General Revelation: God’s Truth
In the Light and Laws of Nature

By

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I. Introductory Considerations:

From the onset, I want to plainly state that this study is not about whether the light and laws within general revelation (or nature) are adequate or inadequate, in and of themselves, to bring men to salvation. They clearly aren’t, and I heartily affirm the Reformed, Calvinistic position of Total Depravity (or Total Inability) per the Canons of Dordt.

Rather, this study’s focus is whether the light and laws within general, ordinary revelation are critical or non-critical sources of sanctifying truth and wisdom in a believer’s life. I believe they clearly are, and I’m concerned that the modern church—misunderstanding and therefore over-emphasizing the sufficiency of Scripture—is neglecting this subordinate but invaluable source of God’s truth.

To begin our study, let’s enter into a counseling session between a seasoned pastor and a young, inexperienced married couple.

Justin, a young man, is in his second year of marriage. His wife, Julie, is the apple of his eye. Nonetheless, lately their marriage has become significantly more challenging. Hence, Justin and Julie (both devout believers) seek out their pastor for some advice. Their pastor, Pastor Mick, recommends that they meet with him in three sessions. In the first meeting, he would like to meet individually with Julie, and in the second, he would like to meet individually with Justin. In the third meeting, Pastor Mick wants to meet with both Justin and Julie together.

Having met with both Julie and Justin individually, Pastor Mick then arranges to meet with them together. As they enter the room, he hugs both of them. As they sit together in his study, the pastor prudently lays out his recommendations. His ways and words are, ironically, both tactful and direct. Let’s peek into some of their conversation:

Pastor Mick: “I want both of you to know that I think I’ve discovered some opportunities for change that can get you past this rough patch in your marriage. I also want you to know that such turmoil in this season of your marriage is common. Even ‘good’ marriages commonly struggle at this juncture. Justin, you know the Scriptures teach that you are to love Julie ‘as Christ loved the church.’ This is a tall order; in fact, it is impossible. You will spend your entire life improving upon this command. In this season of your marriage, I think you would do well to work harder at listening to Julie. Julie’s words to me earlier reflect that she feels misunderstood, and that she has lost hope that you will ever really understand her. This scares her because she feels your connection as a couple is eroding.”
Justin: “Okay, I guess I need to listen better—but I have spent a lot of time just letting her rattle on about her problems.”

Pastor Mick: “Justin, listening doesn’t mean just weathering Julie’s emotional storms in silence. Real listening isn’t merely a passive activity wherein you give Julie a long, uninterrupted opportunity to talk. Listening involves sincerely engaging her words and feelings with a view to seriously understanding them. You probably don’t even realize it, but what you just said is part of the problem. When you said: ‘... but I have spent a lot of time just letting her rattle on about her problems,’ you conveyed to Julie that you aren’t sincerely engaging her words and feelings with a view to seriously understanding them. Instead, such words and sentiments infer that you are merely weathering the times she emotionally ventilates to you. This sends the message that her complicated emotions are a burden that you must endure, because it’s your responsibility as a husband. Julie wants more than that; she wants you to care about how she is feeling. Justin, you can never really love Julie, ‘as Christ loved the church,’ until she feels understood. This is a given with nearly every woman. Generally, women only truly feel loved when they feel they have been deeply understood.”

Justin: “I think I see what you mean, but I don’t think I would have ever figured this out on my own. I guess I was, ironically, just doing what I always observed my father doing—and I always resented how he never listened to any of us. Thanks for pointing this out to me. I’m anxious to learn more about listening.”

Pastor Mick: “Good, because I’ve got some excellent literature on listening to share with you. I’ll send it home with you after our meeting. Julie, I also have some things to share with you.”

Julie: “Great, I’m ready to do my part in making things better in our marriage.”

Pastor Mick: “Julie, you know that Scripture teaches us that when a woman marries, she is called to ‘leave’ her mother and father and to ‘cleave’ to her husband. Essentially, this passage instructs us to make our relationship with our spouses the number one human relationship in our lives. The marital relationship should even have priority over our relationship with beloved parents. In your case, you had very good parents, and such can make it more difficult to leave and cleave. Your father, in particular, idolizes you. Justin has shared with me that you openly share all of your marital problems with your father. He’s also informed me that your father says critical things to him privately that make him feel like he’s failing you and your whole family. Your Dad may feel like he’s helping you by criticizing Justin, but, in reality, he’s deeply discouraging Justin. Justin feels he can’t possibly live up to all the expectations that are heaped upon him, and he’s lost confidence in you as a trustworthy partner who uses discretion.”

