

# Analytic Theology and the Reconciled Mind

## The Significance of History<sup>1</sup>

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### Introductory comments

It is an exciting time to be a theologian! There are two reasons for this. The first is that it is always an exciting time to be a theologian! The second is that the unparalleled developments that have taken place in analytic philosophy over the past 30 years are shedding a great deal of light on some of the key questions with which theologians are obliged to engage. There has been a sea-change in the field of philosophical theology due, in very large measure, to the immense intellectual achievements and, indeed, courage of Alvin Plantinga who stood against the stream of the prevailing academic assumptions at a time when it was anything but culturally acceptable to do so! The most impressive testimony to the significance of these developments (and Plantinga's contribution to them) is to be found in Quentin Smith's editorial article, 'The Metaphilosophy of Naturalism' in *Philo: the Journal of the Society of Humanist Philosophers* (2001). In it he argues that the new breed of philosophers, inspired by Alvin Plantinga, have challenged metaphysical naturalism at every nodal point with the result that the field has now been desecularised.

Whereas, thirty years ago, theism had such low epistemic status that it was treated with derision in most academic philosophical debates, its explanatory power is now taken more seriously than at any time since the beginnings of modernity. By contrast, the problems for metaphysical naturalism are now perceived to be immense – how to explain the existence and intelligibility of the contingent order, the staggering degree of fine-tuning evident to contemporary science (the mathematical physicist Sir Roger Penrose speaks of probabilities of 1 in 10 raised to the power 10 raised to the power 123), the existence of the moral universe as assumed by scientific enquiry and the fact that, in light of the modal form of the ontological argument, atheism is obliged to establish that the probability of there being no possible world in which God exists is greater than 0.5 (See Sptizer 2010, 58). In sum, it is increasingly atheism whose epistemic status is being called in question and it is estimated that one in four analytic philosophers is now a theist. There are over 4000 members of Christian academic philosophy societies in the States, five new academic journals in the field and myriad monographs published by leading university presses. The result is that spectacular analytic work is going on in the field of philosophical theology redefining and addressing in profoundly new

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ways a whole range of theological questions! These developments have now led, in turn, to the emergence of the ‘analytic theology’ movement that Michael Rea and Oliver Crisp have founded and the launch of the Journal of Analytic Theology. The publications, conferences and workshops associated with AT constitute, without doubt, the most significant development in academic theology in decades. It is against this backdrop that I wish, in this article, to raise a question that is central to distinguishing the task of analytic theology from that of analytic philosophy.

It has long been commonplace to subsume Christianity within a wider genus of religions and then adopt a ‘*per genus et differentiam*’ approach. One begins by focusing on what the Western religions, for example, hold in common and then assume that what they hold in common should be regarded as foundational for all three. Often fuelled by so-called ‘inclusivist’ concerns, this results in playing down what is specific to the Christian faith, as also, indeed, the other faiths. Such an approach is increasingly a temptation within the context of philosophical theology when it seeks to focus on the theism common to all ‘religions of the book’, and then, by establishing the coherence, cogency and explanatory power of theism *per se* interprets this strategy as establishing both the grounds and core affirmations of *Christian* theism. It is this particular challenge and its implications for how we should conceive of analytic theology that I now wish to discuss.

For the Christian, analytic theology is obliged to engage with a book that is full of metaphor, rhetorical plays, and the semantic shifting of everyday concepts, not to mention the kind of counterintuitive claims and hermeneutical dilemmas that would cause most analytic philosophers to turn to drink. This makes it tempting for theologians to allow the theism of natural theology to condition the distinctively *historical* character of knowledge of God as we find it presented in the philosophically counter-intuitive testimony of the Old and New Testaments. In short, apologetic concerns, or simply concerns for analytic clarity, could lead us to displace the more opaque New Testament claims *vis-à-vis* knowledge of God in favour of theistic arguments for the existence of God combined with a perfect being theology to determine God’s nature.

In contrast to the temptation to demythologise, I wish to consider: first, the implications of certain, central New Testament affirmations and accounts for how we understand the necessary conditions for the knowledge of God; second, the implications of affirming that a particular piece of history could be significant for the knowledge of God; and third, the implications of this for the task of analytic theology.

The New Testament is composed of testimonies to a series of particular historical events that are held, by its authors, to be decisive for the knowledge of God. They testify to an *ephapax* event of divine self-disclosure that could neither be anticipated nor predicted by natural reason and that cannot be accessed by ahistorical forms of enquiry. What should be plain is that the New Testament writers regard faith in Jesus Christ and knowledge of the Father mediated through him and by the Spirit as foundational and not secondary. To confess Jesus Christ as Lord is *not* to see oneself as first ‘religious’ or a theist in some general sense and then, secondarily, Christian. It is to recognise Jesus Christ as Lord with respect to our knowledge of God – that there is one Mediator between God and humankind, the man Christ Jesus and not the thinking subject.

