal God to us.”<sup>7</sup> As this dissertation has termed it, there is an external revelation of God in creation.

Systematically understood, revelation includes an external reality. This fact is especially evident from Jesus Christ, Scripture, and creation.

### **The Internal Dimension of Revelation**

Revelation also includes an internal dimension, specifically regeneration and illumination. As the triune God discloses himself (externally) in Jesus Christ, Scripture, and creation, he also unveils himself (internally, through the Spirit) in each corresponding

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<sup>6</sup>Kuyper, *De gemeene gratie in wetenschap en kunst* (Amsterdam: Hoveker & Wormser, 1905), 5, quoted in Peter S. Heslam, *Creating A Christian Worldview: Abraham Kuyper’s Lectures on Calvinism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 174.

<sup>7</sup>Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 1:370. Bavinck here refers to “nature and history,” which for him recall the totality of general revelation (ibid.). Nature and history, in other words, reveal the creation and sustaining of God. Or, as John Baillie rightly notes, “There is a sense in which all valid knowledge, all apprehended truth may be regarded as revealed” (John Baillie, *The Idea of Revelation in Recent Thought* [New York: Columbia University Press, 1956], 19). Indeed, he continues, “The fact is that no true knowledge, no valid act of perceiving or thinking, can be explained by beginning from the human end” (ibid., 22). “Ultimately,” concludes John Frame, “revelation includes everything, for all reality manifests God” (John M. Frame, *The Doctrine of the Christian Life: A Theology of Lordship* [Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2008], 132). This view, however, denies Wolfhart Pannenberg’s view in which revelation itself is history (see Pannenberg, *Revelation as History* [New York: Macmillan, 1968]), and G. Ernest Wright’s proposal that revelation is equated with God’s objective deeds in sacred history (Wright, *God Who Acts* [Naperville, IL: Allenson, 1964]). Unlike these proposals, the revelation of God in history is admittedly dim though inexorably present.

media; namely, he unveils the salvific perception of Christ (i.e., regeneration), Scripture (i.e., illumination) and creation (i.e., illumination) to the believing person. As Charles Hodge rightly asserts, “Whatever God does, he does by the Spirit.”<sup>8</sup> To explain revelation aright, one needs to describe not only the external work of the triune God but also the internal work that completes it. Following the former discussion, this section shall explore such internal completion in (1) Christ, (2) Scripture, and (3) creation.

First, as he regenerates human hearts unto belief, the Spirit internally unveils the true perception of Jesus. Regeneration specifically involves the Spirit imparting new life to people in Christ.<sup>9</sup> As the Spirit regenerates people, he also produces the new faculty of faith, which opens their minds to true perception of Jesus Christ. Before regeneration, therefore, people do “not understand” the reality of Jesus, as in the example of Nicodemus (John 3:10); after regeneration, as Leon Morris rightly contends, “the indwelling Spirit *reveals* Christ” to the child of God.<sup>10</sup> The Spirit brings about belief in

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<sup>8</sup>Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology* (New York: Scribner, 1873; repr., Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2003), 1:529. Hodge writes this statement in the beginning of his discussion of the “Office of the Holy Spirit” (ibid.). Hodge is not denying the triune operation of the Spirit, that is, that all things are done by the Father, in the Son, and through the Spirit; he is in fact affirming it. His point, along with our point, is that the Spirit is involved in all the operations of God. Therefore, the divine work of revelation (i.e., person, word, and event) is not complete with a discussion of the Father and Son, but it is only complete with a discussion of the extending and internal work of the Spirit.

<sup>9</sup>Or, alternatively, regeneration is the Spirit’s work of supernatural change in the qualities of the soul unto the likeness of God. This latter definition is substantially borrowed from Thomas Boston, “The Nature of Regeneration,” in *The Fundamentals: A Testimony to the Truth*, ed. R. A. Torrey, A. C. Dixon, and Others (repr., Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 3:131-32. Boston later writes, “The Lord God makes the creature a new creature, as the goldsmith melts down the vessel of dishonor, and makes it a vessel of honor. Man is, in respect of his spiritual state, altogether disjointed by the fall; every faculty of the soul is, as it were dislocated: in regeneration the Lord loosens every joint, and sets it right again” (ibid., 131). In this sense, regeneration ought not to be understood as the result of faith (e.g., E. Y. Mullins, *The Axioms of Religion: A New Interpretation of Baptist Faith* [Philadelphia: American Baptist, 1908], 33; cf. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 951-59); rather, faith is a result of regeneration. Either way one conceives of this relationship, there is an internal, Spirit enabled action (whether regeneration or faith) that produces an internal unveiling of perception of Jesus. For a dated yet fascinating discussion of regeneration and its implications towards Christian certainty, see Franz Herman Reinhold Frank, *System of the Christian Certainty*, 2nd ed., trans. Maurice J. Evans (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1886), 189-230, see also 63-73.

<sup>10</sup>Morris, *The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians: An Introduction and Commentary*, TNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985), 60. The work of the Spirit, therefore, may be conceived as revelation. Karl Barth is thus correct when he declares, “Reconciliation is indeed revelation” (Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of Reconciliation*, vol. 4.3.1, ed. G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance [Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1961], 8).

Jesus as the Christ. This is why, as Paul asserts, “No one can say ‘Jesus is Lord’ except in [ἐν, i.e., “by”] the Holy Spirit” (1 Cor 12:3). Regeneration thus leads to the assurance that people are in fact joined with Christ and thus fellow heirs with him.<sup>11</sup> It likewise introduces a “categorical difference” between believers and unbelievers: while unregenerate people are unaware of the truth of the gospel of Christ and the reality of their condition, upon regeneration they receive a special unveiling of perception that allows them to perceive correctly and respond accordingly.<sup>12</sup> The supernatural act of regeneration, therefore, shows that the Spirit internally reveals the correct perception of Jesus to believers.

Second, the Spirit internally unveils the truth of Holy Scripture to people. Just as the Spirit is the author of Scripture, so also he is the illuminator of its meaning to believers. Illumination is the action of the Spirit through which people rightly discern and use the word of God already revealed.<sup>13</sup> Illumination is necessary on account of God’s transcendence and human sinfulness. As the dissertation argued in chapter 3, the Spirit is sent to “guide” the disciples and believers today into truth (John 16:13). This guidance is important: “The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned” (1 Cor 2:14). Theodore of Mopsuestia aptly summarizes, “Things that you cannot even hear [or] understand—those very things, I say, you will understand when

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<sup>11</sup>As Paul reflects, “The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God” (Rom 8:16; cf. 1 John 3:24; 4:13).

<sup>12</sup>The verbiage of “categorical difference” is borrowed from Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 275. In the words of Bavinck, “People do not [of their own accord] come to revelation to seek God; God [by his Spirit] searches for them” (Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 1:505).

<sup>13</sup>For various theological discussions on the concept of illumination, see Lydia Schumacher, *Divine Illumination: The History and Future of Augustine’s Theory of Knowledge* (Chichester, West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 62-64; Daniel Fuller, “The Holy Spirit’s Role in Biblical Interpretation,” in *Scripture, Tradition, and Interpretation*, ed. W. Ward Gasque and William Sanford LaSor (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 189-98; Calvin, *Institutes*, 1:7.4-5, 11; John Murray, “The Attestation of Scripture,” in *The Infallible Word: A Symposium by the Members of the Faculty of Westminster Theological Seminary*, ed. Ned Stonehouse and Paul Wooley (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1946), 52.

you receive the gift of the Spirit.”<sup>14</sup> Wayne Grudem thus defines illumination as the action of God in which “he enables us to understand,”<sup>15</sup> or, as John Murray helpfully clarifies, it is “regeneration on its noetic side.”<sup>16</sup> As regeneration involves renewed life in Christ, so illumination involves renewed thought in Christ.<sup>17</sup> In this sense, the Spirit internally unveils the truth of Holy Scripture to people.

Third, while the internal correlate to creation is admittedly less clear in Scripture, some tentative conclusions can be made. There are two options. First, regarding general internal revelation, one might follow Paul’s discussion of the conscience, wherein all peoples have an implanted moral revelation: a “law” (νόμος) or “conscience” (συνείδησις) that bears witness to God’s moral standard (Rom 2:14-15). This conscience is revelation that is internal or inward within people, and it consists in natural moral perception. Therefore, the revelation of the human conscience, while somewhat of a mystery, fits adequately into the schema of internal revelation.<sup>18</sup>

Second, regarding special internal revelation, the author of Hebrews discusses

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<sup>14</sup>Theodore of Mopsuestia, *Commentary on the Gospel of John*, trans. Marco Conti, ed. Joel C. Elowsky, Ancient Christian Texts (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2010), 135.

<sup>15</sup>Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 645; cf. Michael F. Bird, *Evangelical Theology: A Biblical and Systematic Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013), 203-5.

<sup>16</sup>John Murray, “The Attestation of Scripture,” 51. Also, he writes, illumination is “regeneration in its noetic expression because it is regeneration manifesting itself in our understanding in the response of the renewed mind to the evidence Scripture contains of its divine character” (ibid.). He elsewhere writes, “It is the function of the Holy Spirit to open the minds of men to perceive that [divine] testimony and cause the Word of God to be borne home to the mind of man with ruling power and conviction” (ibid., 50-51).

<sup>17</sup>Illumination thus affects and changes us and not the text itself (see Robert Rollock, “A Treatise of Our Effectual Calling,” in *Select Works of Robert Rollock*, ed. William M. Gunn [Edinburgh: Woodrow Society, 1869], 70, cf. 94; Horton, *The Christian Faith*, 167-68). In other words, illumination does not convey truth content in addition to Scripture. “Rather,” clarifies Frame, he “persuades us to embrace the content of the word itself” (Frame, *The Doctrine of the Word of God*, 309). In this sense, as Bavinck notes, “Subjective revelation serves only to make this objective revelation known and have it appropriated by the believer” (Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 1:348; this is also why, as he notes, the internal form of revelation is usually referred to as something else in Scripture, namely, enlightenment and regeneration). In a nutshell, illumination has to do with apprehension (see also Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, 1:15).

<sup>18</sup>Like revelation in creation itself, therefore, until the conscience is accompanied by the special revelations of the (external) Word of Scripture and the (internal) Spirit of illumination, such knowledge only leads to suppression, misunderstanding, and death (Rom 1:18-32).

faith in relation to the created world: “By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible” (Heb 11:3). In other words, it is only “by faith” that people can comprehend that all reality was indeed made by the word of God.<sup>19</sup> As this dissertation has already argued, the Spirit is the instrumental cause of faith; thus, the regenerative and illuminative activity of the Spirit causes people to perceive the world anew. In this context, Calvin likewise avers the necessity of “the spectacles of faith” when viewing creation: the “invisible divinity is made manifest in such spectacles [that are gazing at the ‘universe’], but that we have not the eyes to see this unless they be illumined by the inner revelation of God through faith.”<sup>20</sup> To follow the logic of Geerhardus Vos: just as the Spirit regenerates people and thereby redeems them, so also the Spirit restores redeemed people’s proper cognition of creation itself.<sup>21</sup> The Spirit internally unveils the perception

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<sup>19</sup>The term (τοὺς αἰῶνας) translated as “worlds” or “universe” may also mean “ages,” and thus the author is making a double entendre to signify that God—through his word—consummates “ultimate reality” including creation, redemption, and final judgment (Gareth Lee Cockerill, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, NICNT [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012], 523-25). In other words, the author has not only the physical “world” in mind, but also all of space-time itself (Peter T. O’Brien, *The Letter to the Hebrews*, PNTC [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010], 401). He is picking up on the same theme as John: “All things were made through him [the Word], and without him was not any thing made that was made” (John 1:3). Therefore, while from Genesis to Revelation the Bible asserts the creative activity of God, it is only by faith that we can accept the fact that the invisible spoke forth the visible. “Only by faith can we understand that the cosmos was fashioned with a word from God” (Garth Leno, *Hebrews: The Superiority of Christ*, Deeper Life Pulpit Commentary [Camp Hill, PA: Christian, 1999], 242).

<sup>20</sup>Calvin, *Institutes*, 1:5.14. Or, as he writes later, “First in order came that kind of knowledge by which one is permitted to grasp who that God is who founded and governs the universe. Then that other inner knowledge was added, which alone quickens dead souls, whereby God is known not only as the Founder of the universe and the sole Author and Ruler of all that is made, but also in the person of the Mediator as the Redeemer” (ibid., 1:6.1). Kuyper concludes Calvin’s thoughts here in a twofold conclusion: “(1) that true faith is a gift of God, the fruit of an operation of the Holy Spirit; and (2) that true faith, as the Heidelberg Catechism teaches, first of all consists of this, ‘that I hold for truth all that God has revealed to us in His Word’” (Kuyper, *Principles of Sacred Theology*, 553).

<sup>21</sup>Vos writes, “The main correction, however, of the natural knowledge of God cannot come from within nature itself: it must be supplied by the supernaturalism of redemption. Redemption in a supernatural way restores to fallen man also the normalcy and efficiency of his cognition of God in the sphere of nature” (Vos, *Biblical Theology*, 20). Therefore, while the Reformed tradition has tended to limit the work of the Spirit to Scripture and overlook the Spirit’s implications towards epistemology in general (as Bavinck contends in his *Reformed Dogmatics*, 1:593), Vos suggests that just as the Spirit illuminates the word of Scripture so that we can read it correctly, so also he illuminates the world so that we can see it correctly. Charles Hodge previously made a similar argument: using scriptural, early church (Constantinople Creed), and Reformed tradition, he asserted that, just as the Spirit is the immediate source of all life, so also he is the immediate source of all intellectual life (and thus knowledge itself) (Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, 1:529-31; cf. Gen 2:7; Job 32:8; 33:4; 35:11; Pss 104:29; 139:14-16; Isa 32:14-15). Therefore, Hodge echoes, “All truth is enforced on the heart and conscience with more or less power by the

of the created world, giving people the eyes to see it correctly through his word of Scripture and illuminating power. People may only perceive and comprehend the Word of God in creation through the illumination of the Spirit of God. (This theme is admittedly difficult to discern in a biblical theology and thus will await development until the systematic undertaking on the *principia* below.)

### **Summary of Revelation**

In summation, as the triune God discloses himself (externally) in Jesus Christ, Scripture, and creation, he also unveils himself (internally) in each corresponding media; namely, he reveals perception or understanding for Christ (i.e., regeneration), Scripture (i.e., illumination), and creation (i.e., illumination). The Spirit's role in this process has been especially highlighted. As Francis Turretin wisely summarizes,

Hence, we must understand by the Holy Spirit, the Spirit's speaking both in the word and in the heart. For the same Spirit who acts objectively in the word by presenting the truth, operates efficiently in the heart also by impressing that truth upon our minds.<sup>22</sup>

The parallel herein is significant: the organic action of the Spirit in the external media of revelation—Christ, Scripture, and creation—is the same organic action that he completes in the internal media. Revelation thus necessarily entails both components.<sup>23</sup>

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Holy Spirit" (Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, 1:532). Indeed, the Spirit is an "all-pervading influence" that is generally at work and that "we are indebted for" concerning the "morality and order in the world" (ibid.). The Spirit is also responsible for redemption. Therefore, in the same way that he regenerates broken humanity, he will one day fix the world from its groaning (Rom 8:18-30).