Julie: “Boy, I didn’t mean to do that, but I can see what you’re saying. I’ve been in the habit of sharing everything with Dad for so long, that I guess I just continued doing it after we were married. I had no idea such could create so many problems.”
Pastor Mick: “Julie, leaving your parents and cleaving to Justin involves several things, but I want to address just two of these things today. First, I want to share some things with you regarding the use of discretion. Discretion involves respecting privacy and maintaining silence about things that are relationally delicate. The discreet wife considers how being open with her beloved father might impact her beloved husband (her primary relationship). Such doesn’t mean just being silent about things Justin specifically says to keep in confidence. It means being discrete about everything that is shared about your marriage—with everyone. The second thing I want to share with you is that maintaining trustworthiness in a relationship is impossible without discretion. Trust is the bed-rock of every human relationship. This is true of our relationship with the plumber we hire, the neighbor we ask to watch our house when we take a vacation, and, of course, it’s true of your relationship with Justin. Anytime we maintain close contact with other people, their trust in us fluctuates. When we behave or speak questionably, their trust in us erodes, and when we behave or speak uprightly, their trust in us is built up. The quality of your marriage depends upon trust. Obviously, the good you behave and speak must far outweigh the bad you behave and speak, if your marriage is to be intimate and stable. If you want a good marriage, you simply can’t ignore these relational rules.”

Julie: “This is very helpful. Do you have some literature to send home with me? I’d sure like to learn more about discretion and trust.”

Pastor Mick: “I sure do. I’ll make some copies of them and you can take them home with you.”

Now let’s take an epistemological x-ray of Pastor Mick’s counsel and conduct. Where did he get all this pastoral wisdom? How has he come to know the things that he shares with Justin and Julie, and why does he treat them the way that he does?

First, it is clear that Pastor Mick is a man of the Scriptures, as part of his counsel and conduct is derived from special revelation (i.e., the inspired, infallible, inerrant Scriptures). Such is clear in his counsel to both Justin and Julie. For instance, in his dealings with Justin, he references Ephesians 5: “Justin, you know the Scriptures teach that you are to love Julie ‘as Christ loved the church.’” And, when he counsels Julie he derives his counsel from Genesis 2: “Julie, you know that Scripture teaches us that when a woman marries, she is called to ‘leave’ her mother and father and to ‘cleave’ to her husband.” Consequently, we can conclude from Pastor Mick’s counsel that a significant part of his advice is derived from the Bible. Moreover, Pastor Mick’s conduct reflects that he is a Biblical pastor. He is lovingly pastoral toward Justin and Julie (cf. Jn 21:15-17), and his ways and words are, ironically, both tactful and direct (cf. 1 Pet 5:1-4; 2 Tim 3:16-4:2).

Secondly, it is also clear that Pastor Mick has learned some things from observation and experience, so part of his counsel and conduct is derived from general revelation.

For example:
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1. He has learned that sometimes meeting with struggling couples in three sessions is most effective. In this meeting structure, he is able to first analyze them individually and then later counsel them more effectively as a couple.
2. He has also learned that many young couples think something strange is happening to them when they struggle significantly in the first few years of marriage. Hence he tells this couple: “Even ‘good’ marriages commonly struggle at this juncture.”
3. Having seen many couples for counseling, Pastor Mick also assumes that Justin and Julie (like others before them) probably will feel a bit embarrassed when they come. Therefore, he hugs both of them as they enter his study, and he verbally affirms his love for each of them before they get started. Such he hopes will help put them at ease.
4. Counseling Justin, he defines profitable, empathetic listening: “Listening involves sincerely engaging [Julie’s] words and feelings with a view to seriously understanding them.” Additionally, Pastor Mick draws upon something else he has learned in his tenure as a minister about relating to women: “Generally, women only truly feel loved when they feel they have been deeply understood.”
5. Counseling Julie, Pastor Mick connects her lack of discretion to an erosion in Justin’s sense of her trustworthiness. By observation and experience, Pastor Mick has learned (as he counsels Julie) that “maintaining trustworthiness in a relationship is impossible without discretion. Trust is the bed-rock of every human relationship.” Moreover, “discretion involves respecting privacy and maintaining silence about things that are relationally delicate.” (Note: Pastor Mick’s wisdom regarding discretion is probably derived from both the book of Proverbs as well as general revelation.)