To that end, it is appropriate to engage in some analytic, New Testament theology!

## The Johannine Vision

For John, the eternal Logos, the creative *dabar*, the source of the coherence and rationality of the contingent order, 'became flesh' not *in* but *as* Jesus Christ. The meaning is clear: in the all-creative Word made flesh we are given privileged epistemic access to the nature, character and purposes of God the Creator. Later in the Gospel, the form of this is spelled out: through the incarnate Son we are given unique and exclusive knowledge of the Father – knowledge that is not available to the world, that is not immanent within the human understanding. *No one* knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son gives him to be known. This is not, of course, merely Johannine. The same claim is found in Matthew 11:27.

Further, John recounts Jesus referring to the Spirit of Truth, *parakletos*, whom 'the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him' (14:17). The reception of the 'Spirit of truth' or 'Advocate' is presented as intrinsically related to our abiding 'in Jesus Christ'.<sup>2</sup> Judas (not Iscariot), is immediately concerned about the exclusivity here. 'Lord, how is it that you will reveal yourself to us, and not to the world?' The answer, implied by what ensues, is that the Lord freely determines to be known in the context of personal witness (he is not on display for detached or impersonal scrutiny), second, that God intends to be known in the context of the witness of the Holy Spirit to the Father through the Son and, third, that the cross will be key to the knowledge of God.

So how do we receive the conditions for participation in this exclusive epistemic access to the Truth? The argument is that they are given to us in and through our being reconstituted 'from above', that is, 'reborn'. It is in and through an event of radical transformation – what amounts to a reconciliation of our minds that redefines our very identity – that we are given to share by the Spirit/Advocate in the Son's unique and exclusive knowledge of the Father – a knowledge that is *not* immanent within the natural mind. As to what this 'rebirth' implies, we shall return to shortly.

Before we try to analyse the metaphors that are clearly so central to John, let us now turn to consider how the Synoptic, Pauline (and the so-called 'deutero-Pauline'<sup>3</sup>) writings view the conditions for the knowledge of God as these are mediated through Jesus Christ.

## The Synoptics and Paul

Arguably, the most significant recognition account is found in Matthew 16 where Jesus confronts Simon with 'Who do you say that I am?' Simon recognises Jesus to be the Messiah, the Son of the living God. What is significant here is

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<sup>2</sup> When the One who provides exclusive epistemic access to the Father, departs, he promises that the Father will provide the Holy Spirit who will be sent in the name of the Son, who will remind his disciples of all that he has said and will 'teach them everything'.

<sup>3</sup> Colossians, Ephesians and II Thessalonians.

Jesus' response. First, he states 'flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven.' And second, he renames him Peter. The implication is clear. First, the condition for the recognition of God's presence as the Christ, the Messiah, is the creative presence of the Father who brings Peter to recognize what his "flesh and blood" could not discern. The argument is that human nature does not have the capacity to discern God's presence unaided. Second, the recognition (the provision of the condition) redefines the identity of Simon and he is given the name 'Peter'. Third, the recognition is deemed to be constitutive of the church conceived as the Body of Christ, that is, a new, redeemed, resurrected humanity – a new creation. The parallels with John are marked – the recognition of God's unique, disclosive presence to humanity as Jesus Christ and our being party to Jesus' unique knowledge of God is *simply not open* to those who have not been given to recognise who he is in and through an event of transformation 'from above'.

That the recognition of God's presence as Jesus Christ requires a transformative act of God is evident in the use of eye/sight and ear/hearing metaphors and allusions throughout Matthew, Mark, Luke, Acts, John and the whole Pauline corpus. Without God's transforming and, as we shall see, reconciling presence, God's Self-disclosure *is not recognised*, and who God is as Father is not revealed to us in the Son. God's self-disclosure, as we have it in Jesus' declarations, is a 'success word' to use J. L Austin's expression, where, as Searle might put it, the Word's Self-presentation generates the fit between the world and the Word – a fit created by means of a redemptive act constitutive of a new humanity, a reborn humanity, with new eyes (which can see), new ears (which can hear) and a reconciled mind – let's call it that mind that was in Christ Jesus, the sole, true *image of the Father*, the *true human*.

This also seems to be the thrust of Paul's argument in Romans 12:2. Here Paul tells us that there needs to be a *metamorphosis* of our minds in order to discern the truth – *Metamorphousthe!* We are not to be '*schematized*' by the secular order. Why the need for this 'metamorphosis'? Because, for Paul, we are *echthroï te dianōia* in our natural state, that is, we are "hostile/alienated" with respect to our capacity to *think through (dia-noein)* to the reality of God (Col 1:21). In sum, to discern the truth of God, our minds need to be reconciled so that they penetrate through to the reality of God.