<sup>22</sup>Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, trans. George Musgrave Giger, ed. James T. Dennison, Jr. (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 1992), 2:6.14. Bavinck explains similarly: "The Holy Spirit is the great and powerful witness to Christ, objectively in Scripture, subjectively in the very hearts of human beings" (Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 1:506). "Thereby," as John Murray notes, "The Holy Spirit may be said to bear perpetual witness to the divine character of that which is his own handiwork" (Murray, "The Attestation of Scripture," 51).

<sup>23</sup>See Michael Allen and Scott R. Swain, *Reformed Catholicity: The Promise of Retrieval for Theology and Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2015), 31-32. This idea also accounts for why theological definitions of revelation often implicitly include regeneration or illumination. One person summarizes, "Revelation is the disclosure by God of truths at which people could not arrive without divine initiative and enabling" (R. W. Yarbrough, "Revelation," in *NDBT* [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000], 732). Another suggests that revelation is the "content and process of God's making himself known to people" and it is thus "God's manifestation of Himself to mankind in such a way that men and women can know and fellowship with Him" (David S. Dockery, "Revelation of God," in *HIBD* [Nashville: Holman Reference, 2003], 1383).

John Frame’s conclusion summarily applies to our own: “The structure of revelation . . . suggests the value of rethinking the traditional distinction between general and special revelation.”<sup>24</sup> As the dissertation has contended, revelation includes an internal form that does not easily fit into the basic categorization of revelation as general and special. Revelation is thus best restructured to follow the biblical pattern.

A summary of the types of revelation is presented in Table 1. The basic argument so far has framed revelation into external and internal revelation. It is also helpful to see it arranged in terms of the more traditional categorization, general and special.

Table 1. The types of revelation

|          | General    | Special                      |
|----------|------------|------------------------------|
| External | Creation   | Christ<br>Scripture          |
| Internal | Conscience | Regeneration<br>Illumination |

The general/special categories communicate the availability of revelation: whether a revelation is accessible to all persons in all times and in all places (general) or only to

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<sup>24</sup>Frame, *The Doctrine of the Word of God*, 330. Unlike this dissertation, John Frame prefers a threefold classification of revelation: general, special, and existential. As he implicitly suggests throughout, just as God is triune—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—so also lordship is triune—control, authority, and presence—and so knowledge is triune—metaphysics, epistemology, and ethics—and thus revelation is triune—events, words, and persons. As he asserts, because revelation consists of events, words, and persons, revelation ought to be distinguished in terms of general, special, and existential (ibid., 330-31). His synthesis is brilliant and unique. His insights are also consistent with the argument of this thesis, even while his construction is different. As this dissertation has already maintained (see chap. 4), Frame wisely suggests that revelation includes a subjective or existential aspect in which “we appropriate the other forms of revelation” (ibid., 331). The eminent late Roman Catholic Theologian, René Latourelle, argues similarly that revelation is word testimony and encounter (cf. René Latourelle, *Theology of Revelation* [New York: Staten Island, 1966], 315-28). Likewise, Michael Bird suggests that revelation is natural, special, and christological; moreover, special revelation includes history, proclamation, Scripture, and illumination (Bird, *Evangelical Theology*, 172, 193).

particular persons in particular times and in particular places (special). The external/internal categories communicate the sphere and form of revelation: whether a revelation occurs objectively to people in the form of a disclosure of information (external) or subjectively to people in the form of an unveiling of perception (internal).

Table 1 intentionally includes all of physical reality. The reason is simple: there is not one square inch of reality that does not belong to God and thus reveal him (however finitely and imperfectly).<sup>25</sup> Following this simple insight, among other things, Calvin maintained that all knowledge consists of the knowledge of God (external) and knowledge of ourselves (internal).<sup>26</sup> Calvin's profound epistemological insight led the later Reformed tradition to suggest that there are two *principia* of knowledge, the external and internal, the former of which is summarized in nature and history, and the latter of which is summarized in Spirit and faith.

### **The *Principia Cognoscendi Externum* and *Internum* in General and Special Revelation**

The previous discussion paralleled the external and internal dimensions of revelation, and it related the dimensions in terms of their general and special character. It remains to discuss adequately the nature of internal revelation, namely the (unilluminated) mind/cognition of general revelation and the work of the Spirit in regeneration/illumination in special revelation.

This chapter shall now clarify and expand the argument by exploring more

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<sup>25</sup>This line is inspired by Abraham Kuyper, in his "Sphere Sovereignty," in *Abraham Kuyper, A Centennial Reader*, ed. James D. Bratt (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 488: "Oh, no single piece of our mental world is to be hermetically sealed off from the rest, and there is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ, who is Sovereign over *all*, does not cry: 'Mine!'" Herman Bavinck's lucid words efficiently interpret Kuyper's intentions: "The world itself rests on revelation; revelation is the presupposition, the foundation, the secret of all that exists in all its forms" (Herman Bavinck, *The Philosophy of Revelation* [New York: Longmans, Green & Co., 1909], 27). In other words, revelation "does not stand isolated in nature and history, does not resemble an island in the ocean, nor a drop of oil upon water. With the whole of nature, with the whole of history, with the whole of humanity, with the family and society, with science and art it is intimately connected" (ibid.).

<sup>26</sup>Calvin, *Institutes*, 1:1.1. This kind of cursory summary is obviously a gross simplification of Calvin's complex argument. For review, see the corresponding discussion in chap. 4 of this dissertation.

deeply the twofold dimensions within general and special revelation, paying particular attention to the nature of internal revelation in each. In so doing, the chapter shall utilize the delineations of the *principia cognoscendi*.<sup>27</sup> The *principia cognoscendi* (*externum* and *internum*) traditionally denote the foundations of knowledge and apply to two spheres: the general sciences and theology. The former discusses general revelation as it bears a more natural and universal character, whereas the latter examines special revelation and bears a more spiritual and particular character.

Following the biblical, historical, and initial systematic presentation, the rest of this chapter shall explore general and special revelation through the *principia*. It shall argue that both the general sciences (i.e., general revelation) and theology (i.e., special revelation) include (1) an external or objective reality to be known and (2) the internal or subjective ability to know it.<sup>28</sup> The dissertation shall accomplish this, first, by surveying the external and internal *principia cognoscendi* of the general sciences, and, second, by exploring the corresponding *principia* of theology. The section shall conclude by summarizing the *principia cognoscendi* of science and theology, and paralleling them to general revelation and special revelation, respectively.

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<sup>27</sup>See chap. 4 of this dissertation, “Reformation and Post-Reformation Eras.” While it may be objected that the terminology of *principia* is outdated and/or modern, this kind of objection does not stand. The conception of the *principia*, whether explicitly or implicitly, is at the basis of any subject of study. In doing theology, for example, the Christian is forced to make a decision to begin with revelation (*cognoscendi*) or God (*essendi*); likewise, he must choose to begin either with the work of Christ (*cognoscendi*) or the person of Christ (*essendi*) in their Christologies. The person is required, in other words, to make decisions concerning ultimate principles or foundations of his own theological or philosophical systems. Naturally, a person must undergird his thought before he elaborates, lest his argument be open to objections. This is the purpose of the *principia*. It simply refers to the foundation of being (*principia essendi*), that is, God; or the foundation of knowledge (*principia cognoscendi*), that is, revelation. Whatever terms one uses to argue this point does not matter. The fact is that these arguments are necessary, whether one is a coherentist, (modified) foundationalist, or pragmatist; whether one is a rationalist, empiricist, or realist.

<sup>28</sup>While not the inspiration for this dissertation, Louis Berkhof argues similarly that, just as theology contains a *principium cognoscendi externum* and *internum*, so also do the “non-theological sciences,” namely philosophy (i.e., epistemology) (Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 1:93-97).

## **The *Principia* of the General Sciences (General Revelation)**

The general sciences<sup>29</sup> naturally include both a *principium externum* and *principium internum* within their system. The present section shall explore the twofold *principia* and then relate their epistemological implications to general revelation.

First, following external general revelation (see Table 1), the created world is the *principium cognoscendi externum*.<sup>30</sup> The world is an external foundation of knowledge for the general sciences, a foundation that lies outside of people. The triune God created all things; thus, the created world reveals God and is the basis (i.e., material source or cause) for all natural knowledge in the general sciences. The *principium* is thus the external means by which all general knowledge flows from God to people, from the archetype to the ectype. It includes all things that are existent in space-time, such as the physical universe, its dimensionality, its energy, laws, and general order.

Second, following internal general revelation, the human mind or cognition is the *principium cognoscendi internum*.<sup>31</sup> The external *principium* of creation is incomplete

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<sup>29</sup>The term, “general sciences,” here intends to include all the physical or natural sciences (e.g., physics, chemistry, biology), the social sciences (e.g., anthropology, psychology, sociology), as well as the formal sciences (e.g., mathematics, logic, philosophy). In other words, the term is meant to encompass any study of natural, social, human, or mental reality. As he develops his *Principles*, Kuyper likewise uses the term to denote both the “hard sciences” as well as the “soft sciences” (Kuyper, *Principles of Sacred Theology*, 122).

<sup>30</sup>“God’s beautiful creation, replete with divine wisdom, is the *principium cognoscendi externum* of all non-theological sciences” (Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 1:94).

<sup>31</sup>If the special internal principle is the illumined mind, then the general internal principle is the unilluminated mind, that is, the mind of the natural person. While one should also include the human conscience as the internal correlate, the mind is the more generalized form. While the mind is the (material) source of human cognition, the conscience is the source of morality, a source that no doubt finds its greater foundation within the human mind. Indeed, theologians have long attested that the mind of the human is a revelation of God, for it is the highest material expression of rationality in the universe. This is why John Calvin correlated the internal *sensus divinitatis* (“sense of divinity”) with an innate and general preconception of divine knowledge in all human persons: “There is within the human mind, and indeed by natural instinct, an awareness of divinity. This we take to be beyond controversy. To prevent anyone from taking refuge in the pretense of ignorance, God himself has implanted in all men a certain understanding of his divine majesty” [Calvin, *Institutes*, 1:3.1; cf. 1:3.2-3; Edward Adams, “Calvin’s View of Natural Knowledge of God,” *IJST* 3 [2001]: 280-92). This is also why Augustine, in large measure, found the highest revelation of God as triune within his consciousness or mind, playing with themes such as intellect, memory, knowledge, and love to display the reality of the Trinity (Augustine, *On The Holy Trinity*, trans. Arthur West Haddan, in vol. 3 of *NPNF* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983], books 9-12). Indeed, it would be odd to understand anything other than the mind as being the internal receptacle of revelation, for it is person’s cognition that, among other things, is restored so that they believe (regeneration) and know (illumination) spiritual realities.

without a particular way to receive, understand, and appropriate it.<sup>32</sup> Indeed, the selfsame triune God who created the universe (*externum*) also, through his Word and Spirit, created and sustains the human capacity and ability to understand it (*internum*). Louis Berkhof asserts it well: “The same Logos that reveals the wisdom of God in the world is also the true light” of the world.<sup>33</sup> This Logos, through the Spirit, is the impetus for human understanding of all things, especially “general, necessary, and eternal” (i.e., scientific) ideas.<sup>34</sup> People may think only insofar as God sustains. “Accordingly,” Kuyper continues, “all science is only the application to the cosmos of powers of investigation and thought created within us.”<sup>35</sup> Therefore, corresponding to the external *principium* as the material cause, the internal *principium* is the instrumental cause of knowledge.

In the end, therefore, the *principia cognoscendi* of the general sciences include external and internal dimensions. As Michael Polanyi rightly highlights, knowing anything includes two reciprocal poles: (1) an internal pole wherein (a) the tacit assertion, (b) scientific hunch, (c) judgment of reality, (d) claim of truth, and (e) striving to reach

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<sup>32</sup>As Kuyper and Hodge have rightly noted, knowledge in the general sciences thus includes a threefold relation: the subject of science (the scientist and his/her cognitive capacity), the object of science (the universe), and the law(s) governing science (the scientific laws). See Kuyper, *Principles of Sacred Theology*, 257; cf. Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, 1:9-10. In other words, revelation and knowledge both include the subject, object, and subject-object relation within their definitions (see Harriet A. Harris, “A Diamond in the Dark,” in *Religion, Pluralism, and Public Life: Abraham Kuyper’s Legacy for the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Luis E. Lugo [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000], 128).

<sup>33</sup>Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 1:95. For Kuyper’s explanation of the relationship between the natural world and consciousness, see Kuyper, *Principles of Sacred Theology*, 355-68. God’s epistemic work here is Trinitarian. In the same way that the Logos enables all knowledge, so also the Spirit is the source and agent of all life in humanity and the world (see Gen 1:2; Pss 33:6; 104:30; 139:7; Job 26:13; 33:4), especially the intellectual, ethical, and spiritual life (Job 32:8; Isa 11:2).

<sup>34</sup>Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 1:95. Justin Martyr is one of the earliest theologians to argue this idea (see Justin Martyr, *Second Apology*, *Dialogue with Trypho, a Jew*, and the *Discourse to the Greeks*, in vol. 1 of *ANF* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956], 188-272). However, he had a tendency to abstract an unbeliever’s knowledge (through the Logos) from the salvific implications of the Logos. As such, his theology tended to be too optimistic about people’s knowledge of even spiritual matters. (See especially his comments paralleling Moses and Plato [Justin, *First Apology*, 182].) The Dutch Reformed tradition, while rightly returning to foundation of knowledge in the Christ as Logos, also correctly distinguished the “sphere sovereignty” of natural knowledge and saving knowledge (Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 1:95; see also Kuyper, *Lectures on Calvinism* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1953], 112).

<sup>35</sup>Kuyper, *Lectures on Calvinism*, 92; see also idem, *Principles of Sacred Theology*, 83, 92.

the solution are found; and (2) a respective external pole wherein (a) the content of that which is asserted is testable by experience, (b) validated hunch, (c) contacting reality, (d) truth itself, (e) and reaching the solution are found.<sup>36</sup> Knowledge thus includes the “content” itself and the “personal indwelling” of content.<sup>37</sup> Indeed, all of human life is based upon the reciprocal relation of these elements. God created the (internal) minds of people in such a way that their sense perceptions and mental operations are sufficiently adapted to the world. He also created the (external) world so that it is stable, reliable, and orderly.<sup>38</sup> The study of the general sciences thus must incorporate both realities.

The *principia* of the general sciences accordingly implicate one important idea for the dissertation: knowledge is a continual result of the (revelation of the) triune God.