Hence, we can see from this marital counseling session that Pastor Mick’s wisdom is a fusion of truth derived from a harmonious confluence of both Scripture (special revelation) and the light of nature (general revelation). These two epistemological sources are responsible for his admirable and exemplary, pastoral wisdom.

II. Biblical Considerations:

A. The Bible clearly teaches that God reveals truth via general, ordinary revelation in His created order. Such is an indisputable, intrinsic reality within nature, history, and mankind—even if fallen men and women suppress and twist such truth. Since all humans are image-bearers of God, none can escape this inflexible reality (cf. Rom 1:18-32; Romans 2:14-15; Jn 1:9; Ps 14:1).

B. What are the facets and categories of God’s truths, self-evident in general revelation?
   1. God’s truths about Himself:
      a. A mountain range speaks about its Creator’s majesty.
      b. A powerful storm reveals the Creator’s power.
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c. Refreshing rain, on the just and the unjust, declares the Creator’s patience and mercy.
d. The sun shining in its strength displays truth about the Creator’s glory.
e. The wind blowing where it wishes conveys information about the Creator’s sovereignty.

2. God’s truths about mankind:
   a. The human conscience makes it inevitable for men and women to acknowledge some sense of right and wrong, good and bad, true and false, fair and unfair, just and unjust.
b. Human beings are inevitably religious (even atheist), even if their beliefs are erroneous.
c. Mankind’s instinctive pursuit of common, ordinary truth, via its domination of the creation, attests to its image-bearing capacity.
d. All men pursue some truth about the created order, even if they suppress and twist critical truths relative to themselves, their Creator, and their world. Hence, some brilliant medical doctors are also blatant unbelievers.

3. God’s truths related to the natural sciences:
   a. Physical truths (the law of gravity—what goes up must come down);
   b. Mathematical laws (2 + 10 always = 12);
   c. Medical truths (exercise is indisputably good for the human body);
   d. Electrical laws (metal conducts electricity and plastic does not);
   e. Mechanical truths (friction inevitably creates some degree of heat);
   f. Environmental laws (freezing begins to occur at 32° F and steam begins to occur at 212° F).

4. God’s truths related to the social sciences:
   a. Upset, misunderstood people inevitably feel less-loved.
   b. Trust is an indispensible, foundational building block in every good human relationship.
   c. Men or women who become part of a mob will often do more evil than they would otherwise do as individuals.
   d. Fallen human beings tend to see the world autobiographically (i.e., they tend to see it as they are not as it really is).
   e. A lack of love, security, stability, and nurturing in a person’s childhood adds to the likelihood of adult, criminal behavior.

5. God’s truth in general revelation is also self-evident in the light and laws associated with economics, oratory, sports, art, courtrooms, language, government etc. God’s truth in general revelation is self-evident in every single facet of life that is part of God’s created order.

C. God’s truths revealed in the light and laws of nature are based upon universal, timeless, and self-evident principles.

1. Universal—they apply in any situation, in any culture, throughout time.

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2. Timeless—they never change.
3. Self-evident—you can’t soundly argue against them.

D. All these general (ordinary) truths are God’s truths, as He is the sole, sovereign influence that determines all visible and invisible realities in the present created order. And—of course—all Scriptural (special) truths are also God’s truths (i.e., the truths revealed in the inspired, infallible, inerrant Scriptures), as God is also the lone, sovereign influence that determines all visible and invisible realities in the redemptive, new-creation order in Jesus Christ. Moreover, God’s special and general revelations are not enemies who are at odds with one-another (although many modern believers inadvertently treat them as such). Rather, they are collaborating friends who together serve to make believers wiser. Both of these epistemological resources are critical roots of knowledge, discernment, and wisdom. And, walking through life without referencing both of them, seriously handicaps any Christian who attempts to do so.