This brings us to the wider use, in the NT, of the term '*metanoia*' – same root as 'noein'. *Metanoein* means 'after-knowing' as opposed to *pronoein* (pre-knowing) – it is the means by which our alienated *noein* becomes '*sun-eidesis*'.<sup>4</sup> God is known in Christ in and through an event of *metanoia* which involves the transformation/reorientation/conversion of our thinking both about God and, indeed, about the world. It denotes the gift, through the Spirit, of proper epistemic function as also the dispositions/orientation that stem from this. It expresses the metamorphosis, the reconstitution, the rebirth of the mind in and through which we are given to share in the Son's unique and exclusive knowledge of the Father. And it *also* denotes the disposition to which this gives rise. Knowledge and disposition are intrinsically related. To have 'that mind which is in Christ Jesus' denotes both – to be reoriented toward God is to be

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<sup>4</sup> Joannes Stobaeus stated: "The wise man must not know after [*metanoein*] but know before [*pronoein*]" <http://studybible.info/trench/Repent> – accessed April 9, 2013.

reoriented toward the world – not least toward our enemies! The consequent connection between knowing and loving is made explicit in John 17:26. ‘I have made you known to them that the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them...’

## So how is Christian faith to be conceived?

Quite simply it is to be conceived as participation *in Jesus Christ’s* knowing of the Father, in his communion of mind, will and heart with the Father. That is, we share in his faith, in his faithfulness, in his obedience, in his love - in sum, in the totality of his all-embracing ‘Amen’ to the Father.

The phrase that defines for Paul, more than any other, the essence of Christian faith is participation (*koinonein* or *metechein*) in Christ (*en Christo*) – a phrase that appears explicitly 73 times in his letters and, if we include equivalent forms of expression, over 160 times.<sup>5</sup> A closely related conception is the key to Johannine theology – we know the Father solely when we ‘abide in Christ’ and ‘in the Spirit’, the Advocate. For Paul and John, it is by participating ‘in Christ’ that we are given knowledge of the Father. To participate in this exclusive knowing, however, requires the reconstitution and transformation of our minds.

What we see here is that reconciled epistemic access to God requires to be conceived in irreducibly Trinitarian and Incarnational terms. Warranted knowledge of God is the gift of transformed participation, by the Spirit, in the Son’s noetic communion with the Father. Athanasius formalises this. The *homoousion* both of the Incarnate Logos and importantly of the Spirit, by whom the Incarnate Logos is recognized, constitutes the absolute condition of theology *theologein* and God-talk *analogein*. God-talk that is *not* grounded in the two-fold *homoousion* is to be regarded as *muthologein* – the projection of myths, the fabrication (*muthoplastia*) of alienated creatures onto a Reality that utterly transcends creaturely knowing.

So why have I devoted so much space to New Testament exegesis in a paper on analytic theology? Because the New Testament witness appears to suggest that analytic *God-talk*, that is faithful to the reality of the triune God, is obliged to recognise the following:

- 1) that the Incarnate Son is the only human being who has unmediated knowledge of the Father<sup>6</sup>;
- 2) that we know the Father solely and exclusively through being given to participate by the Spirit in the incarnate Son’s unique knowledge and communion of mind with the Father<sup>7</sup>;

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<sup>5</sup> For a recent, detailed study of these see C. Campbell (2012). The theme of participation in Paul was dealt with by Adolf Deissmann in his 1911 classic, *Paul: A Study in Social and Religious History* (1957). For a scholarly and insightful discussion of participation in Romans 5-8, see D. Campbell (2012). Michael Gorman and Ben C. Blackwell are two significant scholars who have written on participation in recent years.

<sup>6</sup> Matt 11:27, Luke 10:22. Cf John 10:15.

<sup>7</sup> Cf Rom 8:15. By the Spirit we have received a spirit of adoption enabling us to cry ‘Abba! Father!’

3) that, in the incarnate Son, we meet none other than the eternal, creative Logos of God, the One through whom and for whom all things were created, the fullness of the Godhead dwelling bodily, Immanuel (God-with-us);

4) that this recognition involves the transformation and reconciliation (metanoia, metamorphosis, reschematisation, rebirth from above) of alienated, hostile, dysfunctional minds – minds that would otherwise engage in the construction and projection of myths, in Athanasius' phrase, by idol-factories, as John Calvin puts it;

5) that reconciled participation in this *ephapax* and exclusive reality is the necessary condition of proper epistemic function with respect to knowledge of the reality of God.

As I hope should be clear, the thrust of these statements is not simply Johannine, but runs right through Paul's letters and the Synoptics as well.