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<sup>36</sup>Michael Polanyi, *Personal Knowledge: Towards a Post-Critical Philosophy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), 15, 17, 48, 69-131; see also Stefania Ruzsits Jha, *Reconsidering Michael Polanyi's Philosophy* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2002), 68, cf. 51-69; Jerry H. Gill, *The Tacit Mode: Michael Polanyi's Postmodern Philosophy* (Albany, NY: State University of New York, 2000), 51-55. Stefania Ruzsits Jha also argues for a neo-Polanyian development wherein active empathy (humane passion) and heuristic striving (intellectual passion) are added to the internal pole of knowing (Jha, *Reconsidering Michael Polanyi's Philosophy*, 202). See also Polanyi, *The Tacit Dimension* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1966). Polanyi's work has even been correlated with John Calvin and Albert Einstein (see Iain Paul, *Knowledge of God: Calvin, Einstein, and Polanyi* (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic, 1987).

<sup>37</sup>Michael Polanyi, *Knowledge and Being*, ed. Marjorie Grene (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969), 148. Indwelling describes an innate epistemic process whereby, as we direct our attention on a focal object by way of our subsidiary awareness, we interiorize and integrate the object and thereby perceive the greater dimension. For the most direct explanation of indwelling, see Andrew T. Grosso, *Personal Being: Polanyi, Ontology, and Christian Theology* (New York: Peter Lang, 2007), 24-27. Jerry Gill admirably summarizes Polanyi: “[Polanyi's model] construes reality as structured according to a hierarchy of dimensions that interpenetrate and mediate one another in a vectorial pattern by means of boundary conditions and rules. The richer, more comprehensive dimensions are mediated in and through the lesser, without being explainable in terms of them” (Gill, *The Tacit Mode*, 37). Gill thus explains epistemic indwelling: it is “the process of immersing oneself in the particulars of subsidiary awareness by means of embodied activity until these particulars come together as a meaningful whole in an ‘integrative act’” (ibid., 52). Indeed, one cannot recognize a mood on a person's face or a species of rock simply through an explanation of external variables. This fact, he explains, is proof that knowing is external as well as internal (Michael Polanyi, “The Logic of Tacit Inference,” in *Knowing and Being: Essays by Michael Polanyi*, ed. Marjorie Grene [London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969], 156).

<sup>38</sup>In other words, the unbelieving person can understand many things from creation. The atomic physicist can know, understand, and assess an atom's behavior (in relation to mass, acceleration, and velocity), properties (its quark components, various spins and charges), and cosmic history (where and when that atom was at  $t_1$ ,  $t_2$ , and so on). The artist can glimpse Albert Bierstadt's sublime landscapes or Louis Le Vau's majestic architecture and perceive the inherent symmetry and beauty. The stoic cosmologist can gaze upon the exceeding grandeur, harmony, and improbability of the universe and postulate a divine, rational principle that transcends it. In other words, and perhaps obviously, the natural person can see the world on its own terms.

As K. Scott Oliphint rightly deduces, “This dependence requires not just an acknowledgement so that we can tip our theological hat to God and then go our merry way in pursuit of truth . . . but it invites us to see the knowledge situation as dependent” upon the whole corpus of the triune God’s revelatory activity.<sup>39</sup> As the Father was planning and commanding, the Son was executing and performing and the Spirit was sustaining and increasing.<sup>40</sup> The Spirit particularly, as he fills and animates all things, is the epistemic means of enabling and empowering people to think, understand, and comprehend. Because even the unbelieving scientist is Spirit-enabled to recognize various features of the world, it is logical that science includes a twofold *principia*, one which in fact parallels our heretofore argued understanding of revelation. Just as revelation contains an external general *principia* in creation, so also do the general sciences; as revelation contains an internal general *principia* in human reason, so also do the sciences.<sup>41</sup> Knowledge is the result of the proper correlating of the external (creation) and the internal (mind) so that the two correspond.

### **The *Principia* of Theology (Special Revelation)**

Theology also includes both a *principium externum* and *internum* within its system or prolegomena. These shall be explored in order; then the chapter shall draw out

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<sup>39</sup>K. Scott Oliphint, *God with Us: Divine Condescension and the Attributes of God* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 130.

<sup>40</sup>This language alludes to Irenaeus’s Trinitarian structure (Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, in vol. 1 of *ANF*, trans. Alexander Roberts and William Rambaut [Grand Rapids : Eerdmans, 1983], 2:30.9; 3:24.2; 4:20.1; 4:38.3). For an excellent discussion that places the essence and function of truth within the larger domain of the triune God, see Bruce D. Marshall, *Trinity and Truth* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

<sup>41</sup>After developing a biblical and theological case, Bavinck summarizes the logic: “But if that is the case, if in virtue of its nature religion has its own external principle of knowledge (*principium cognoscendi externum*), then there also has to correspond to it a unique internal principle of knowledge (*principium cognoscendi internum*). Just as the eye answers to light, the ear to sound, the logos (reason) within us to the logos (rationality) outside of us, so there has to be in human beings a subjective organ that answers to the objective revelation of God” (Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 1:505). He continues: “Eventually, all philosophers of religion are finally and willy-nilly brought to the recognition that human beings are by nature religious beings, that they are akin to God, and his image” (ibid.; cf. 1:233). See also Kuyper, *Principles of Sacred Theology*, 67, 260.

implications of the *principia* for theology and the general sciences.

Following external special revelation, the *principium externum* of theology is Holy Scripture itself. Theology needs this external *principium* because, within creation itself, the infinite and transcendent God must necessarily remain inaccessible to finite and (more importantly) sinful creatures. The purpose or function of the *principium* is obvious: to describe, assess, and evaluate God and the world correctly. As Calvin recognizes, “It appears that if men were taught only by nature, then they would hold to nothing certain or solid or clear-cut, but would be so tied to confused principles as to worship an unknown God.”<sup>42</sup> While God consistently reveals himself in the creation, the noetic devastation of the fall left that disclosure misunderstood and misappropriated. In order to complete his plan of revelation, that is, to ensure true and proper knowledge of himself, God continued to reveal himself through the words of prophets and apostles and, eventually, through their writings in Scripture. As the primary source and material cause of science is creation itself, so also the primary source and material cause of theology is Scripture.<sup>43</sup>

The *principium internum* of theology, likewise, is the regeneration of the Spirit that leads to faith and the illumination of the Spirit that leads to true perception of Scripture.<sup>44</sup> Theology needs this internal principle because, on account of active and destructive sin, people are not receptive to the gospel—and the whole of theology—until

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<sup>42</sup>Calvin, *Institutes*, 1:5.12.

<sup>43</sup>While overstated, Bonaventure is helpful: “Thus, theology is the only perfect science, for it begins at the very beginning, which is the First Principle [God], and continues to the very end, which is the everlasting reward; it proceeds from the summit, which is God Most High, the Creator of all things, and reaches even to the abyss, which is the torment of hell” (Bonaventure, *Breviloquium*, trans. and ed. Dominic V. Monti, *Works of St. Bonaventure*, vol. 9 [Saint Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Publications, 2005], 28). In other words, as he parallels science and theology, Bonaventure suggests that theology is the only complete science as it contains the correct perception of the world and the gospel itself.

<sup>44</sup>One could connect the internal *principium cognoscendi* to the regenerating and illuminating work of the Spirit, on the one hand, or its human result, faith, on the other (for the former, see Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 1:207; for the latter, see Rom 10:17; Gal 3:3, 5; Heb 11:1, 3; cf. Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 1:97). This inward principle may also be biblically identified as spiritual rebirth (John 3:3, 5), purity of heart (Matt 5:8), doing the will of God (John 7:17), or the anointing of the Spirit (1 John 2:20). The question is simply a matter of terminology and emphasis. Nevertheless, for the sake of perceiving the unity of the Triune God in all his activity, this chapter will consider the work of the Holy Spirit the internal dimension.

they are unveiled by the Spirit. Because Scripture is misunderstood and misrepresented by unbelieving eyes, God intervened to open these eyes to believe. Irenaeus compares such divine grace to the dew and the rain, both of which make the fields fruitful.<sup>45</sup> Augustine summarizes, “Unless you have believed, you will not understand.”<sup>46</sup> Therefore, writes Berkhof, this internal *principium* “brings the knowledge of God into man, which is after all the aim of all theology and of the whole self-revelation of God.”<sup>47</sup> Just as human rationality (created and sustained by the Spirit) apprehends the external world, so the Spirit’s illumination unto faith leads to the correct apprehension of Scripture (and the world). Just as human reason is impaired and maimed by sin, the Holy Spirit is the internal *principium* that restores and illumines rationality. Alister McGrath says it well: “The task of the Holy Spirit is to lead into God’s truth; without the Spirit, truth remains elusive.”<sup>48</sup>

Accordingly, the *principia cognoscendi* of theology implicate two important realities. First, while unbelieving people can know many things about the world, only believers may apprehend those Spirit-given realities. On the one hand, many of the greatest geniuses—whether Plato, Mozart, or Einstein—were, by all indications, without the Spirit-guided reading of Scripture, yet they manufactured, respectively, some of the greatest philosophical edifices, the most beautiful and elegant symphonies, and the most

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<sup>45</sup>Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, in vol. 1 of *ANF*, trans. Alexander Roberts and William Rambaut (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 3:17.2.3. John Owen likewise compares the regenerative grace to the Spirit’s planting a new spiritual habit within the person. This habit consists of a “new, gracious, spiritual life, or principle, created, and bestowed on the soul, whereby it is changed in all its faculties and affections, fitted and enabled to go forth in the way of obedience unto every divine object that is proposed unto it” (John Owen, *Of Communion with God the Father, Son and Holy Ghost*, ed. William H. Goold, *The Works of John Owen*, vol. 2 [Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1965], 200).

<sup>46</sup>Augustine, *On The Holy Trinity*, trans. Arthur West Haddan, in vol. 3 of *NPNF* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 15.2; see also idem, *Confessions of Saint Augustine*, trans. Edward B. Pusey, in vol. 1 of *NPNF* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 13.1. He previously defines faith simply: “what is believing unless it is to agree to that which is said is true” (Augustine, *On the Trinity*, 13.1).

<sup>47</sup>Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 1:97.

<sup>48</sup>McGrath, *Christian Theology*, 241.

synthesized and creative scientific hypotheses. However, because of sin and the corresponding absence and/or distortion of the *principia* of theology (i.e., Word and Spirit), they were left blind to other, unperceived spiritual realities.

Believers, on the other hand, may apprehend those realities that only the Spirit can impart. This work of the Spirit does not add new information beyond Scripture or the natural world; it does not change the believers' sense perception or reason; and it is not a platonic upward movement of surreal contemplation.<sup>49</sup> Rather, the Spirit's action rectifies or resurrects human cognition: "Redemption [via regeneration] in a supernatural way restores to fallen man also the normalcy and efficiency of his cognition of God in the sphere of nature."<sup>50</sup> To put it simply, the epistemic problems are sin and rebellion from God; the epistemic solutions are personal renewal (regeneration) and cognitive enlightenment (illumination).<sup>51</sup> This organic work of the Spirit obviously applies to the

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<sup>49</sup>For the latter, see Plato, who suggests that the person "has the ability to uplift the best part of the soul toward the contemplation of the best in things that are in the real world." Plato's words here apply to his conception of recollection (*anamnesis*) or the dialectic (Plato, *Republic*, trans. Chris Emlyn-Jones and William Preddy, LCL, vol. 6 [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013], 532C-D, see also 531D-534D). For a modern proponent of religious contemplation towards knowledge, see John Hick, *Who or What is God? And Other Investigations* (New York: Seabury, 2009), 14-30.

<sup>50</sup>Vos, *Biblical Theology*, 20, cf. 69. As he helpfully maintains, the Spirit's internal redemption does not only affect our perception of general revelation, but also special revelation (*ibid.*, 20-22). For example, as Kuyper argues, regeneration (or, as he prefers, *palingenesis*) restrains the noetic effects of sin and produces the newfound ability to see the universe as it really is (i.e., illumination) (Kuyper, *Principles of Sacred Theology*, 299). He writes, "Here we affirm that in every domain *palingenesis* revivifies the original man as 'a creature of God,' and for no single moment abandons what was given in the nature of man" (*ibid.*). In other words, the Holy Spirit, "by illumination, enables the human consciousness to take up into itself the substance of the Scriptures," leads us to "ever richer insights into its content," and imparts "personal application of the Word" that is "intended and indispensable for them" (*ibid.*, 402). Following Kuyper's basic trajectory, Geerhardus Vos likewise argues, "The main correction, however, of the natural knowledge of God cannot come from within nature itself: it must be supplied by the supernaturalism of redemption" (Vos, *Biblical Theology*, 20). For an excellent discussion of this idea, see Schumacher, *Divine Illumination*, 62-64. For further discussion of the work of the Spirit in relationship to hermeneutics, see David Chang-Nyon Kim, "The Role of the Holy Spirit in the Interpretation of the Word of God" (Ph.D. diss., Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2012). For a Roman Catholic appraisal of regeneration (i.e., justification=regeneration) that drives towards epistemological implications of the doctrine, see Eleonore Stump, *Wandering in Darkness: Narrative and the Problem of Suffering* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 162-69.

<sup>51</sup>As Kuyper contends, the problem is twofold: namely, a formal one whereby the disorder of the sinner must be neutralized, and a material one, where the knowledge of God must be extended to include the knowledge of God's relation to the (now) sinner (Kuyper, *Principles of Sacred Theology*, 275). This problem is augmented by *palingenesis* (or regeneration) and illumination, on the one hand, and special revelation, on the other. For the former, see *ibid.*, 150-51, 280-81, 288-89, 298, 327, 345, 361, 402, 415, 508, 554; for the latter, see *ibid.*, 275, 327, 361. This is why Dirk van Keulen argues that Kuyper's theological epistemology consists of three aspects: special revelation, regeneration, and illumination (Dirk

biblical text, where, as Kevin Vanhoozer suggests, the Spirit (1) convicts people that the Bible is divinely authoritative, (2) impresses its truth onto their minds, and (3) sanctifies them so that they truly read the text instead of preferring their own interpretations.<sup>52</sup> The epistemic spiritual work also applies to general revelation in creation, for it is a divine work wherein the Spirit enables ordinary cognition so that believers can think in terms of God and his work of creating, sustaining, providentially caring, and ruling as they gaze at the world.<sup>53</sup> In other words, the existence of the *principia cognoscendi* of theology implicate that regenerated people perceive Scripture and the world differently than do unbelievers.