E. King Solomon’s intense pursuit of truth and wisdom reflects an interwoven, harmonious confluence of both special and general revelation (e.g. 1Kings 3:16-28; 4:29-34; Prov 6:6-11; 21:1). In authoring the wisdom literature of the Scriptures (sovereignly supervised by the Holy Spirit, of course), King Solomon used things he learned from observing and experiencing general revelation, in its fallen state, to illuminate spiritual truths (e.g. Prov 17:14; 19:12; 25:17, 19; 26:11, 17; 27:8).

1. A sample of some of Solomon’s other observations in his pursuit of wisdom:
   a. He observed social chemistries (Prov 1:10-19);
   b. He observed human propensities (Prov 1:20-32; 3:11, 12);
   c. He observed God’s works and ways (Prov 3:19, 20);
   d. He observed subtle, alluring patterns of temptation (Prov 5:3, 6:23-29; 7:7-27);
   e. He observed behavioral consequences (Prov 5:3-14, 22, 23);
   f. He observed seed forms of violent crimes (Prov 6:32-35);
   g. He observed sure pathways to regret (Prov 6:1-5; 6:23-29, 32);
   h. He observed patterns of deceit (Prov 6:12-14);
   i. He observed spiritual measures that prevent sin (Prov 7:1-5);
   j. He observed man’s futile plight in the fallen creation (Eccl 1:1-3);
   k. He observed ironic complexities in navigating life events (Eccl 3:1-8).

F. The wisdom literature in the inspired Scriptures was not designed by God to be comprehensive in its content. Thus, via the Biblical authors, we not only receive the specific wisdom they observed and illumined, but also a pattern for discovering additional wisdom ourselves. For example, there are true proverbs beyond the inspired proverbs that King Solomon wrote. A proverb is simply the saying of a sage. It is a short pithy saying in frequent and widespread use that expresses a basic truth or practical precept. One Chinese proverb asserts: “I hear and I forget. I see and I remember. I do and I understand.”
G. Special revelation and general revelation are relationally above and below one another respectively, like a Christian husband and wife are in a harmonious Biblical marriage. Scripture is indisputably the most authoritative, sacred source of truth we possess; however, it is not the only source of truth that is to be found in God’s created order. While the Scriptures reveal the most critical, foundational truths we need to know, they don’t reveal all the truths we may need to explore. Some truths are to be subordinate sought and discovered by our observation and experience in general revelation.

H. King Solomon, the wisest man who ever lived (I Kings 4:29-34; 10:23-24), was eventually surpassed in wisdom by another King, Jesus Christ (Matt 12:42). Jesus was (and is) the sage of sages; he was (and is) the incarnate wisdom of God (cf. Luk 2:40, 52; 1 Cor 1:24, 30). In ancient days, men came from the ends of the earth to hear King Solomon’s great wisdom, and today men from every tribe, tongue, nation, and people come from the ends of the earth to hear the greater wisdom of King Jesus (Rev 5:9-14; 14:1-7).

1. The special revelation that we have in Christ’s words (in the gospels) are also filled with countless references to general revelation. Christ’s stories, parables, proverbs, sermons, teachings and interpersonal exchanges are filled with innumerable and illuminating references to general revelation. Like Solomon, having observed the creation in all its fallen realities, Christ utilized them to clearly communicate spiritual truths.
   a. He utilized wheat, tares, seeds, vines, thorns, fruit, lilies, grass, rain, trees, rocks, sand, winds, pits, and branches to illumine spiritual truths.
   b. He brings up birds, foxes, camels, sheep, and wolves to shed light on certain life-situations.
   c. He elucidates reality by conveying deep spiritual concepts while speaking figuratively of seasons, harvests, closets, gates, paths, nests, garments, wine skins, fields, bread, millstones, cornerstones, masters, servants, vineyards, bones, talents, barns, salt, light, candles, leaven, fishing, blind men, prodigal sons, stewards, and rich men.