Before I seek to address the counterintuitive character of this, the question emerges: what does all this actually amount to in terms of concrete theological statement and, indeed, argumentation about the divine nature and purpose? The implications appear to include the following:

1) To know and, thus, to confess *who Jesus Christ is* is to recognise that God's primordial divine perfection is not determined *a priori* by the creature or deduced by analysis of what it might be to be a perfect being (according to various forms of Hellenistic philosophy, for example). Rather, the divine nature is to be conceived in terms of God's active involvement in human history – a history that discloses, for example, that God's primordial perfection is God's love, God's love-in-freedom. The conclusions of a "Perfect Being theology" of the Anselmian variety, therefore, cannot possess more than a provisional status at best and must always be correctable by God's self-revelation in Christ, that is, by God's self-definition as the incarnate Word.

2) That that love is defined by the mutual love between the Father and the Son and expressed in the Creator's orientation towards his creation – a love for lost, confused and hostile creatures that seeks to restore them to their intended *telos* in and through an act of unanticipatable identification.

3) We discover that God's will for humanity is that we participate in Jesus' love of the Father and for his neighbor, not least his enemies - and that in and through participating in that, we fulfill our *telos* as creatures.

Clearly, a great deal more requires to be added. Suffice it to say that if we are to be true to the collective witness of the New Testament, the entire theological task unfolds and must unfold from this centre.

To respond with Peter to Jesus' question 'Who do you say that I am?' is to recognise a very great deal about God. It is to know the critical control and criterion on all our thinking about God – for here we have God himself, as himself

revealing himself. It is to recognise that all our thinking about God is *either* true to that centre, to that one Logos, *or* it is the repudiation of that centre (with all that that implies) *or*, for those ostensibly committed to the church, an act of rebellious disobedience. There is no neutral option.

In sum, analytical theology is only reconciled God-talk to the extent that the whole process of analytical exposition unfolds from this centre, from this foundation. If it determines to bracket this centre in the light of other conceptual controls and criteria it can only constitute a *de facto* rejection of the New Testament witness to God's self-disclosure as Jesus Christ.

In his famous and inspirational essay, 'Advice to Christian Philosophers', Alvin Plantinga urged academics to pursue their various fields of enquiry in the light of what they know to be true as Christians. In parallel, analytic theologians are obliged to have the courage to approach the theological task from within that transformed perspective and in obedience to that divine Self-disclosure to which the New Testament bears witness. In this respect analytic theology is a science seeking to be true in its methods to what is prescribed by this specific object of enquiry.

## **Analytic Theology and the Place of History.**

It is here, however, that we confront a perennial problem. What I am suggesting is inherently counterintuitive given the canons of natural reason. This is due not simply to the suggestion that our thinking about the eternal, transcendent God begins with the Christ of history. That we should contemplate regarding history as possessing any *decisive* significance at all for the theological task is offensive because it threatens to dethrone immanent reason.

For this reason, philosophy of religion and theology have long adopted an ambiguous attitude towards the historical. Leibniz' distinction between the "truths of reason" on one hand and "factual truths" on the other led to Lessing's description of the big ugly ditch that divided the 'truths of reason' from their frail cousins, the 'truths of history'. Since the latter were accidental and contingent they were judged to have inferior epistemic status and incapable therefore of sustaining knowledge of the God who is eternal, transcendent and necessary. The subject-matter of theology, therefore, was the universal and timeless truths of reason immanent within our minds and accessible by Socratic means. Hegelian idealism (which spawned D.F. Strauss's 'Myth Theory'), Neo-Kantian idealism (which spawned Bultmann's programme of demythologization) not to mention Hickean pluralism or the myriad expressions of metaphysical naturalism that inform so much research in Biblical studies, operate on the basis of a foundational, *a priori* assumption that the historical cannot have decisive significance. If analytic theology joins those ranks it can do no other than demythologize.

So what is involved in analytic theology's repudiating the Socratic dismissal of history? No philosopher has offered a more incisive analysis of what is involved than Søren Kierkegaard in his *Philosophical Fragments*. Johannes Climacus, its pseudonymous author, opens by posing the key question, namely,

the question of the *Meno*: “Can the truth be learned?” If we know the truth, we don’t need to seek it. But if we don’t know the truth, we don’t know what to look for or where to look. Moreover, we wouldn’t be able to recognise it if we were to stumble across it! The Socratic solution, of course, is that we already possess the criteria for the recognition of all truth subliminally, that is, immanently within our minds.