Second, the theological *principia* result in a shift in worldview. While it is true that believing and unbelieving people see the same things as they gaze upon the cosmos, the difference herein is not material but rather formal. As believers are affected by revelation (by Word and Spirit), they perceive the world in a different way.<sup>54</sup> The

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van Keulen, “The Internal Tension in Kuyper’s Doctrine of Organic Inspiration of Scripture,” in *Kuyper Reconsidered: Aspects of his Life and Work*, ed. Cornelis van der Kooij and Jan de Bruijn [Amsterdam: VU Uitgeverij, 1999], 124).

<sup>52</sup>Kevin Vanhoozer, *Is there Meaning in this Text?* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 413-14; idem, *First Theology: God, Scripture, and Hermeneutics* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2002), 233-34. See also the previous discussion in this chapter (“Internal Reality of Revelation”).

<sup>53</sup>As D. A. Carson asserts, “What the Spirit accomplishes in us is more than application of truth already grasped. Paul’s point is that truly grasping the truth of the cross and being transformed cannot be separated—and both are utterly dependent on the work of the Spirit” (D. A. Carson, *The Cross and the Christian Ministry: Leadership Lessons from 1 Corinthians* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003], 65). “In other words, there has not only been an objective, public act of divine disclosure in the crucifixion of God’s own Son, but there must also be a private work of God, by his Spirit, in the mind and heart of the individual” (ibid., 52). As he rightly suggests, human cognition needs to be restored to its proper function (ibid., 53-55), so that we can overcome our self-centeredness and see clearly (ibid., 55, 65-66). Therefore, “those without the Spirit are so dead that it is folly to think that arguments can bring them to faith” (ibid., 45, cf. 52). David Chang-Nyon Kim summary is pertinent: Carson can speak of God’s “work of revealing the hiddenness of the gospel (external revelation) and renewing believers’ sinful heart and mind (internal revelation) so that he may understand the gospel” (Kim, “The Role of the Holy Spirit in the Interpretation of the Word of God,” 56). For a similar view to Carson’s, see Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 247-56.

<sup>54</sup>Alfred North Whitehead compares revelation (i.e., the theological *principia*) to a “special occasion” in the life of a person that provides the central clue for interpreting the other occasions (Alfred North Whitehead, *Religion in the Making* [New York: Macmillan, 1926], 32). Or, more notably, H. Richard Niebuhr contends that revelation is like a “luminous sentence” amidst a complex argument, “from which we can go forward and backward and so attain some understanding of the whole” (H. Richard Niebuhr, *The Meaning of Revelation* [New York: Macmillan, 1941], 61, cf. 93). In other words, revelation is a “paradigm shift” that results in the person’s once distorted picture coming clearer as a result of the Word and Spirit. The term, “paradigm shift,” is borrowed from Thomas Kuhn’s historical analysis of scientific theory (see Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 2nd ed. [Chicago: University of Chicago Press,

difference, as Esther L. Meek asserts, is that believers have the formal Spirit-given instructions for viewing the world: just as people must acquire and trust the directions to Magic Eye 3-D pictures to open up the reality of the particulars (Meek's example), so also believers possess and trust God's instructions about the world to unlock the reality of the world.<sup>55</sup> Following Michael Polanyi, one might say that, just as knowledge in the general sciences requires "indwelling" the particulars of the subsidiary awareness to experience knowledge, so also knowledge in theology ultimately requires the Holy Spirit's epistemic "indwelling" to illuminate the mind's perception.<sup>56</sup> With practice, as John Macquarrie explains, illumined people perceive "an extra dimension" in a situation, so that they know what God is doing.<sup>57</sup> For example, while unbelievers may accurately perceive a cedar branch blowing in the wind, only believers (through the twofold *principia*) are able to apprehend that God "creates the wind" that moves the branch (Amos 4:13). This idea explains why John Calvin urges his readers to learn to see every feature of creation as God's clothes, for the features of the world move only inasmuch as he acts.<sup>58</sup>

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1970]; see also Ian Hacking, ed., *Scientific Revolutions* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981]).

<sup>55</sup>Esther Lightcap Meek, *Longing to Know: The Philosophy of Knowledge for Ordinary People* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2003), 46-50, 141-45. Meek summarizes, "Human knowing . . . involves actively struggling to rely on a collection of as yet unrelated particulars to achieve a focus on a coherent pattern or whole. It is a skilled coping with the world through achieving a coherence, an integrated pattern, a making sense of things, that opens the world to us" (ibid., 56). Knowing thus involves three dimensions: the clues, the struggle, and the focus (ibid.). As such, "The act of knowing actively involves the human agent" within it (ibid., 58). Meek is particularly reliant on the heretofore explained tacit knowledge theory of Michael Polanyi (see ibid., 9-10).

<sup>56</sup>Polanyi, *Knowledge and Being*, 148.

<sup>57</sup>John Macquarrie, *Principles of Christian Theology* (London: SCM, 1966), 80. While Macquarrie is not in the same theological camp as this dissertation, his words in this instance accurately reflect much of the Reformed tradition. Calvin, for instance, notes that the rainbow "is merely a refraction of the rays of the sun on the opposite clouds" and has no material "efficacy in restraining the waters" as God promised Noah. Nevertheless, it remains true that God instituted the rainbow as a sign so that "whenever we behold it, we read this promise of God in it, that he would never more destroy the earth with a flood." Therefore, if any man might ridicule simplicity of faith, contending for the scientific nature of such clouds, we can "smile on his stupidity in not acknowledging God as the Lord and Governor of nature, who uses all the elements according to his will for the promotion of his own glory" (Calvin, *Institutes*, 4:14.18). In a similar way, creation reveals God, but only to the extent that he has chosen. In other words, "Without faith there is no perception of revelation" (Morris, *I Believe in Revelation*, 37).

<sup>58</sup>"It is as if he said: Therefore the Lord began to show himself in the visible splendor of his

Alvin Plantinga summarizes the discussion well: because the Spirit's internal instigation resurrects fallen noetic capacities, believers may perceive God in creation and thereby conclude that God created and sustains the world (among other gospel realities).<sup>59</sup> The theological *principia*, therefore, provide believers with a new paradigm for the people of God and the nature of life so that they are enabled to think and live differently. The *principia* result in a worldview shift.

### **Conclusion: The *Principia Cognoscendi* and Revelation**

This dissertation heretofore has sought to provide an evangelical ressourcement of revelation by maintaining that revelation ought to be expressed in its external and internal dimensions. It has expanded this argument by correlating revelation with the *principia cognoscendi* of the sciences (i.e., general revelation) and theology (i.e., special revelation): just as revelation must be understood as external and internal, so also the *principia* must be understood in this twofold categorization (see Table 2).<sup>60</sup> This

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apparel, ever since in the creation of the universe he brought forth those insignia whereby he shows his glory to us, whenever and wherever we cast our gaze" (Calvin, *Institutes*, 1:5.1).

<sup>59</sup>Specifically, Plantinga creatively asserts that the believer, after being illuminated, may perceive God in (1) creation and (2) Scripture and thereby rationally conclude that God (1) created and sustains the world and (2) spoke Scripture as his word. Christianity, he continues, epistemically includes these two "basic beliefs" (among others), that is, beliefs that are basic "in the sense that [they are] not accepted on the evidential basis of other propositions" (Plantinga, *Warranted Christian Belief* [New York: Oxford University Press, 2000], 175, cf. 180). In other words, following John Calvin's *sensus divinitatis* along with the inward testimony, these beliefs may immediately be formed in the mind given the fact that they are "produced by cognitive faculties or processes that are working properly, in an appropriate epistemic environment . . . according to a design plan that is aimed at truth [and] successfully aimed at truth" (ibid., 256, see also 180, 190, 259, 262). The internal testimony of the Spirit, summarizes Randal Rauser, is a "doxastic process that is designed to produce beliefs about God that could not otherwise be gained given our fallen noetic faculties" so that such knowledge (i.e., the gospel and its implications towards the world) through the Spirit is, following Calvin, "revealed to our minds and sealed in our hearts" (Randal Rauser, *Theology in Search of Foundations* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009], 246). Therefore, because God reveals himself in this internal capacity, believers possess a rational justification or warrant for their knowledge. Notably, while Plantinga is generally a faithful (if sometimes anachronistic) interpreter of Calvin, there are two pertinent areas where the two differ: Plantinga attributes to Calvin an interest in rational justification, and his account of self-authentication is different than Calvin's (see Paul Helm, *John Calvin's Ideas* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004], 267).

<sup>60</sup>The Reformers, for instance, could not speak of knowledge or revelation except as they correlate with both the Word (creation) and Spirit (illumination) (see chap. 4 of this dissertation, "Reformation and Post-Reformation Eras").

conclusion is predictable, for the scientific *principia* correspond to general revelation, as the theological *principia* correspond to special revelation.

Table 2. The *principia* within their spheres

|                  |          | Spheres          |                   |
|------------------|----------|------------------|-------------------|
|                  |          | General Sciences | Theology          |
| <i>Principia</i> | External | Creation         | Holy Scripture    |
|                  | Internal | Mind             | Holy Spirit/Faith |

The *principia cognoscendi* of science include external creation and the internal mind. These twofold *principia* are generalized and available to all people—to more or less degrees. Unbelievers do not share regeneration (and thus faith) as the internal *principium*, but they do have cognition. As the dissertation has also asserted, it is helpful to view both of these, creation and mind, as derivative of the Holy Spirit, lest one forgets that both are divinely given and governed.

The theological *principia* basically reduce to Scripture and illumination. By these *principia*, people are enlightened, able to apprehend salvific knowledge, and thereby perceive the spiritual connections between such knowledge. In other words, after the internal *principium* of the Spirit regenerates and illumines, believers perceive and accept the gospel (which they heretofore rejected) and thus understand and apply those gospel realities to the world around them. This new insight does not include more information than is disclosed in Scripture or the natural world; rather, the action rectifies or resurrects human cognition.

In summation, both science and theology include a *principium cognoscenti externum* and a *principium cognoscenti internum*. The former refers to the material cause, and the latter corresponds to the instrumental cause of the subject. These two *principia*, forever united, Word and Spirit, are the basis of science and theology and the means of

understanding the full doctrine of revelation. The Word basically corresponds to the external *principium*, because it is the objective source or material cause of knowledge in science (creation) and theology (Scripture). The Spirit corresponds to the internal *principium*, for it is the subjective source or instrumental cause of knowledge in science (reason) and theology (illumination). René Latourelle summarizes, “There is the combined activity of the external announcing and the interior attraction.”<sup>61</sup> Accordingly, Kuyper’s conclusion regarding the necessity of both dimensions in the *principia* is pertinent:

From the finite no conclusion can be drawn to the infinite, neither can a Divine reality be known from external or internal phenomena, unless that God reveals Himself in my consciousness to my ego; reveals Himself as God; and thereby moves and impels me to see in these finite phenomena a brightness of His glory.<sup>62</sup>

### **The *Principium Essendi* and Revelation**

The former discussions left unaided may lead to the wrong impression that the two coterminous dimensions of revelation or *principia cognoscendi* are unrelated or otherwise detached from one another. Nothing could be further from the case. While the former section elaborated the epistemological substructures of revelation, it remains to discuss the ontological groundwork, that is, the *principium essendi*. This section will argue that the triune God is the *principium essendi* and consequently holds the two *principia cognoscendi* together in his one organic act of revelation.

The *principium essendi* is the fundamental source, ground, or cause from which being, existence, and knowledge proceeds. The *principium* thus refers to the triune

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<sup>61</sup>Latourelle, *Theology of Revelation*, 383. He thus argues for the “twofold dimension of the Word of God” (ibid.). Namely, “Its efficacy as external word is joined by a particular efficacy which comes from the divine activity penetrating the very heart of all of the activity of our intellect and will, predisposing us for the response of faith” (ibid., 385).

<sup>62</sup>Kuyper, *Principles of Sacred Theology*, 343. As he argues, this kind of truth would apply even if humanity had not sinned. Therefore, “neither observation nor reasoning” would be enough; rather, one needs a direct, personal revelation from God (ibid.). See also Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 1:207, 497; Morris, *I Believe in Revelation*, 70-71, 122.

God himself, the fountain of all things.<sup>63</sup> As Francis Turretin reminds his readers, “The question properly is not of principles (*principiis*), but of things principiated (*principiatis*).”<sup>64</sup> In other words, the purpose of the *principia* is not to abstract knowledge or revelation down to its most fundamental components (i.e., external or internal); rather, the purpose is to “set [one’s] mind on things above,” that is, God in Christ, “in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Col 3:2, 2:3). Indeed, it is God who principiates (i.e., makes foundational) the rest of knowledge through his being and works.

As the *principium essendi*, the triune God speaks in one, united communicative act. God is Trinity and as such, in some sense, he is also Speaker, Speech, and its Spokenness.<sup>65</sup> Borrowing terminology from speech act theory, God is likewise Locution, Illocution, and Perlocution.<sup>66</sup> He speaks a locution (by the Father), and his speech carries an objective, concrete meaning or illocution (by the Son as Logos), and this speech is ultimately and effectively received and appropriated as a perlocution (by the Spirit). In the same way that one cannot separate the intended meaning of a statement (illocution)

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<sup>63</sup>As Scripture says, the fear of the Lord is the principle (תְּשׁוּבָה, i.e., beginning, foundation) of wisdom (Ps 111:10) or of knowledge (Prov 1:7); or rather, Jesus Christ is the principle (ἀρχή, i.e., beginning, foundation) of creation (Col 1:18; Rev 3:14). Therefore, the source or cause of all things is the triune God himself. As Bonaventure maintains, theology “deals principally with the First Principle—God, three in one” (Bonaventure, *Breviloquium*, 27; see also Allen and Swain, *Reformed Catholicity*, 31-32). Some theologians in the early church argued that God the Father is technically the *principium essendi*. Augustine, for example, asserted that the Father is “the principle of the whole divinity” (lit. *principium totius divinitatis*, Augustine, *On the Trinity*, 4:20) which means, in other words, the principle of being or existence of the Godhead. However, it is more helpful, following John Calvin, to view each person of the Trinity as *autotheos*, and thus, the Trinity as a whole is the *principium* (Calvin, *Institutes*, 1:13.25, 29; cf. B. B. Warfield, *Calvin and Augustine* [Phillipsburg: P & R, 1980], 283-84).

<sup>64</sup>Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, 2:15.33.

<sup>65</sup>The language here echoes Barth’s Revealer, Revelation, and Revealedness (Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, ed. G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance [Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1961], 1:1.361).