I. Some other Biblical considerations that support the interwoven, harmonious confluence of both special and general revelation:
   1. When Job (an OT believer) lost his way, the Lord utilized general revelation to put his faith back into perspective (Job 38:1-42:6).
   2. While the Apostle Paul primarily referenced special revelation in his evangelism, on occasion, he also utilized general revelation in his presentations of the gospel (e.g. Acts 14:15-17; 17:23-28).
   3. When a person comes to faith via the truths in special revelation (Rom 10:17), born anew (2 Cor 5:17), he or she also comes to see more clearly the truths in general revelation (e.g. Ps 8, 19, 29, 104).
III. Motivational Considerations:

A. Wisdom can be observed everywhere in our world, yet it is commonly ignored:

Proverbs 1:20-27:
20 Wisdom cries aloud in the street; in the markets she raises her voice; 21 on the top of the walls she cries out; at the entrance of the city gates she speaks: 22 "How long, O simple ones, will you love being simple? How long will scoffers delight in their scoffing and fools hate knowledge? 23 Give heed to my reproof; behold, I will pour out my thoughts to you; I will make my words known to you. 24 Because I have called and you refused to listen, have stretched out my hand and no one has heeded, 25 and you have ignored all my counsel and would have none of my reproof, 26 I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when panic strikes you, 27 when panic strikes you like a storm, and your calamity comes like a whirlwind, when distress and anguish come upon you.

B. Proverbs 1:20f: “Wisdom cries aloud in the street; in the markets she raises her voice; on the top of the walls she cries out; at the entrance of the city gates she speaks . . .”

1. Where?
   a. Scripture, sermons, schools, observations, experiences, paintings, statues, movies, songs, books, poems, documentaries, conversations, newspapers, news casts, fables, proverbs, quips, history, philosophy, psychological/sociological sources, court cases, animals, plants, seeds, rivers, oceans, mountains, grass etc.
   1. Wisdom “cries aloud” everywhere regarding the truth about what is real and true.

C. Why should you and I care about the acquisition of truth and wisdom? Because there are many attractive incentives:

1. Wisdom adorns its seekers with spiritual, life-giving beauty (Prov 1:8, 9; 3:22; 4:5-9; 8:10-21).
2. It fills its hearers with a greater sense of safety and security (Prov 1:33; 3:23-26).
3. It preserves, keeps, and delivers its recipients from the consequences of sinful associations (Prov 2:10-22; 4:10-19; 5:1-23).
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5. It fosters better physical health (Prov 3:8; 4:20-22).

6. Its by-product is happiness, so its value is above silver, gold, or jewels (Prov 3:13-18).

7. Wisdom dignifies one as among God’s image-bearers (Prov 3:19-20; 8:22-36; Col 3:10).

IV. Historical Considerations:

The interwoven, harmonious confluence of both special and general revelation is a fusion of truths that has been acknowledged by a number of respected sources throughout church history, both ancient and modern.

John Calvin⁷ writes:

“To charge the [unconverted man’s] intellect with perpetual blindness, so as to leave it no intelligence of any description whatever, is repugnant not only to the Word of God, but to common experience. We see that there has been implanted in the human mind a certain desire of investigating truth, to which it never would aspire unless some relish for truth antecedently existed. There is, therefore, now, in the human mind, discernment to this extent, that it is naturally influenced by the love of truth, the neglect of which in the lower animals is a proof of their gross and irrational nature.”

“Therefore, in reading profane authors, the admirable light of truth displayed in them should remind us, that the human mind, however much fallen and perverted from its original integrity, is still adorned and invested with admirable gifts from its Creator. If we reflect that the Spirit of God is the only fountain of truth, we will be careful, as we would avoid offering insult to him, not to reject or condemn truth wherever it appears. In despising the gifts, we insult the Giver. How, then, can we deny that truth must have beamed on those ancient lawgivers who arranged civil order and discipline with so much equity? Shall we say that the philosophers, in their exquisite researches and skilful description of nature, were blind? Shall we deny the possession of intellect to those who drew up rules for discourse, and taught us to speak in accordance with reason? Shall we say that those who, by the cultivation of the medical art, expended their industry in our behalf were only raving? What shall we say of the mathematical sciences? Shall we deem them to be the dreams of madmen? Nay, we cannot read the writings of the ancients on these subjects without the highest admiration; an admiration which their excellence will not allow us to withhold. But shall we deem anything to be noble and praiseworthy, without tracing it to the hand of God? Far from us be such ingratitude; an ingratitude not chargeable even on heathen poets, who acknowledged that philosophy and laws, and all

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useful arts were the inventions of the gods. Therefore, since it is manifest that men whom
the Scriptures term carnal, are so acute and clear-sighted in the investigation of inferior
things, their example should teach us how many gifts the Lord has left in possession of
human nature, notwithstanding of its having been despoiled of the true good.”