For the Socratic, all learning is a form of recollecting or making explicit what we already know in embryo. *Teaching, therefore, is a form of midwifery*. The teacher helps learners to give birth to what is immanent within their minds. So Socrates would pose questions to slaves. He would ask the length of the sides of a square that is double in area to a given square. Crucially, he only asks questions. He doesn’t tell the slave anything he doesn’t already know. Teaching presupposes that the learner possesses the criteria for the recognition of the truth and the criteria for recognising the truth amount to knowledge of the truth. (Significantly, the word Kierkegaard uses for ‘learners’ is the same word used in Danish for ‘disciples’, *mathetai*).<sup>8</sup>

Once Socrates has helped the learners to recall the truth, he quietly withdraws from view. It is imperative that the learner not associate him with the truth in any way – that he not obstruct their relation to the truth.

On the Socratic, therefore, neither the teacher nor the occasion *possess* - or ever *can* possess - any significance whatsoever in respect of the learner’s relation to the truth.<sup>9</sup> The implication is clear: if we possess the criteria to recognise the truth, it is ultimately irrelevant whether it is the Dalai Lama, Jesus Christ or Mystic Meg who occasions the recognition of the truth, be it the truth of God or ethics or ultimate reality because knowledge of these is already immanent within us. Who evokes our recognition of the truth or what bit of history evokes it not only happens to be irrelevant, it is necessarily irrelevant (Kierkegaard 1985, 11).<sup>10</sup>

Kierkegaard then embarks on a simple ‘thought project’. He asks how things look ‘If the situation is to be different...’

1. If the situation is to be different from this integrated Socratic package, ‘then the moment in time must have such decisive significance that for no moment will I be able to forget it, neither in time nor in eternity...’ Why? Because then there would be an *intrinsic* relation between the learner and that piece of history such that one cannot know the Truth without being in relation to that historical reality.

2. If that is the case, then the learner up until that moment did not possess the truth or even the condition for understanding it – since the condition for recognising the truth is the possession of the truth in embryo. Consequently, for

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<sup>8</sup> This was the divine commission to Socrates which constrained him to be a midwife but forbade him to give birth “because between one human being and another *maieuesthai* (to deliver) is the highest, giving birth indeed belongs to the god.” (Kierkegaard 1985).

<sup>9</sup> As Kierkegaard puts it, I couldn’t find the occasion in which I acquired knowledge of eternal truths “even if I were to look for it, because there is no Here and no There, but only an *ubique et nusquam* (everywhere and nowhere)” (1985, 13).

<sup>10</sup> “In the Socratic view” the key to all knowledge is *gnothi seauton*. As Kierkegaard puts it, “self-knowledge is God-knowledge.”



Kierkegaard, to the extent that the learner is not related to that historical occasion, then the learner exists outside the truth, in untruth.

3. So what of the teacher? Well if the learner is without the truth, then the teacher cannot remind her of the truth. Consequently, if the learner is to obtain the truth, the teacher must not only present the truth to the learner, the teacher must also provide the learner with the condition for understanding it. If the learner possessed in herself the condition for understanding the truth, then the truth is already immanent within her and she merely needs to recollect or recall it. As Climacus puts it, the condition for recognising the truth means being able to ask about it - the condition and the question contain the conditioned and the answer (Kierkegaard 1985, 14).

If the criteria for the recognition and acknowledgement of who God is are immanent within us, then no specific piece of history can possess *decisive* significance for the knowledge of God. History becomes simply illustrative of what we already know about God. If that is the case, analytic theology seeks to do no more than to analyse and articulate the suppositions inherent within our reasoning processes. The key to knowledge of God is: *gnothi seauton!*

4. So what of the event of discovery? 'If the situation is to be different from the Socratic...' then the teacher can no longer be viewed as a midwife. The teacher does not simply facilitate our recalling what we already tacitly know or, by analysis, making explicit what is already inherent within. The teacher must actually deliver the learner from error and the unfreedom integral to it by being Himself the condition for our being brought into relation with the truth. Such a teacher, Climacus suggests, would require to be understood as a deliverer - and not only a deliverer but also a reconciler who reconciles the learner to the Truth from a position of being alienated from it.<sup>11</sup>

5. But finally to the learner - the *mathetes*, the disciple. If the situation is to be different from the Socratic... The learner doesn't contain the key to understanding the truth. Indeed, if the teacher and the history are of decisive significance, then, as we have seen, the learner is in error prior to receiving the condition for being related to the Truth. (Precisely what Paul meant when he argues that we are *echthroi te dianoiā!*) To cite Climacus, "In as much as [the learner] was untruth, he was continually in the process of departing from the truth [processing the world and relating to it in erroneous ways]; as a result of receiving the condition in the moment, his course took the opposite direction, or he was turned around. Let us call this change *conversion....*" (Kierkegaard 1985, 14).

In short, by means of this analytical 'thought project' Kierkegaard sought to articulate how an alternative to Socratic immanentism or idealism must look. What he produces is an internally consistent account that, precisely by breaking

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<sup>11</sup> As for the "moment", in and through which we are delivered and reconciled to the truth, it is short and temporary and passing, yet it is "filled with the eternal". Consequently, he suggests, we might call it the "fullness of time" (Kierkegaard 1985, 18).

with the Socratic immanentist package, looks remarkably similar to the New Testament account as I sought to present it at the start of this article.