<sup>66</sup>Namely, language includes a “locutionary act” (the basic meaning and reference of a statement), an “illocutionary force” (the semantic cogency that the speaker intends to accomplish in the locution), and a “perlocutionary force” (the statement considered by its effect upon its recipient). These three are delineations from J. L. Austin, the founder of this theory, who wanted technical terms to explain the content, intent, and result of language (see J. L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, ed. J. O. Urmson and Marina Sbisa, 2nd ed. [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1975], 1-164; John Searle, *Mind Language, and Society: Philosophy in the Real World* [New York: Basic, 1998]; John Searle and David Vanderveken, *Foundations of Illocutionary Logic* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985]). Vanhoozer has also correlated speech act theory with the three persons of the Trinity in a similar manner (Vanhoozer, *First Theology*, 227-28).

from its intended result (perlocution), one cannot abstract the *principium cognoscendi externum* of the Word from the corresponding *principium cognoscendi internum* of the Spirit. The twofold *principia cognoscendi* consists of two sides of the one coin of the *principium essendi*. This idea accounts for why Irenaeus distinguishes the triune communicative act as God’s singular accomplishment by his two personified hands, the Word and Spirit.<sup>67</sup> It also accounts for why numerous theologians assert that revelation includes both components. The triune God organically unites his revelation. Just as there is one triune God, so also there is one triune communicative act.

Linking this discussion back to a theology of revelation, one can say that revelation, because its source is God (*essendi*), consists of both the *principium cognoscendi externum* and the *principium cognoscendi internum*. First, the *principium cognoscendi externum* is the external speaking itself. God speaks locutions, and by these locutions, he intends the illocutionary force. These truly and properly reveal God in the external sense (e.g., Scripture and creation). Second, the *principium cognoscendi internum* is the internal appropriation. Language has not yet fulfilled its intention until the listener actually internally hears and responds to the external word. This result occurs through the Word’s perlocutionary power, the agent of which is the Holy Spirit and which results in faith among its human audience. The external-internal distinction thus helps to incorporate both dimensions of revelation. As Vanhoozer writes, “The Son is the form and content of the divine discourse, the Spirit its energy and persuasive efficacy.”<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>67</sup>Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 1:22.1; 2:30.9; 5:1.3; see also James Beaven, *An Account of the Life and Writings of S. Irenaeus: Bishop of Lyons and Martyr* (London: J. G. F. & J. Rivington, 1841), 88, 89; John Behr, *Asceticism and Anthropology in Irenaeus and Clement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 38; John Lawson, *The Biblical Theology of Saint Irenaeus* (London: Epworth, 1948), 125.

<sup>68</sup>Vanhoozer, *Remythologizing Theology*, 366. The internal *principium* corresponds to the Spirit’s interior working in the *Testimonium et Illuminatio Internum Spiritus Sancti* (“Testimony and Illumination of the Spirit”). Vanhoozer also acknowledges this notion without using the same language (*ibid.*). He says, “What finally makes the call effectual is its content—the story of Jesus—as ministered by the Spirit” (*ibid.*, 374). This is the difference between “externally authoritative” and “internally persuasive” discourse (*ibid.*, 365).

Revelation likewise may be understood as the external act of God's self-disclosure and the internal perception that actually results from such divine action. Both are inexorably tied and cannot be separated. The Word without the Spirit is empty; the Spirit without the Word is blind.

When both poles of revelation are present, revelation transforms. As the author of Hebrews assures, "For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart" (Heb 4:12). Scripture alone does not accomplish this robust result, as if mere words salvifically reveal to sinful human hearts apart from the illumination of the Spirit. As John Webster perceptively observes, "Reading Scripture is inescapably bound to regeneration."<sup>69</sup> Nor does the Spirit effect this result apart from the Bible. Rather, revelation is external words with internal import. Revelation may be compared to an illuminating sentence from which we move forward and backward to attain a better understanding of the whole.<sup>70</sup> Extending the metaphor, revelation includes a revealed meaning (locution) through its intended (illocutionary) force that then effects the feelings, thoughts, and actions (perlocutions) of the readers/listeners: correction, rebuke, comfort, admonition, warning, encouragement. It is when the external revelation (i.e., the Bible) is read and the internal revelation (i.e., the Spirit) regenerates and illumines the reader's mind and heart—or understanding and will—that the readers can say that the Bible is not a mere book and that the Spirit is in them. It is at this point that revelation fully and finally does its job in bringing the Word of God "out there" (external) to the Word of God "in here" (internal).<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>69</sup>Webster, *Holy Scripture*, 89. This is why A. W. Tozer is so severely critical of those who believe that "if you learn the text you've got the truth," for they "see no beyond and no mystic depth, no mysterious heights, nothing supernatural or divine. . . . They have the text and the code and the creed, and to them that is the truth" (A. W. Tozer, "Revelation is Not Enough," *Presbyterian Journal* 28, no. 41 [1970]: 7-8).

<sup>70</sup>See Niebuhr, *The Meaning of Revelation*, 61, cf. 93.

<sup>71</sup>This does not mean, however, that objective revelation (e.g., the Bible) without subjective

In this sense, revelation is multidimensional. It is an organic act of God whereby he personally confronts people wholistically—mind, heart, and will. Revelation is internal and external communication. It entails communication of propositional truth via the revelations of Christ, the Bible, and creation, so that revelation indeed includes an external component. It also entails an internal component, whereby Christ encounters people by the Spirit. As John Webster again summarizes, “Revelation is thus not simply the bridging of a noetic divide (though it includes that), but is reconciliation, salvation, and therefore fellowship.”<sup>72</sup> Because revelation has both an external and internal component, it can be articulated in words and propositions and is also a redeeming experience of divine encounter.<sup>73</sup> Revelation therefore manifests itself through God’s Word—creation and Scripture—and by his Spirit—in regeneration and illumination. It thus encompasses all the self-presentation and self-communication of the triune God to people, both externally and internally, from creation through redemption unto eternity.

### Chapter Conclusion

The present chapter has provided directions and resources for an evangelical theology of revelation. Using insights from Scripture, Reformed theology, and speech act theory, the chapter has maintained that revelation properly includes both external and internal dimensions, which are moreover grounded within the organic unity of the triune God. It has accomplished this argument so far in three successive steps. First, summarizing the dissertation heretofore, it broadly and systematically surveyed the idea

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revelation is not revelation at all (cf. Barth, Brunner, Niebuhr, Bloesch, and Webster). The mistake of these proponents is that they improperly assume that the ontology of revelation necessarily includes its function, and thus when the function of the Scriptures is unfulfilled—that is, the purpose to bring people to saving faith—they wrongly assume that revelation is not present (see, for example, Webster, *Holy Scripture*, 14, 16). It is better to say that both are revelations regardless of the fulfillment of the purpose.

<sup>72</sup>Webster, *Holy Scripture*, 16. The above footnote may also apply to Webster’s comment here.

<sup>73</sup>In this sense, one may take issue when Webster declares that “revelation is not to be thought of as the communication of arcane information or hidden truths” (ibid., 14). Depending upon what he means by “arcane” and “hidden,” one wonders how revelation can exist without information and truth. In this sense, Webster is misguided to suggest that revelation is simply “God’s own proper reality” (ibid.).

of revelation as external and internal within Christ, Scripture, and creation. Thereafter, it clarified and expanded the argument by correlating revelation with the *principia cognoscendi* of the sciences (i.e., general revelation) and theology (i.e., special revelation); namely, as revelation is external (Word) and internal (Spirit), so also the theological and scientific *principia* are external (Scripture, creation) and internal (illumination, reason), respectively. Third, the chapter grounded the *principia*, and thus revelation itself, within the *principium essendi*, maintaining that this *principium*, the triune God himself, is the singular organic source of all things, especially of being and knowledge. The argument should be clear: the same God who discloses his power and nature in his external world and word is the same God who teaches inwardly. Expanding Thomas Aquinas's apt phrase: Theology, and all science itself, "is taught by God, teaches God, leads to God."<sup>74</sup>

### **Objections and Clarifications Briefly Considered**

This stage in the chapter presents a natural transition point to consider some pertinent objections against the thesis. Because the section will not have the sufficient space to explore all possible objections, it shall consider four of the most significant ones.

The first and most relevant possible objection is that, within Scripture itself, the word "revelation" only refers to the disclosure of (external) information. Because this dissertation has rigorously defended against this objection (see chaps. 2 and 3), it will now only briefly consider it. The dissertation has heretofore asserted that the words for and concept of revelation consist of both external and internal realities. Revelation may refer to an external disclosure of information (in persons, words, or events) that was previously unknown; or it may refer to an internal unveiling of understanding (especially

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<sup>74</sup>Thomas of Aquinas, *The Summa Theologica*, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province, rev. ed. [New York: Benziger Brothers, 1920], 1:1.7; lit., *a Deo docetur, Deum docet, ad Deum ducit*. The succinct and beautiful translation above can be found in Francis Turretin (*Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, 1:1.7) and Gerhardus Vos (*Biblical Theology*, v).

through illumination) that was previously unknown. The concept of illumination, therefore, while distinct from the external disclosure of God in Scripture, can and should properly be termed an internal revelation and thus be included under the broader umbrella of revelation in Christian theology.<sup>75</sup> Revelation is a disclosure or an unveiling of something that was previously unknown, whether that is information or perception. Revelation refers to both external and internal realities.

A second corresponding objection may be raised that, even if one grants that revelation may refer to inner, perceptive realities, this revelation supplements nothing of value to the external dimension. While the dissertation has consistently argued that the internal dimension does not add new information, the inner work of the Spirit does add something of value to the external dimension. Whereas the external element includes information, the internal element includes the presence of true (and not false) perception.

This kind of argument recalls Frank Jackson's distinction between (1) knowing that the color red exists, while being blind, thus lacking the perception of the color red; and (2) knowing that the color red exists and experiencing such a reality through sight. The latter inherently includes something that the former does not and cannot include.<sup>76</sup> Lydia Schumacher proposes a similar distinction as she comments upon Augustine's theory of illumination: while illumination is only the source of an "intrinsic cognitive capacity" (and not "extrinsic" information), it nevertheless has great "bearing on

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<sup>75</sup>As Bavinck admits, "The activity of the Holy Spirit, which is subjectively necessary in human beings to bring them to (saving) faith in Christ, can in a broad sense also be called a revelation" (Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 1:348). Then, after using Matt 16:16 and Gal 1:15-16, he concludes that, while there is a distinction between the objective and subjective revelations in Scripture, because subjective revelation refers to the fact that "new light has dawned in the heart of the believer about himself and about Christ, about God and the world, about sin and grace, about all things in heaven and on earth," such an action may in fact be termed revelation (ibid.).

<sup>76</sup>Frank Jackson, "Epiphenomenal Qualia," *PQ* 32 (1982): 127-36; and idem, "What Mary Didn't Know," *JP* 83 (1986): 291-95. He specifically draws this analogy as he argues against the possibility of physicalism. For objections, see Daniel Dennett, "What RoboMary Knows," in *Phenomenal Concepts and Phenomenal Knowledge*, ed. Torin Alter and Sven Walter (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 15-31.

cognitive processes, content, or certainty.”<sup>77</sup> Indeed, as D. A. Carson continues, the process resurrects correct human cognition so that the mind may cultivate the ability to see the world as it really is—and not simply through one’s own self-centered eyes.<sup>78</sup> By rectifying or resurrecting human cognition, divine illumination reveals true perception or apprehension, not only of Scripture but also of creation. In this way, the internal dimension certainly adds something of value to the external.

A third objection concerns the necessity of distinguishing revelation in this manner. While a response to this objection is partly contained under the second objection above, two more points ought to be made. First, within the doctrine of revelation, it is essential to distinguish between a material cause and instrumental (or efficient) cause. The external dimension is material, whereas the internal dimension is instrumental (or efficient). This distinction shows yet again the necessity of holding together both elements in the doctrine of revelation. It also displays the importance of formally distinguishing the concepts. Second, it is important to distinguish between God and his revelation. God possesses perfect, absolute, and infinite being and knowledge (*principium essendi*). He discloses himself in objective, infallible, yet limited and accommodated revelation to his people (*principium cognoscendi externum*). And he himself illuminates, through his Spirit, in his subjective and finite (in degree and manner) working and teaching, which lead to spiritual reception within his people (*principium cognoscendi internum*).<sup>79</sup> To refuse to distinguish the latter two *principia cognoscendi* may inadvertently lead to one-sided theologies of revelation wherein the Spirit quenches the Word or the Word stifles the Spirit. As Calvin held, the external and internal

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<sup>77</sup>Schumacher, *Divine Illumination*, 62-63. She continues, by illumination, “the cognitive capacity is one that must be gradually recovered as the mind cultivates a habit of reasoning in the light of faith in God” (ibid., 63).

<sup>78</sup>Carson, *The Cross and the Christian Ministry*, 52, 65-66; see also Schumacher, *Divine Illumination*, 63. See also 153n53 of this dissertation.

<sup>79</sup>Herman Bavinck also uses this argument (Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 1:214).

dimensions cannot be separated.<sup>80</sup> In the same way that the two dimensions of a square—height and length—can be formally distinguished but not materially separated, so also the two basic dimensions of revelation can be formally distinguished—external and internal—but not materially separated.

A fourth objection concerns a certain tendency among some proponents of a view similar to this dissertation's view. While affirming revelation as external and internal, some deny the truthfulness and authority of the external forms of revelation. Donald Bloesch, for example, while making a helpful distinction between the subjective and objective aspects of revelation, presses the distinction too far. He contends that, because revelation consists inexorably of both dimensions working together, external forms of revelation alone (e.g., Scripture) must somehow be imperfect or flawed.<sup>81</sup> Nevertheless, Bloesch's position on the objective/subjective nature of revelation does not logically result in an errant Scripture. This dissertation demonstrates that there is a distinction between revelation and Scripture, but it is not one of authority or truthfulness (as Bloesch holds) but one only of sphere. In other words, revelation (as external and internal, general and special) is the broader category in which Scripture finds its part.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>80</sup>Calvin, *Institutes*, 1:9.1-3.

<sup>81</sup>Donald Bloesch, *Jesus Christ: Savior and Lord*, Christian Foundations, vol. 3 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1996), 15. He denies the inerrancy of Scripture because he does not want to correlate the biblical words and revelation too closely, leading to bibliolatry (see Bloesch, *The Evangelical Renaissance* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1973], 21). In fact, because Bloesch wants to affirm a higher-critical reading of the Bible along with a spiritual reception for the believer, he ends with an odd and inconsistent hermeneutic that separates the conceptual and existential poles of revelation in the reading of Scripture (Bloesch, *Holy Scripture*, 178-79; idem, *Essentials of Evangelical Theology: Two Volumes in One* [Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2006], 1:71). The question is obvious: how does one critically engage while also spiritually receive? Based upon what he calls an "apparent weakness," Chad Brand notes, "It is not clear that Bloesch has provided an adequate solution to this difficulty." Brand then avers, "If this approach is to succeed, it is incumbent upon its advocates to demonstrate the intersection between these two methodologies" (Chad Owen Brand, "Donald George Bloesch's Contribution to Theological Method" [Ph.D. diss., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1998], 178, 179).