Cornelius Plantinga⁸, paraphrasing Calvin’s quotes above writes:

“Why such enthusiasm for Christian colleges among Calvinists? No doubt one reason is
that John Calvin himself loved the life of learning. Calvin understood that God created
human beings to hunt and gather truth, and that, as a matter of fact, the capacity for doing
so amounts to one feature of the image of God in them (Col 3:10). So Calvin fed on
knowledge as gladly as a deer on sweet corn. He absorbed not only the teaching of
Scripture and of its great interpreters, such as St. Augustine, but also whatever knowledge
he could gather from such famous pagans as the Roman philosopher Seneca. And why
not? The Holy Spirit authors all truth, as Calvin wrote, and we should therefore embrace
it no matter where it shows up. But we will need solid instruction in Scripture and
Christian wisdom in order to recognize truth and in order to disentangle it from error and
fraud. Well-instructed Christians try not to offend the Holy Spirit by scorning truth in
non-Christian authors over whom the Spirit has been brooding, but this does not mean
that Christians can afford to read these authors uncritically. After all, a person’s faith,
even in idols, shapes most of what a person thinks and writes, and the Christian faith is in
competition with other faiths for human hearts and minds.”

The Westminster divines, who framed the Westminster Confession of Faith, used the
phrase “light of nature” several times,⁹ demonstrating that general revelation and special
revelation are concurrent, interwoven realities in the experience of God’s people.

Cornelius Van Til writes¹⁰:

“As far as the principle of interpretation is concerned, the natural man makes himself the
final point of reference. So far then, as he carries through this principle, he interprets all
things without God. In principle he is hostile to God. But he cannot carry through his
principle completely. He is restrained by God from doing so. Being restrained by God
from doing so, he is enabled to make contributions to the edifice of human knowledge.
The forces of creative power implanted in him are to some extent released by God's
common grace. He therefore makes positive contributions to science in spite of his
principles and because both he and the universe are the exact opposite of what he, by his
principles thinks they are.”

Louis Berkhof writes¹¹:

“General revelation rests on the basis of creation, is addressed to all intelligent creatures
as such, and is therefore accessible to all men; though as a result of sin they are no more
able to read and interpret it aright.”
“[General revelation] consists in those active manifestations to the perception and consciousness of man which come to him in the constitution of the human mind, in the whole framework of nature, and in the course of God’s providential government. Divine thoughts are embodied in the phenomena of nature, in the human consciousness, and in the facts of experience or history.”

“Special revelation rests on the basis of re-creation, is addressed to men as sinners with a view to their redemption, and can be properly understood only by the spiritual man.”

“General revelation also has a certain value for the Christian religion.”

“[The Christian] derives his theological knowledge of God from special revelation only. Yet there is a close relation between the two. Special revelation has incorporated, corrected, and interpreted general revelation. And now the Christian theologian takes his stand on the Word of God, and from that point of vantage also contemplates nature and history.”

Louis Berkhof also writes:

“The fact that, after the fall of man, general revelation was superseded by a special revelation may easily lead to an under-valuation of the former. We should not forget, however, that God’s original revelation remains of great importance.”

“When God gave His special revelation, He did not simply place this alongside of His original revelation, but incorporated in it the truths embodied in His general revelation, corrected their perversion, and interpreted them for mankind. Consequently, the Christian now reads God’s general revelation with the eye of faith and in the light of His Word, and for that very reason is able to see God’s hand in nature and His footsteps in history. He sees God in everything round about him, and is thus led to a proper appreciation of the world. But if special revelation engenders a true appreciation of general revelation, it is equally true that general revelation promotes a proper understanding of special revelation. Scripture can be fully understood only against the background of God’s revelation in nature. The latter frequently sheds a welcome light on the former. Moreover, general revelation also offers Christians and non-Christians a common basis on which they can meet and argue. The light of the Logos that lighteth every man is also a bond that unites them. Finally, it is also due to God’s general revelation that special revelation does not appear, as it were, suspended in the air, but touches the life of the world at every point. It maintains the connection between nature and grace, between the world and the kingdom of God, between the natural and the moral order, between creation and re-creation.”