What this suggests is that if we submit the interpretation of the gospel to immanentist suppositions, then there can only take place a '*metabasis eis allo genos*' of the Christian faith, that is, the mutation of the Gospel into something of a completely different kind. On the frontispiece of the *Philosophical Fragments*, Climacus quotes Shakespeare: 'Better well-hanged than ill-wed.'

It is more honest simply to repudiate the Christian faith than to try and interpret it from within an immanentist framework!

## So what?

This brings us to the key question. What precisely does the *metanoia*, or conversion or transition at the heart of Kierkegaard's exposition involve? Is it to suggest that we endorse a leap of faith that constitutes a *sacrificium intellectus*? Categorically not! As Murray Rae argues, "It involves neither the abandonment of reason (it is not *contra rationem*) nor an addition to reason (it is not *supra rationem*) but rather reason's redemption." But what precisely, is reason's 'redemption'? As Plantinga argues so vigorously in his critique of *Fides et Ratio*, reason invariably operates from a particular epistemic base – and the appeal to the deliverances of reason is generally an appeal to the deliverances of the relevant epistemic base rather than 'reason' itself. In theology, the appeal to reason is too often an appeal either to a Hellenic/Socratic dualism between the *kosmos noetos* and the *kosmos aisthetos* or, more recently, a Kantian dualism between the noumenal and the phenomenal. For Kierkegaard those who have eyes to see are those who by God's grace have been set free from such limited frameworks "to perceive the world anew" under the condition of faith (Rae 1998, 113). Faith generates what Murray Rae argues, is a kind of paradigm shift. For Kuhn 'paradigm' does not refer simply to a particular theory, but rather to the entire scientific or philosophical framework of understanding in which the theory is located. The parallel between Christian *metanoia* and a Kuhnian paradigm shift lies in the fact that neither is generated by an evolutionary progression from prior reasoning. The paradigm shift that Kierkegaard had in view was the establishment of a whole new world-view, one that was discontinuous with our old frameworks of thought, and that interpreted God and the world afresh in the light of an event of decisive, historical, divine Self-disclosure. On this account, Rae adds, *there is nothing that can be done within the old paradigm that may constitute a propaedeutic or preparation for the new.* "By the standard of the new paradigm those who continue to operate within the old exist in untruth and employ structures of understanding which compel them to dismiss the claims of those who have undergone a paradigmatic transition" (Rae 1998, 119).

Rae is not suggesting that Christian *metanoia* should simply be subsumed within a generic category of "paradigm shifts." As Eberhard Jüngel has argued, "Theology has to do with a paradigm change *sui generis*: the existential change in human understanding conveyed by the phrases *ta tes sarkos phronein* and *ta tou pneumatos phronein* (Rom 8:5)" (Jüngel 1989, 297-8). And when Paul refers to our thinking in accordance with the Spirit, he means thinking *en Christo*.

So what are the key features of the event of “recognition” and the resulting paradigm shift constitutive of the Body of Christ?<sup>12</sup>

1) Peter’s perception that Jesus is the Christ is characterised by doxastic immediacy. There is a given-ness to the truth-conducive grounds underpinning the proposition: “Thou art the Christ!”

2) If this belief has the property of being grounded in God’s transforming self-disclosure then we are warranted in assuming that its grounds will indeed be truth-conducive. Of course, the perception that these are indeed the grounds of the belief is *itself* grounded in those same truth-conducive grounds. There may be an apparent circularity here but it is not a vicious circularity.<sup>13</sup>

In short, if we are not going to go with the Socratic, then the *criteria* for the recognition of revelation will indeed be intrinsic to the event of revelation itself! There neither is nor can be any independent means of confirming the validity of the revelation event. (There are substantial similarities between the approaches of Plantinga and Kierkegaard in this respect. Both are epistemological externalists opposed to theological approaches wedded to a marriage of epistemological internalism and evidentialism.)

3) What this suggests is that Peter’s affirmation of who Jesus is can be construed as a kind of rational ‘seeing’- rather like the way one ‘sees’ *a priori* truths to be true. Laurence Bonjour argues, in his book, *In Defense of Pure Reason* that “*a priori* justification should be understood as involving a kind of rational “seeing” ... of the truth or necessity of the proposition in question” (Baehr 2013, quoting Bonjour). Peter simply ‘sees’ that Jesus is the Christ – he finds himself believing it. It is a direct belief that has, as I have suggested, doxastic immediacy.