<sup>82</sup>Therefore, belief in full verbal inspiration does not lead to the worship or deification of the words. Moreover, whereas Bloesch presupposes that only the "highest" form of revelation can be inerrant (that is, Christ), we say that this entails a false antithesis. All revelation is truly and truthfully revelatory, for all revelation proceeds from and integrates into the doctrine of the triune God. While the Bible's words are inspired and thus revelatory, these words inexorably point to and signify the God who alone is worthy of worship. This view is the historic view of the church fathers and Reformers. Beyond the sources cited in chap. 4, see Augustine, *On Christian Teaching* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 9, 10, 27; and

As a necessary consequence, all of God’s self-revelation must be true—whether it be in creation, Scripture, Christ, or conscience.

This idea accounts for why Kenneth Pike asserts that the Barthian or Bloeschian position, which reduces revelation to something that is appropriated, has an incomplete and narrow view of human language. He uses the illustration of a brilliant scientist who gives a (recorded) lecture to a group of graduate students, none of whom understand it. As Pike suggests, there is indeed revelation, even if no one understands it, because the lecture is recorded and thus latently speaks as objective revelation.<sup>83</sup> The analogy to hearing/reading Scripture without personal acceptance should be clear. Unlike what Bloesch argues, Scripture is a true and authoritative form of divine revelation.<sup>84</sup> While it may only gain apprehension and acceptance (internal revelation) when the hearer is enlightened by the Spirit, the divine book itself externally or objectively reveals in its intent and content. A proper understanding of revelation as external and internal does not entail a denial of inerrancy.

While there will naturally be more objections to the thesis, for the sake of brevity, this chapter will end at this juncture. The next chapter will survey the practical implications of the thesis and thereby help to establish some of its most significant conclusions.

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Peter Martyr Vermigli, *Early Writings: Creed, Scripture, Church*, in *The Peter Martyr Library*, vol. 1, trans. Mariano Di Gangi and Joseph C. McLelland (Kirksville, MO: Sixteenth Century Essays and Studies, 1994), 32, 70, 71; idem, *Life, Letters, and Sermons*, in *The Peter Martyr Library*, vol. 5, trans. and ed. John Patrick Donnelly (Kirksville, MO: Sixteenth Century Essays and Studies, 1999), 186, 191, 187, 284, 288.

<sup>83</sup>Kenneth L. Pike, “Language and Meaning: Strange Dimensions of Truth,” *Christianity Today* 5 (1961): 690-92.

<sup>84</sup>Interestingly, one of Bloesch’s illustrations that he argues best supports his position in fact supports inerrancy. Bloesch argues that just as the Protestant scholastics emphasized Christ’s divinity to the exclusion of his humanity, so these scholastics also emphasized the Bible’s God-speaking to the exclusion of its human-speaking (Bloesch, *Holy Scripture*, 69). He thereby contends that the Bible has a real “humanity” just as Christ does. However, this line of reasoning actually implicates inerrancy; for, just as Christ is both human and divine so also the Scriptures are human and divine; but also, just as Christ (even in his humanity) was sinless, so also the Bible is sinless, that is, without error. Bloesch’s analogy seems to collapse on itself.

## CHAPTER 6

### A PRACTICAL THEOLOGY OF REVELATION

This dissertation has sought to provide direction and resources for an evangelical renaissance of theology as external and internal. It has argued that revelation is an organic unity that includes external and internal dimensions. For the purposes of appropriating these resources for contemporary evangelical theology, this chapter will draw out some of the most relevant implications of the thesis. These implications involve theological prolegomena, the authority of Scripture, hermeneutics, and theology. The chapter shall argue that the thesis implicates that (1) theological prolegomena includes both external and internal dimensions; (2) the authority of Scripture involves both Word and Spirit; (3) hermeneutics (a) embraces both Word and Spirit and thus (b) requires a humble posture; and (4) theology (a) contains both Word and Spirit and (b) entails practical action. In this manner, the present chapter seeks further to understand and evaluate the argument of the thesis.

Before the chapter elaborates its thesis, two clarifications ought to be made. First, while these four implications plausibly follow from the thesis, they are not unique to the thesis. In other words, while one could deny the thesis of the dissertation yet affirm many if not all of the points, the thesis helps to establish and highlight the implications within a broader framework. Second, this chapter does not seek to explore comprehensively these theological implications. The topics of theological prolegomena, the authority of Scripture, hermeneutics, and theology will be explored only insofar as the findings relate to the thesis of the dissertation. With these two clarifications in mind, the chapter turns to the matter at hand.

## Theological Prolegomena Includes the External and Internal Dimensions

First, the dissertation implicates a formal modification within theological prolegomena: its discussion of revelation must include both its external and internal dimensions.<sup>1</sup> If one dimension is neglected, then the discussion fails to provide the explicit twofold foundation of theology and the sciences.

As this dissertation has already noted in chapter 1, oftentimes theological prolegomena addresses the Word but seldom the Spirit. This tendency ought to change. Revelation is a much larger concept than the disclosure of information in Scripture and creation.<sup>2</sup> John Frame further highlights,

As the Spirit illuminates the Scriptures and writes God's word on our heart, he truly reveals God to us. The term *reveal* in Scripture does sometimes refer, not to special revelation, nor to general revelation, but to the enlightenment of individuals, so that they actually come to know and appropriate God's truth (Matt 11:27-27; Eph 1:17). This is an important form of existential revelation.<sup>3</sup>

Extending Frame's helpful point, as the prolegomena examines revelation, it should discuss not only the doctrine of Scripture but also the external and internal dimensions of revelation.

This methodological issue is not new to contemporary evangelicalism. As Richard Muller recognizes, this very issue confronted Reformed and post-Reformed theology, and many theologians concluded that both dimensions ought to appear in the prolegomena.<sup>4</sup> For example, in the same vein that the Second Helvetic Confession

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<sup>1</sup>"Prolegomena" is here used in the generalized sense of a preliminary, initial, or introductory section of theology.

<sup>2</sup>As John Frame writes, "God's revelation forms an organism, a unity of many self-manifestations, many norms. Ultimately revelation includes everything, for all reality manifests God" (John M. Frame, *The Doctrine of the Christian Life: A Theology of Lordship* [Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2008], 132). He also rightly notes that "Scripture plays a leading role" in revelation (*ibid.*, 133).

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, 137.

<sup>4</sup>Richard A. Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics: The Rise and Development of Reformed Orthodoxy, ca. 1520 to ca. 1725*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 2:293. While this development was primarily in the post-Reformation, "There are elements of the theology of the Reformers that point in this direction" (*ibid.*). Calvin is an obvious example here. See chap. 4 of this dissertation.

discusses the external Word as the “true Word of God,” it simultaneously addresses the internal Word that “inwardly lightens.”<sup>5</sup> This dipolar notion accounts for why John Owen, paralleling the Spirit’s inspiration (external) and testimony (internal), speaks of all of revelation as an external disclosure that is simultaneously internally self-authenticating.<sup>6</sup> The twofold idea of revelation ought to be the starting-point for theologies.

In the end, the inclusion of both dimensions in theological prolegomena is necessary. If it does not keep these elements together, then, at the very least, there is disjointedness and even incoherence between the Word and the Spirit.<sup>7</sup> This method implicates that, while the Word is foundational to theological study, the Spirit—who gives meaning, coherence, and life to the Word—is secondary or even tangential to the foundational issues at hand. It is necessary to place both dimensions in the prolegomena.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>Second Helvetic Confession, chap. 1, in *The Creeds of Christendom, with a History and Critical Notes*, ed. Philip Schaff, 6th ed. (1931; repr., Grand Rapids: Baker, 1983), 3:831.

<sup>6</sup>Owen writes, “God speaking in the penmen of Scripture (Heb 1:1), his voice to them was accompanied with its own evidence, which gave assurance unto them; and God speaking by them or their writing unto us, his word is accompanied by its own evidence, and gives assurance to us” (John Owen, *Of the Divine Original of the Scriptures*, in *The Works of John Owen*, vol. 16, ed. William H. Goold [New York: Johnstone and Hunter, 1850-53; repr., Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1967], 307). Therefore, Scripture is self-authenticating, first, “by way of testimony” of the Spirit, and second, “by way of deductions and inferences,” that is, intrinsically and extrinsically (ibid., 313, 309). Moreover, he continues, “We say not that this spirit ever speaks to us of the Word but by the Word” (ibid., 325-26). Therefore, the authority of all revelation—including creation, providence, conscience, and Scripture—is an authority “in itself towards us” (ibid., 309-11). It is all an external disclosure that is simultaneously internally self-authenticating. Owen concludes that all of God’s revelation, both general and special, has “such an impression of his authority upon it, as undeniably to evince that it is from him,” that to ignore his testimony in all these things leaves one “without excuse” (ibid., 312). In this manner, Owen unites much of the post-Reformation theology before him.

<sup>7</sup>This kind of separation between the Word and Spirit in theological method is common today. See the discussion in chap. 1, “The Eclipse of the Internal Dimension in Evangelicalism.”

<sup>8</sup>Herman Bavinck and Louis Berkhof are commendable examples in this area. Herman Bavinck, after he speaks about the science, method, and history of dogmatics, speaks in a more extended manner about the foundations of dogmatics, that is, the *principia*. He first explores the *principium externum* (that is, general and special revelation), and then he develops the *principium internum* (that is, faith and the work of the Spirit) (Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 1:283-496 [external]; 497-622 [internal]). Similarly, after speaking about the name, idea, task, and history of dogmatics, Berkhof begins his substantial discussion of dogmatics by speaking about the essential, external, and internal *principia* (Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 1:95-97). Within his prolegomena, he then develops these in terms of a broad discussion of the *principium cognoscendi externum* (that is, general and special revelation) and then the *principium cognoscendi internum* (that is, faith and the work of the Spirit) (ibid., 1:116-69 [external]; 170-87 [internal]).

## **The Authority of Scripture Involves the Word and Spirit**

Second, organically related to the previous discussion, the authority of Scripture is twofold, that is, Word and Spirit. In other words, people come to accept, know, and live out Scripture on the basis of the Word and Spirit.

It is important at the onset to note that the authority of Scripture is not separately that of Word and of Spirit, as if the Spirit were a discrete power apart from the Word (or vice versa). Rather, the authority of Scripture is both Word and Spirit inseparably united in one organic act of God.<sup>9</sup> This idea accounts for why John Calvin averred that the Word and Spirit are joined by a “mutual bond”: “Scripture will ultimately suffice for a saving knowledge of God only when its certainty is founded upon the inward persuasion of the Holy Spirit.”<sup>10</sup> In other words, the authority of Scripture is founded upon its identity as the Word of God, and it is inseparably related to its inspiration and illumination by the Spirit. The two work hand-in-hand.

Richard Muller, as he refers to the external-internal distinction in Reformed and post-Reformed theology, maintains that the authority of Scripture includes both dimensions: “The authority of Scripture rests both on its identity as Word and its inspiration by the Spirit.”<sup>11</sup> As Millard Erickson explains, “The written word, correctly interpreted, is the objective basis of authority. The inward illuminating and persuading world of the Holy Spirit is the subjective dimension.”<sup>12</sup> Richard B. Gaffin concludes, “The internal testimony of the Holy Spirit is absolutely indispensable to recognizing the divine origin and authority of Scripture. There is no place for a system of external proofs for inspiration, directed to unaided reason.”<sup>13</sup> The authority of Scripture is that of Word

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<sup>9</sup>See chap. 5 of this dissertation.

<sup>10</sup>Calvin, *Institutes*, 1:9.1-3; 1:8.13.

<sup>11</sup> Muller, *PRRD*, 2:206.

<sup>12</sup>Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 278.

<sup>13</sup>Richard B. Gaffin, Jr., “Old Amsterdam and Inerrancy,” *WTJ* 44, no. 2 (1982): 288.

and of Spirit.

At this juncture, John Murray helpfully clarifies the discussion of scriptural authority. Against Karl Barth, he notes that the authority of Scripture is not founded upon Word and Spirit as if, before the latter's special inner illumination, Scripture is not authoritative.<sup>14</sup> Instead, Scripture's authority "resides in the fact that it is the Word of God."<sup>15</sup> The internal work of the Spirit subjectively convinces us that the Word is true. He quotes Westminster approvingly: "Our full persuasion and assurance of the infallible truth and divine authority thereof, is from the inward work of the Holy Spirit, bearing witness by and with the Word in our hearts."<sup>16</sup>

Murray is thus correct insofar as he goes, but he unnecessarily assumes that the authority of Scripture resides—and only resides—in Scripture itself.<sup>17</sup> He raises the question: is not the subjective disclosure of truth (i.e., persuasion and assurance) itself an internal unveiling of perception? Does it not affirm the authority of the Scripture?<sup>18</sup> As the Gallican Confession helpfully clarifies, the Spirit who inspired Scripture is the same Spirit who testifies to it; therefore, the divinity and necessity of Scripture is known "not

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<sup>14</sup>John Murray, "The Attestation of Scripture," in *The Infallible Word: A Symposium by the Members of the Faculty of Westminster Theological Seminary*, ed. Ned Stonehouse and Paul Wooley (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1946), 44-45.

<sup>15</sup>*Ibid.*, 45. He writes this as he affirms the words of the Westminster Confession (see Westminster Confession, 1.6, in *The Creeds of Christendom*, 3:603-4). He affirms later, the "authority of Scripture is an objective and permanent fact residing in the quality of inspiration" (Murray, "The Attestation of Scripture," 46).

<sup>16</sup>*Ibid.*, 45.

<sup>17</sup>*Ibid.*, 45-46.

<sup>18</sup>Murray comes close to answering this question in the affirmative in two instances: "It is the function of the Holy Spirit to open the minds of men to perceive that [divine] testimony and cause the Word of God to be borne home to the mind of man with ruling power and conviction" (*ibid.*, 50-51). If he believes that the internal work of the Spirit opens the minds of people to perception, then he is affirming the basic thesis of this dissertation: internal unveiling of perception ought to be included under the biblical and theological concept of revelation. Even more oddly, he concludes the chapter by noting, "The two pillars of true faith in Scripture as God's Word are the objective witness and the internal testimony" (*ibid.*, 53). If there are two pillars of "true faith in Scripture as God's Word," then are these not the two pillars of the authority of Scripture? Therefore, Murray, while at first seeming to oppose the argument of this dissertation, at the very least gives credence to the argument as he develops his thoughts.

so much by the common accord and consent of the Church, as by the testimony and inward illumination of the Holy Spirit, which enables us to distinguish them from other ecclesiastical books upon which, however useful, we cannot find any articles of faith.”<sup>19</sup> John Frame’s clarification is thus beneficial: while the internal work of the Spirit is the “cause” of faith in Scripture, the external self-witness of Scripture itself is the “reason” for it.<sup>20</sup> In other words, both of these dimensions are united in one organic act; the self-evident Scriptures cannot be an independent criterion over against the testimony of the Spirit, or vice versa.<sup>21</sup>

The authority of Scripture is found in both the Word and Spirit.<sup>22</sup> This notion accounts for why Thomas Aquinas, as Bernard Ramm notes, “used to pray and fast when he came to a difficult passage of Scripture.”<sup>23</sup> This also accounts for why Calvin asserted that, because of our “great weakness,” we could not even move our tongue in recitation or celebration of God’s Word “unless it be governed by his Spirit.”<sup>24</sup> Both the Word and Spirit are involved in the authoritative recognition of Scripture. Otto Weber’s summary is masterful:

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<sup>19</sup>Gallican Confession, art. 4, in *Creeeds*, 3:361-62.