Albert N. Martin writes:
“As I did this [i.e. taught, revised, edited my Pastoral Theology class materials] I became increasingly convinced that there was a third body of data to which careful attention must be paid in constructing an adequate and comprehensive theology of preaching. That body of data is the voice of general revelation as it is revealed in the science or art of rhetoric.”

“These pages [of this book] contain an accurate synopsis of my efforts to set forth a sound theology of preaching—a theology rooted in the data of special revelation, sensitive to the voice of general revelation, and disciplined by the boundaries of historical theology.”

Dr. R.C. Sproul writes:

“I hold to the classical Christian view of the relationship between general revelation and special revelation, and the thesis that no truth of any kind can be discovered apart from God’s revelation. With Augustine, Aquinas, and all of orthodox Christianity, I believe that all truth is God’s truth.”

Dr. Donald Oppewal writes:

“The Belgic Confession [Art.2] indicates that God has spoken in two manners, or “books.” Theologians often refer to general and special revelation as the book of nature and the book of grace, with the Bible being the latter and the raw material of the universe the other. The Bible itself contains some evidence of that distinction. But it doesn’t say much on how the two “books” speak together to help Christians confront the moral, social, and intellectual questions we face.”

“Paul acknowledges God’s voice in creation [Rom 1:20] as well as Scripture, yet what has happened to our two-book doctrine of revelation?”

“Berkhof asserts [in his Manual of Reformed Doctrine] that while general revelation is not enough by itself to know God’s will, so also special revelation alone is inadequate. He argues that the two sources are interdependent. While special revelation “engenders a true appreciation of general revelation, it is equally true that general revelation promotes a proper understanding of special revelation.” In other words, we need to take both into account and each in light of the other. We could say that they must be in conversation together and that the most valid conclusion arises out of listening to both.”

“When the two sources of the knowledge of God are consulted and kept in conversation together, a quiet consensus becomes likely.”

“One more example from history, that of slavery, may be persuasive in helping to understand the role of both general and special revelation. When we gazed simply on Bible texts, we tended to find justification for oppressing one class of people. But when
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we read the texts God wrote in history and saw the psychological effects on those oppressed people, our outlook changed. Today one is hard-pressed to find a defense of what was once seen as defensible.”

“We can think of the need for both general and special revelation another way. Many of us use bifocals to look at the world around us. What is blurred when we use one part of the lens becomes clearer when we use the other part. When we shift from one to the other, depending on whether we look close up or from afar, we finally get the clearer picture.”

“Those who readily dismiss the validity of general revelation seem to argue that only special revelation is normative, a particular application of the doctrine of the infallibility of Scripture. What this view seems not to consider is that the trustworthiness of both revelations is rooted in God as the writer of both books. Once human beings, being the fallible readers of both, interpret them, then neither reading is final or infallible by itself. God reveals and people read. History should teach us that the readers of both are not infallible and that confident changes come about when both revelations are honored for their contribution.”

“The Spirit moves most surely among us when Christians read the “facts of experience or history” (Berkhof) as well as when we read the Bible. Christian thinkers in the various disciplines, including theology, can give us counsel as we try to walk together toward that day when we shall all see more clearly the will of God for our communal lives, both in church and in society.”

T. David Gordon writes:

“The Bible is sufficient to guide the human-as-covenanter, but not sufficient to guide the human-as-mechanic, the human-as-physician, the human-as-businessman, the human-as-parent, the human-as-husband, the human-as-wife, or the human-as-legislator.”

“Where the big change has occurred in my own thinking has been with regard to the disastrous consequences of the common misunderstanding of the doctrine of the sufficiency of scripture. We appear to have lost the historic Protestant understanding of the importance of Natural Revelation, and have tended to function as though such revelation were not necessary. If anything has changed, then, it is that I would now argue with equal zeal for the insufficiency of scripture in other than religious or covenantal areas. I would want to argue now that scripture is not a sufficient guide to many aspects of life, other than in the sense of providing religious direction and motivation to all of life.”