And ‘seeing’, of course, is precisely the analogy that is used throughout the New Testament. Significantly, however, we do not simply ‘see’ with our own innate capacities but are *given the eyes to see* – we are provided with the condition for this event of recognition. Peter’s ‘seeing’ is thus a genuinely *de novo* seeing. He is not simply seeing another example or illustration of a generic truth that he has always ‘seen’ in his mind’s eye.

4) Peter’s (and our) recognition is clearly non-inferential – it is not the result of a process of inferential reasoning from other more basic beliefs. The belief that Jesus is the Christ denotes a properly basic and foundational belief.

That is not to say that there is not an element of coherence. There is a background and context, a three-dimensional perspective in the context of which Simon is given the eyes to see. The point is that the perception is not simply an inference from those background beliefs. Hans Urs von Balthasar comments here “Simon the fisherman, before his meeting with Christ, however thoroughly he might have searched within himself, could not possibly have found a trace of Peter.... In the form ‘Peter’ Simon was capable of understanding the word of

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<sup>12</sup> I am indebted to Kevin Diller for some of the ideas developed in this section.

<sup>13</sup> The same grounding of perceptions characterises the mutual knowing in a marriage relationship – one knows one’s spouse in and through her freely giving herself to be known.

Christ, because the form itself issued from the word and was conjoined with it" (von Balthasar 1973, 48-49).

It is important to stress that there are no Marcionite implications here. The recognition of who Jesus Christ is provides unparalleled *retrospective* endorsement of the whole history of Israel and the attendant theological conceptuality that God prepared for us so that we might recognize and appropriate the incarnation. That is, the recognition provides a *retrospective* discernment of 'fit' - that is, 'fit' perceived from *within* a reconciled epistemic base. The accounts of the covenant, exile, Torah, suffering servant songs, priestly traditions etc. become testimony to God's preparing a tradition, history and semantic base without which the significance of the incarnation could neither be understood nor appropriated.

5) Just as Simon's perception should not be conceived as the product of inferential reasoning, neither should it be seen as the result of a probability assessment:

And Jesus said to Simon, Son of Jonah B.A. (Philosophy, Oxford), 'Who do you say that I am?' And he replied, 'Given a) the probability that God exists, that is, given fine-tuning, the kalam cosmological argument and the low probability of atheism being true given the modal form of the ontological argument, and given b) the compatibility of incarnation with the prescriptions of Perfect Being theology and given c) the apparently inexplicable things you're reported to have done (though, given that this is early in your ministry, ideally I'd need to see a few more), and given d) defeaters to the counter-argument from the Biblically defined role of the Messiah, I'd guesstimate that, on a Bayesian account, there is a conditional probability of at least 0.7 that you are in fact the Messiah. At the same time, of course, I should acknowledge that there is a corresponding probability of 0.3 that you aren't.' And Jesus responded, "Blessed be you, son of Jonah BA (Oxon). On this rock I shall build my church!"<sup>14</sup>

Were a probability assessment of this kind to be made (either explicit or subliminal), the relevant probabilities would be assessed from the perspective of the old paradigm, from an unreconciled epistemic base! To ground the perception on inference or a probability assessment suggests that one could establish the truth of this new belief from a basis in the old - that old wine skins could contain this new wine. But as we have seen, the consequence of a non-Socratic account, as Rae has argued, is that there is nothing that can be done within the old paradigm that may constitute a propaedeutic on the basis of which we can affirm the new.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> This is not to say, of course, that God may not use philosophical arguments of various kinds to clear the kinds of confusion that might cause us to dismiss outright discussion of his existence and purposes - arguments such as Alvin Plantinga's "Two Dozen (or So) Theistic Arguments" (Plantinga 2012).

<sup>15</sup> Dietrich Bonhoeffer makes precisely this point in his advocacy of the priority of the Who question over the How question. From our alienated perspective, that is, viewed from our prior *logoi*, Jesus Christ is not the Logos but rather the Counter-Logos - the logos that redefines, transforms, reconciles and, indeed, challenges our prior *logoi*, that is, our prior theories, suppositions, and conceptualities by challenging the paradigm in which they repose. As Bonhoeffer puts it, "When the Counter-Logos appears in history, no longer as an idea, but as a 'Word' become flesh, there is no longer any possibility of assimilating him into the existing order of the human logos" (Bonhoeffer 1978, 30).

In summary, Paul Moser writes, ‘God’s self-revelation (of transforming love) takes its recipients beyond mere historical and scientific probabilities to a foundation of personal acquaintance with God.’ As we are given to cry out “Abba, Father” to God, “His Spirit confirms to our spirits that we are indeed children of God. We thereby receive God’s personal assurance of our filial relationship with Him. This assurance is more robust than any kind of theoretical certainty offered by the arguments of philosophers or theologians. It saves a person from dependence merely on speculation, hypothesis-formation, probabilistic inference, or guesswork about God” (Moser 2006, 79 ).