<sup>20</sup>“So the work of the Spirit is the cause of faith; the self-witness of Scripture is the reason for faith. We need both in order to be assured of the truth of Scripture. It is in this way that God comes with his personal words to attest to our minds and hearts” (Frame, *The Doctrine of the Word of God*, 314). Otto Weber and J. van Genderen and W. H. Velema argue similarly (see Otto Weber, *Foundations of Dogmatics*, trans. Darrell L. Guder [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981], 1:241-48; J. van Genderen and W. H. Velema, *Concise Reformed Dogmatics*, trans. Gerrit Bilkes and Ed M. van der Maas [Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2008], 107-11).

<sup>21</sup>For example, see Calvin, *Institutes*, 1:7.2; Weber, *Foundations of Dogmatics*, 242.

<sup>22</sup>This conclusion, however, must avoid the Barthian trap. In other words, the conclusion should not lead us to assert, with Barth, that the authority of Scripture is a dynamic reality. True, the authority of Scripture resides in the Holy Spirit inasmuch as authority is subjectively unknown to the person before the Spirit’s work; however, the authority of Scripture also resides objectively in the text of Scripture itself so that it is a changeless or once-and-for-all occurrence (contra Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, vol. 1.1, ed. G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance [Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1961], 207ff.).

<sup>23</sup>Bernard Ramm, *Protestant Biblical Interpretation*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1970), 13-14. Indeed, he continues, “Most of the scholars whose Biblical studies have blessed the church have mixed prayers generously with their studies” (ibid.).

<sup>24</sup>John Calvin, *Epistles of St. Paul to the Corinthians*, trans. John Pringle, *Calvin Translation Society* (repr., Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), 1:397. He comments here on 1 Cor 12:3.

The doctrine of the inward testimony of the Holy Spirit announces the discovery that the authority of Scripture can be secured neither objectively [in the doctrine of inspiration] nor subjectively [in our experience], but rather that we will only be persuaded of it when God the Holy Spirit . . . reaches out to us through the scriptural Word.<sup>25</sup>

### **Hermeneutics, the Word and Spirit, and Humble Posture**

Third, following the former points, the hermeneutics of Scripture (1) involves both the Word and Spirit and thus (2) requires a humble posture towards the scriptural text. These two shall be explored in order.

#### **Hermeneutics and the Word and Spirit**

First, hermeneutics involves both the Word and Spirit. It seeks to understand Scripture on its own terms (Word) through the illumination of the Spirit.

Though hermeneutics has to do with properly interpreting the Word of God, fewer hermeneuticians elaborate the Spirit's relation to their discipline. For example, Andrew Hill closely surveyed dozens of evangelical hermeneutical textbooks, and he discovered that the illumination of the Spirit is seldom if ever seriously examined.<sup>26</sup> Many textbooks fail to wrestle with the relationship between the Spirit's illumination and hermeneutical method. Many more only marginally consider the work of the Spirit in the actual process of interpretation.<sup>27</sup> Roy B. Zuck's dated assertion still applies today: "Biblical scholars have wrestled and are wrestling with serious hermeneutical issues but

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<sup>25</sup>Weber, *Foundations of Dogmatics*, 245. As he continues, however, he certainly rings an obtrusive Barthian note: "The *theopneustia* of Scripture is not a passive characteristic of Scripture but rather a vital saving activity" (ibid.).

<sup>26</sup>Andrew Hill, "The Holy Spirit and Biblical Interpretation: Oil and Water?" unpublished paper, rev. November 29, 2008; idem, "Survey of Books on Biblical Interpretation/Hermeneutics," unpublished paper, rev. November 29, 2008. I would also like to thank Daniel Treier for directing me to Andrew Hill.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid. Notable exceptions include Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text?* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 407-29; D. McCartney and C. Clayton, *Let the Reader Understand: A Guide to Interpreting and Applying the Bible* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1994), 75-80; and Grant R. Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1991). See also David Chang-Nyon Kim, "The Role of the Holy Spirit in the Interpretation of the Word of God" (Ph.D. diss., Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2012).

comparatively little attention has been given to the Holy Spirit's role in hermeneutics."<sup>28</sup> While only minimal conclusions can be made from these studies, the Holy Spirit is often overlooked in the hermeneutical process. As this dissertation has asserted, the Spirit has also been overlooked in the reality of revelation, so this conclusion should be unsurprising.

To frame this discussion more tangibly, the Spirit is involved in the process of hermeneutics through the divine act of illumination. This much is obvious. As stated by this dissertation (chap. 5), illumination is the action of the Spirit through which believers rightly discern and use the word of God already revealed. Alternatively, as Bernard Ramm helpfully summarizes, it is the process whereby the Spirit "guides and directs" believers as they read Scripture.<sup>29</sup> This spiritual work does not implicate that the Spirit gives a new revelation or an infallible interpretation; rather, it means that the Spirit effects the person's acceptance of the text.<sup>30</sup> As John Calvin further highlights, because sin effects both the will and mind, illumination is the process of restoring both the will and mind unto the glory of God.<sup>31</sup> Illumination, therefore, involves both acceptance and cognition.

As the Spirit guides and directs the acceptance and appropriation of the meaning of the text, its readers are able to understand and apply the text to their life. Indeed, the Spirit seeks to "open the eyes of the readers to perceive its truth and receive its light."<sup>32</sup> The Spirit gives the full meaning of Scripture to its readers. Henry Virkler

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<sup>28</sup>Roy B. Zuck, "The Role of the Holy Spirit in Hermeneutics," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 141 (1984): 120.

<sup>29</sup>Ramm, *Protestant Biblical Interpretation*, 13.

<sup>30</sup>Daniel Fuller, "The Holy Spirit's Role in Biblical Interpretation," in *Scripture, Tradition, and Interpretation*, ed. W. Ward Gasque and William Sanford LaSor (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 189-98.

<sup>31</sup>See the discussion of Calvin in chap. 4; see also Calvin, *Institutes*, 1:7.4-5, 11, where he consistently speaks about illumination in the context of, not only the will, but also the mind: God can "illumine their minds," the Spirit has "instructed" and "has inwardly taught," as well as "sealing our hearts," so that we "can comprehend the mysteries of God."

<sup>32</sup>Geoffrey W. Bromiley, "The Biblical Doctrine of Inspiration," *Christianity Today* 23 (1959):

summarizes well:

Thus unbelievers do not know the full meaning of scriptural teaching, not because that meaning is unavailable to them in the words of the text, but because they refuse to act on and appropriate spiritual truths for their own lives. Furthermore, the psychological results of such refusal make them less and less able (and willing) to comprehend these truths.<sup>33</sup>

In other words, the Spirit's work is twofold as he (1) changes one's will to accept, act, and appropriate Scripture to one's life; and (2) takes away the problematic psychological hindrances that obstruct one's comprehension. A lack of spiritual preparedness hinders accurate interpretation.<sup>34</sup> A person who is not obeying the truth is unable to understand Scripture fully and "is unskilled in the word of righteousness" (Heb 5:13). The spiritual person, therefore, has greater discernment of spiritual truths (1 Cor 2:15, cf. 3:1-3). The Spirit gives the acceptance and appropriation of the meaning of the text so that its readers are able to understand and apply the text to their life.

Illumination does not add knowledge but allows perception. For instance, Luke narrates Jesus telling his disciples that everything written about the Christ in the Old Testament must be fulfilled, then underscoring, "he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures" (Luke 24:44-45). This "opening" contextually involves not material information but rather formal perception; that is, Jesus enabled the disciples to see that, according to Scripture, the Christ should be crucified and raised and that salvation be proclaimed to the nations (vv. 46-48). Another example was heretofore made that the Spirit's internal illumination resurrects fallen noetic capacities so that the believer may perceive God in creation and rightly conclude that God created and sustains the world (among other gospel realities). In both these senses, illumination implicates a formal

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<sup>33</sup>Virkler, *Hermeneutics*, 30.

<sup>34</sup>See Zuck, "The Role of the Holy Spirit in Hermeneutics," 125. Or, as Chafer averred in a different vein, "Carnality of life excludes [believers] from understanding, or progressing in, the deep things of God" (Lewis Sperry Chafer, *He That Is Spiritual*, rev. ed. [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1967], 62).

perceptive change on the part of believers. It resurrects their fallen noetic capacities so that they perceive Scripture and the world as it really is (that is, Scripture as pointing to Christ, and the world as created and preserved by God).

In this manner, the Holy Spirit unveils the significance of Scripture so that a believer's will accepts it; additionally, by unveiling (formal) perception of God in Christ, the Spirit discloses a greater cognition. Illumination, the gift of the Spirit, unveils the formal perception of reality that allows the creature to think in terms of God in Christ. As explained in chapter 5, the Spirit rectifies or resurrects human cognition.<sup>35</sup> Illumination thereby changes the internal cognitive capacity to accept and appropriate the truth of God in Christ; thus, it intrinsically changes the person's cognitive processes and certainty. Illumination not only changes the will but also the (formal) cognition of people.

In the final analysis, hermeneutics involves both the Word and Spirit, seeking to understand Scripture through the illumination of the Spirit. Through this process, the Spirit, by rectifying the believer's will and nature, unveils the true perception of Scripture.

### **Hermeneutics and Posture**

Following the above point, hermeneutics requires a humble posture towards the scriptural text. The thesis of this dissertation clarifies the person's disposition while reading Scripture. Biblical interpretation is not only about correct understanding but also the appropriate posture.

Jonathan Pennington aptly summarizes this posture: "Our goal in reading Scripture is not merely to *understand* what God is saying (via helpful exegetical tools) but to *stand under* his Word."<sup>36</sup> Indeed, just as there is a quantitative historical distance

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<sup>35</sup>E.g., the example of Magic Eye 3-D pictures. See chap. 5.

<sup>36</sup>Jonathan T. Pennington, *Reading the Gospels Wisely: A Narrative and Theological Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), 137.

between the reader and the human writer, so also there is a greater qualitative theological distance between the reader and God—the God from, to, and for whom Scripture is written. Pennington continues,

A person who is deficient in skills—and who is not?—but seeks to read [Scripture] with an openness to learn from the otherness of the text (and the God behind it) can be a better reader than a methodologically skilled exegete who reads without a posture and disposition of humble teachability, the greatest of the intellectual virtues.<sup>37</sup>

Posture is more important than skill. In this sense, one might compare biblical interpretation to entering a divinely directed and purposed play of a text. Mere knowledge and recitation of the material falls short of the desired goal; the humble posture before the divine director is also required.<sup>38</sup>

Hermeneutics necessarily involves a humble posture before the text. The thesis of this dissertation accounts for this desideratum in hermeneutics. Just as reading and understanding Scripture is by the Word and Spirit, so also Scripture—while a text that is revelatory and available at all times—is something that is discerned and appropriated through the illumination of the Spirit. As he illuminates the mind and seals Scripture on the heart, the Holy Spirit gives true understanding, will, and direction.

### **Theology, the Word and Spirit, and Gospel-Centered Action**

Fourth, and also organically following the former discussions, theology involves the Word and Spirit and thus entails gospel-centered action. These two shall be explored in order.

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<sup>37</sup>Ibid., 138.

<sup>38</sup>Kevin Vanhoozer is best known for the analogy between reading Scripture (or doing theology) and a scripted and enacted play (Kevin Vanhoozer, *Remythologizing Theology: Divine Action, Passion, and Authorship* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010]; idem, *Faith Speaking Understanding: Performing the Drama of Doctrine* [Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2014]).

## Theology Involves the Word and Spirit

First, theology involves the Word and Spirit; it is not simply the description and evaluation of the knowledge of God gleaned from (especially) Scripture but also a discipline that supernaturally and necessarily reaches into the heart. While any Christian would affirm this idea, the argument of this thesis is especially amenable to it.

As heretofore argued, God reveals himself through information and apprehension. Herman Bavinck explains:

Revelation cannot be external only but must also be internal. For that reason a distinction used to be made between the external and internal principle of knowing, the external and internal word, revelation and illumination, the working of God's Word and the working of his Spirit.<sup>39</sup>

Because the goal of revelation is introducing itself within the human consciousness (through the Spirit), divine self-revelation must reach into and subjectively affect human beings themselves. Indeed, this divine action may simply be summarized as the gospel.

Michael F. Bird explains:

The way we understand revelation, God's self-disclosure of himself, will be evangelically shaped because it is the gospel that constitutes the organic unity between God's revelation of himself in redemptive-historical, Christological, and experiential modes. Indeed, the gospel is so paramount for knowledge of God that we may properly regard the gospel as the paradigm of true revelation.<sup>40</sup>

Indeed, just as Jesus Christ promised (cf. John 14-16), the Spirit is the great witness of truth to the gospel, externally through his authorship of Scripture, and internally in his enlightening of the hearts of people. As such, the aim of the triune God's organic work in the world and word can be none other than the creature to know God, and in so doing, find pleasure in him and thus glorify him.<sup>41</sup> God's revelation is in information and

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<sup>39</sup>Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics: Prolegomena*, ed. John Bolt, trans. John Vriend (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 1:213.

<sup>40</sup>Bird, *Evangelical Theology*, 164. As he quotes Klyne Snodgrass to explain, "The gospel is revelation"; thus, Bird continues, revelation must be "both propositional and personal" (*ibid.*, 165), which he later explains in terms of Scripture and illumination (cf. *ibid.*, 203-5).

<sup>41</sup>See Prov 16:4; Rom 11:36; 1 Cor 8:6; Col 3:17. Indeed, revelation must be personal given the goals or purposes of revelation: to humble the receiver and thus glorify the giver. Abraham was terrified by God's revelatory presence (Gen 15:12), Moses trembled (Deut 9:19), Job was overcome with remorse (Job 42:6), Isaiah was terrified (Isa 6:5), Daniel was incessantly mortified (Dan 8:27; 10:8-9), John the

through apprehension.

The result of this revelatory work, among many other things, is the capacity to think and do life-giving theology. To live life and ponder thoughts after God is to participate in the gospel. Geerhardus Vos likewise rightly contends that

God's self-revelation to us was not made for a primarily intellectual purpose. . . . It would not be the full-orbed religion at which, as a whole, revelation aims. It is true, the Gospel teaches that to know God is life eternal. But the concept of 'knowledge' here . . . [has to do with] the reality of something practically interwoven with the inner experience of life.<sup>42</sup>

The primary function of revelation is the invitation to greater communion with the Lord. God's revelation is offered to those who thirst, those who so desire (Is 55; Rev 22:17). As such, revelation cannot be abstracted from salvation. As Robert Yarbrough clarifies, "Revelation is knowledge of God. Yet revelation extends beyond what mortal minds will ever fully grasp. Its goal is not only to mediate truth but also to effect [a] relationship with God."<sup>43</sup> Revelation thus results in the capacity to do and participate in theology.

Charles Hodge reflects both dimensions: "The question is not, first and mainly, What is true to the understanding, but what is true to the renewed heart. The effort is . . . to subject our feeble reason to the mind of God as revealed in his Word, and by his Spirit in our inner life."<sup>44</sup> Theology is a matter of the Word and Spirit. The point of theology is

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Baptist shrank back in humility (John 3:30), the disciples fell to the ground in dismay (Matt 17:6), and Paul was even struck blind (Acts 9:8).

<sup>42</sup>Geerhardus Vos, *Biblical Theology: Old and New Testaments* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1975), 8.

<sup>43</sup>R. W. Yarbrough, "Revelation," in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, ed. T. Desmond Alexander and Brian S. Rosner (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000), 737.

<sup>44</sup>Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, (New York: Scribner, 1873; repr., Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2003), 1:16. Therefore, the inward teaching of the Spirit must be allowed "its proper place in determining our theology" (ibid.). "Although the inward teaching of the Spirit, or religious experience, is no substitute for an external revelation, and is no part of the rule of faith, it is, nevertheless, an invaluable guide in determining what the rule of faith teaches" (ibid.). Once we are aware of the necessity of the Spirit in our own theology, we are conscious of being slaves to sin, possessed by the law, and under the present grace of God (ibid.). In short, Word and Spirit lead to the conclusion that we are, in fact, part of theology's story. Indeed, Hodge continues, "So legitimate and powerful is this inward teaching of the Spirit, that it is no uncommon thing to find men having two theologies, —one of the intellect, and another of the heart. The one may find expression in creeds and systems of divinity, the other in their prayers and hymns" (ibid., 16). Therefore, he calls the church to "admit into his theology nothing which is not sustained by the devotional writings of true Christians of every denomination. It would be easy to construct from such writings,

not merely academic learning but also inward renewal and perception.

### **Theology Entails Gospel-Centered Action**

Second, and closely related to the previous point, theology involves or leads to gospel-centered action. Theology entails practice.

In *Faith Speaking Understanding: Performing the Drama of Doctrine*, Kevin J. Vanhoozer argues this precise idea: theology consists not only of cognitive beliefs, but also involves speech and action. Using a theatrical model to describe theology, he explains that the church is the preeminent theater in which the gospel is performed through the direction of doctrine. Doctrines are thus not only compilations of true information but also directions to be followed and enacted: “Being biblical is thus a matter not only of theory but also of practice. It is one thing to have a view of biblical authority, quite another to grasp God’s word and formulate its truth systematically, and still another not only to state the truth but also to do or embody it.”<sup>45</sup> Accordingly, theology leads to gospel-centered action.

The foundation of theology—and thus its method, task, and content—is external and internal, Word and Spirit. Theology does not suffice to categorize and summarize information, but rather the information of theology is necessarily driven towards human life and flourishing in Christ. Vanhoozer concludes yet again, “Doing theology ‘in accordance with the Scriptures’ is ultimately a matter of being transformed by the Spirit in order to conform one’s heart, mind, and soul to the Bible.”<sup>46</sup> Theology necessarily leads to gospel-centered action. Because revelation is external and internal, it

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received and sanctioned by Romanists, Lutherans, Reformed, and Remonstrants, a system of Pauline or Augustinian theology, such as would satisfy any intelligent and devout Calvinist in the world” (ibid., 17).

<sup>45</sup>Vanhoozer, *Faith Speaking Understanding*, 2, cf. 4-11. For a fuller explanation, see Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *The Drama of Doctrine: A Canonical Linguistic Approach to Christian Doctrine* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2005).

<sup>46</sup>Ibid.

also entails that theology is founded upon Word and Spirit, both understanding truth and applying it.

### **Conclusion**

For the purposes of appropriating resources for contemporary evangelical theology, this chapter has explored some of the most pertinent implications of this dissertation. The thesis implicates that (1) theological prolegomena includes both external and internal dimensions, (2) the authority of Scripture involves both Word and Spirit, (3) hermeneutics embraces both Word and Spirit and thus requires a humble posture, and (4) theology is Word and Spirit and thus entails gospel-centered action. In the end, the fact that revelation is an organic unity of external and internal dimensions affects many realities within the theological studies. This chapter has not intended to explore these realities comprehensively; rather, it has expounded the thesis by showing how it elaborates important areas of study to it, namely, theological prolegomena, the authority of Scripture, hermeneutics, and theology in general.

CHAPTER 7  
CONCLUSION

**Summary of Argument**

In light of the neglect and dichotomization of revelation in evangelical theology, this dissertation has sought to provide an evangelical ressourcement for the external and internal reality of revelation. By using resources from Scripture, the history of the church, and systematic theology, it has argued that revelation includes external and internal dimensions that are organically united in the triune God. In other words, the dissertation asserted that revelation is external and internal, whether a revelation occurs objectively to the human person in the form of a disclosure of information (external) or subjectively to the human person in the form of an unveiling of perception (internal). Over the course of argument, the dissertation has considered a biblical, historical, systematic, and practical theology of revelation for the purposes of an evangelical ressourcement.

Chapter 2 began to develop the thesis by averring that the Old Testament treats revelation in both external and internal dimensions. While the external dimension is especially evident within the earlier development of the law, the internal dimension becomes evident as one follows the development of the covenants into the new covenant. External revelation is most clearly discerned in three different media: verbal or written speech, events, and persons. Internal revelation is discerned in the cases of Pharaoh, Balaam, Job, and the psalmist, where God confronts and transforms perceptions internally, having the spiritual power either to hide or to reveal himself to people. Moreover, internal revelation is clear in the promise and reality of the new covenant. Herein God, providing the greater provision of the Spirit to all believers, internally

reveals the true perception of himself by giving believers a new heart and spirit and by putting the law within them so they would know God directly.

Chapter 3 affirmed and expanded the argument by exploring the New Testament for the purposes of an evangelical ressourcement of revelation as external and internal. It maintained that the external and internal dimensions of revelation correspond to the Word and Spirit. The Word corresponds to the external dimension of revelation, which refers to revelation through realities that are external to the human person, specifically Jesus Christ, Scripture, and creation. The work of the Spirit corresponds to internal revelation, which occurs as the Spirit unveils understanding or perception within a person through regeneration and illumination. Therefore, both the external and internal dimensions of revelation should be included within the larger biblical category of revelation. Indeed, revelation simply means to unveil or disclose some truth or reality that was previously unknown. External revelation is a disclosure (in persons, words, or events) that was previously unknown, and internal revelation is an unveiling of understanding (through regeneration and illumination) that was previously unknown.

Chapter 4 argued that the external and internal nature of revelation is implicitly or explicitly evident throughout the history of the church. For the purpose of evangelical ressourcement, it focused on important theologians including Augustine, Bonaventure, Calvin, Turretin, and Bavinck. Each theologian variously conceived of revelation in this twofold framework. While the early church only implicitly conceived of the twofold distinction, later contributors and contributions (such as Bonaventure, Calvin, and the Reformed confessions) included the terminology without a fuller discussion. Finally, Turretin and various modern theologians explicitly used the distinction and applied it to discussions within theological prolegomena and/or *principia*. In other words, the twofold understanding of revelation is not new, but it extends back to the early church and Reformation.

Chapter 5 has provided systematic directions and resources for an evangelical

theology of revelation. Using insights from Scripture, Reformed theology, and speech act theory, it argued that revelation includes external and internal dimensions, and these dimensions are organically united in the one triune Godhead. It accomplished this argument first by systematically surveying the idea of revelation as external and internal in Christ, Scripture, and creation. Second, it clarified and expanded the argument by correlating revelation with the *principia cognoscendi* of the sciences (i.e., general revelation) and theology (i.e., special revelation); namely, as revelation is external (Word) and internal (Spirit), so also the theological and scientific *principia* are external (Scripture, creation) and internal (illumination, reason), respectively. Third, the chapter grounded the *principia*, and thus revelation itself, within the *principium essendi*, maintaining that the triune God himself is the singular organic source of all things, especially being and knowledge. Revelation recorded in Scripture and observable in the natural world is the external source of knowledge (*principium cognoscendi externum*); revelation through regeneration and illumination is the internal source of knowledge (*principium cognoscendi internum*). The former is the material cause, whereas the latter is the efficient; the former is the means, and the latter the goal. These two cannot be pulled apart without losing the unity of God and theology. The selfsame God who discloses his power and nature in his external world and word also teaches inwardly.

Chapter 6 sought to provide practical resources for evangelical theology by exploring some of the most pertinent implications of the thesis: (1) theological prolegomena includes both external and internal dimensions, (2) the authority of Scripture involves both Word and Spirit, (3) hermeneutics embraces both Word and Spirit and thus requires a humble posture, and (4) theology is Word and Spirit and thus entails gospel-centered action.

In conclusion, the dissertation has sought to provide an evangelical ressourcement for the external and internal reality of revelation. It affirms that the external and internal dimensions of revelation are organically united in the triune God.

While Jesus Christ, Scripture, and creation properly disclose the one true God, the Spirit is necessary to unveil perception and understanding of God. Herman Bavinck likewise concluded that the internal work of the Spirit must be included within an understanding of revelation:

The aim of revelation, after all, is to re-create humanity after the image of God, to establish the kingdom of God on earth, to redeem the world from the power of sin and, in and through all this, to glorify the name of the Lord in all his creatures. In light of this, however, an objective revelation in Christ is not sufficient, but there needs to be added a working of the Spirit in order that human beings may acknowledge and accept that revelation of God and thereby become the image of the Son. Just as in the sciences the subject must correspond to the object . . . so external and objective revelation demands an internal revelation in the subject.<sup>1</sup>

Objective or external revelation by itself is not complete; rather, in order for humans to acknowledge and accept the external revelation God and so be conformed to Christ, the Spirit is necessary to unveil perception in human hearts.

### **Areas for Further Research**

This dissertation is not the final voice on the subject of the twofold dimensionality of revelation. While it has contributed to a biblical, historical, and systematic understanding of the field, it is, like any project, a work in progress. Following the work herein, there are at least five pertinent areas for further research.

First, while this dissertation has contended that the traditional Reformed distinction of external/internal is helpful, such a distinction is admittedly limited and open to misinterpretation. The dissertation has already combated many misunderstandings flowing from these terms. Further work should be done to define and assess the terminology in light of church history and philosophy. Moreover, because the thesis of the dissertation is influenced far more by continental philosophical categories, analytic categories and definitions would be especially helpful.

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<sup>1</sup>Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, ed. John Bolt, trans. John Vriend (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 1:347-48.

Second, while this dissertation has briefly discussed the relationship between the human conscience, rationality, and revelation, further work is necessary in this area. Because this dissertation has sought to show in the broadest contours the biblical, historical, and systematic helpfulness of revelation as external/internal, it was unable to explore adequately the relationship between other, lesser pronounced forms of revelation, such as the human conscience and rationality. Pertinent questions here include the following: is the conscience best understood as an informational or perceptive disclosure? How is the conscience related to reason? What is the relationship between the image of God and the conscience? What is the relationship between the image and revelation?

Third, because the historical chapter was necessarily limited to the pertinent thinkers of the eras, more work ought to be done to evaluate other theologians and philosophers. Many important thinkers were necessarily passed over in the discussion, some that agreed with the basic premise, including (but not limited to) Ambrose of Milan, Johannes Scotus Eriugena, Martin Luther, Martin Bucer, Jonathan Edwards, and John Owen. Further historical work in this capacity will clarify and inevitably nuance some of the arguments of this dissertation.

Fourth, because the biblical chapters (chaps. 2 and 3) were limited to exploring revelation as external and internal, further work ought to be done to incorporate these insights into a fuller and more systematic undertaking of the biblical doctrine of revelation. By incorporating these fuller insights of the biblical text, and by dealing with the Ancient Near Eastern background of revelation, one could articulate a more precise and full biblical definition of revelation.

Fifth, while this dissertation (especially chap. 5) has dealt with the nature and result of regeneration and illumination on the epistemic faculties of the mind, more work needs to be done. The dissertation has asserted that these internal works of the Spirit resuscitate and resurrect the cognitive faculties of a person. It has also suggested that this event allows a believer to apprehend and accept God's truth in the world and thereby

produce a worldview shift. Many questions still remain. For example, in what ways does regeneration and illumination contribute positively to the construction of knowledge? The dissertation has explained that internal revelation does not produce extrinsic information; rather, through illumination, it restores proper cognitive function through the Spirit's ever-present renewing and sustaining. While this much is taken for granted, how does this process unfold? What are the mechanisms within it? In other words, ultimately, how are the external and internal categories of revelation integrated in the human mind through the process of thought? The unfolding development of (external/internal) revelation in and through the triune God is clear, but exactly how this unfolds in epistemology is unclear.

In the final analysis, revelation includes external and internal dimensions. Through the demonstration of this thesis, the dissertation provides direction and resources to reunite the two dimensions of revelation within evangelical theology; namely, it offers an overarching framework for discussions related to revelation within evangelical biblical, historical, and systematic theology. It also provides believers with the practical knowledge that “the Father of glory” gives “the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him,” which leads to “having the eyes of [their] hearts enlightened” and thus the knowledge of their salvific hope and inheritance (Eph 1:17-19). Thanks be to God the Father in Christ by his Spirit.

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## ABSTRACT

### THE ORGANIC UNITY OF REVELATION: TOWARDS A BIBLICAL, HISTORICAL, AND THEOLOGICAL UNDERSTANDING OF THE EXTERNAL AND INTERNAL NATURE OF REVELATION

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The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2015  
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Because of the neglect and dichotomization in evangelical theology, this dissertation provides an evangelical renaissance for the external and internal reality of revelation. By using resources from Scripture, the history of the church, and systematic theology, it argues that revelation includes external and internal dimensions that are organically united in the triune God. This construal is clear within the Bible and church history, and its biblical and historical presence carries implications towards the construction of a systematic theology of revelation and a practical understanding within the church. The dissertation argues that revelation is external and internal, whether a revelation occurs objectively to the human person in the form of a disclosure of information (external) or subjectively to the human person in the form of an unveiling of perception (internal). The argument is developed by utilizing a biblical, historical, systematic, and practical theology of revelation. Accordingly, after a brief introduction to the contemporary scene in chapter 1, this dissertation addresses biblical theology in chapters 2 (Old Testament) and 3 (New Testament), historical theology in chapter 4, systematic theology in chapter 5, and practical theology in chapter 6.

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