6) The impact of this ‘seeing’ is such that it triggers a domino or avalanche effect on our other beliefs – thereby creating a *sui generis* paradigm shift. But the form of the paradigm shift is very specific. It involves what the iconographers portrayed as a reversal of perspective. When the ‘scales fell from the eyes of Paul’, instead of interpreting Jesus and his actions from a centre in himself and his prior conceptions of God, Messiahship, *torah*, election, Kingdom etc, Paul finds himself reconceiving not only his prior conceptuality but his own existence from a centre in Jesus Christ. “I know, nay I am known” “I live, nay Christ lives in me.” He sees Christ and him Crucified as defining and redefining his entire theological stance which, he explains, from the Jewish paradigm, is a stumbling block and from a Greek, Socratic paradigm utter folly, the sacrifice of reason.

7) Finally, to return to Peter, we find that the reconciliation of our minds is an on-going process. What is dis-analogous with Kuhn’s paradigm shift is the fact that the establishment of the new paradigm is presented in the New Testament as a process only finally complete in the *Eschaton*. This *metanoia* or *metamorphosis* is only fully realised on that day when ‘we shall know even as we are known’ - when that mind which is in Christ Jesus is fully realised in us. Or, drawing on the seeing metaphor again, ‘Now we see through a mirror dimly, then we shall see face to face.’

Until that time, we are caught up in an on-going struggle between interpreting the world *kata pneuma* (in accordance with the Spirit) and interpreting it *kata sarka* (in accordance with the flesh), between interpreting from within the new paradigm while seeking not to be sucked back into the old. In the case of Simon Peter, he had hardly confessed Jesus as the Messiah when the old paradigm kicked in again and he started dictating to Jesus the *modus operandi* definitive of a Messiah. The direction of the pressure of interpretation was reversed (from the traditional concept of the Messiah, to the Messiah himself), inverting the dynamic of revelation such that the old *logoi* sought to revise the new. The result? Jesus denounced him – to allow the old paradigm to dictate the new is to reverse the dynamic of revelation and that is nothing less than demonic.(Matt 16:23)<sup>16</sup>

There are few places where this reversal of the direction of the pressure of interpretation is more evident and destructive than in the forms of mistranslation evident in the controlling conceptuality of Western theology. The

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<sup>16</sup> As Calvin (and Paul) saw, the reconciliation of our alienated minds is always in a manner present but at the same time in a manner absent. That is, it awaits the *eschaton* when we shall know even as we are known. Cf. Farrow (1996, 3). It is, in short, an on-going challenge to allow our *logoi*, our language and our conceptualities to be true to the *Logos* and not to dictate to it.

consequence of this has been to affirm the Socratic and submit the Gospel to a profoundly distortive Procrustean bed.

*berith* denoting God's unconditioned and unconditional *covenant* commitment to Israel was translated "*foedus*" meaning *contract*, giving rise to the contractualism of Federal theology; *torah* which spelled out God's covenant commitment and covenant faithfulness to his people and the obligations that stem from that was translated in the West as *Lex*, law conceived in Stoic and, indeed, judicial terms; *tsedaqah* denoting the righteousness of God, God's covenant faithfulness to his people was translated *iustitia*, justice conceived in retributive terms.

The submission of the Jewish conceptuality in the Old and New Testaments to the Procrustean bed of Latin categories of contract, law and retributive justice (as opposed to covenant, *torah* and God's righteousness) was the transformation of God's gracious self-disclosure into something of a completely different kind. To the extent that analytic theology is 'evangelical', it will serve to challenge rather than endorse those forms of reasoning that operate from unreconciled paradigms that are foreign to the Bible and that have not been reconciled through the transforming pressure of God's triune Self-disclosure.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, the condition of faithful, reverent analytic theology is a reconciled mind where our thinking is directed and shaped by a perception – a perception that generates that *sui generis* paradigm shift that is thinking 'in Christ' (*en Christo*) and in accordance with the Holy Spirit (*kata pneuma*). What I am proposing is not an alternative world-view – perhaps a Pauline or Athanasian or Barthian one. Rather, I am suggesting that analytic theology stems from a perception not of the plausibility or coherence of a system of ideas *per se* but of the reality of the One who is Immanuel.

Analytic theology does not take place inside Mary's room.<sup>17</sup> Rather, it starts with a perception, in this case, not of colour but of the presence of God as Jesus Christ. Strictly speaking, indeed, it starts with a relationship established by God who draws us into fellowship with him in and through the perception of who Jesus Christ is. To recognise him is to acknowledge in every facet of our thinking about God as in our understanding of the contingent order, the One who is the Way and the Truth and the Life.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Here I am referring to Frank Jackson's (1982) classic knowledge argument.

<sup>18</sup> John 14:6

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