“Yet, according to the biblical testimony, how does one acquire wisdom? Well, in part, by heeding God’s commands in holy scripture (Pro. 10:8; Eccl. 12:13). But more commonly, wisdom comes from listening to advice (Pro. 12:15; 19:20), from entertaining

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the opinion of a variety of people (Pro. 11:14; 18:17; 24:6), by listening to older people (Pro. 13:1), and by observing the natural order itself (Pro. 6:6). Wisdom does not come easily or quickly, but through a lengthy, prolonged effort. Most importantly, it does not come exclusively, or perhaps even primarily, through Bible study. Solomon promotes listening to parents, elders, a variety of counselors, and even a consideration of ants, badgers, locusts, and lizards (Pro. 30:24-28). Nor will we concur with a pietistic interpretation of James’s counsel that those who lack wisdom should pray for it (James 1:5), as though such prayer would be answered by some sort of special revelation. Jesus also counsels us to pray for our daily bread, which we do, but we also then labor to acquire bread by ordinary means, and, when successful, we offer prayers of thanks.”

“Similarly, we should pray for wisdom, but then labor for it by the ordinary means by which it is found. We will not acquire wisdom without consulting a variety of points of view, without thinking long and hard about life, without being perceptive. Most importantly, we will not acquire it by simply reading the Bible.”

Hence, an epistemology that includes an interwoven, harmonious confluence of special and general revelation is obviously critical and foundational to a sound Christian worldview and faith. Moreover, God’s light and laws within general, ordinary revelation are critical sources of sanctifying truth and wisdom in a believer’s life.

V. Practical Considerations:

A. The doctrine of the sufficiency of Scripture is not denied or diminished because a believer maintains that God’s truth is also derived from the light and laws of nature.

1. The Scriptures are indisputably sufficient; the Bible is an authoritative guide that sufficiently addresses the religious life of Christ’s church and every believer.
   a. The Scriptures are sufficient—within the scope of their Divine design.
   b. The Bible, God’s redemptive revelation of His will, was never Divinely-intended to be a comprehensive manual that adequately addresses every single personal, relational, social, scientific, or political issue that arises.
      1. For example, the Bible is not a sufficient source of truth that a physician could turn to for truth about autism, nor is it an adequate source of truth that a mother could turn to for truth about her daughter’s anorexia.
   2. The Bible’s sufficiency as a source of truth must be understood within the intended boundaries of its Divine-design.
   3. Special revelation and general revelation are complimentary in their Divine designs.
      a. In His earthly ministry, Jesus Himself used natural, observable truths to illuminate Scriptural, spiritual realities. For example: “. . . unless a grain
of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit” (Jn 12:24).

1. In this passage, Jesus used general truths about wheat to further illuminate special truths about the resurrection of the dead.

b. Sacred, inspired truths in the Scriptures and truths revealed in the creation fluidly complement one another in their confluences. Truths about forgiveness, for example, reflect this reality.

1. Forgiveness is addressed as a moral imperative in the Scriptures (e.g. Matt 6:15; Lk 17:3, 4).
2. Forgiveness is also revealed as a gift to oneself in the light of nature. For example: “To be angry is to revenge the faults of others upon ourselves” (Alexander Pope).
3. The Christian who has both of these sources to draw from has more truth to work with not less.

    Such makes them wiser, more discerning, more loving—increasing his or her potential to glorify God.

4. In such a case, the truths of forgiveness revealed in the inspired, authoritative Scriptures are enhanced (not diminished) by the truths derived from the light and laws of nature. Together these truths compliment, strengthen, and reinforce each other.

4. We shouldn’t discard God’s light in nature simply because some religious groups twist or distort the complimentary design God intended for special and general revelation.

    a. For example, if Liberalism, in its quest for “truth,” elevates the social sciences above the Scriptures, such doesn’t mean that there is absolutely no truth in the social sciences. It means that Liberalism has erroneous epistemological perceptions and priorities.

    1. Such should not be instrumental in causing conservative Christians to fearfully over-emphasize special revelation and under-emphasize general revelation (e.g. like nouthetic counselors often do). To do this is to simply error on the other extreme, and, at the end of the day, such errors on the right can prove as serious as the errors on the left.

b. Well-meaning believers who defend the sufficiency of Scripture by dismissing the light and laws of nature as a legitimate truth-source weaken and harm Christ’s church.

    a. Many undesirable consequences are inevitable when believers over-emphasize the pursuit of God’s truth in special revelation and under-emphasize the pursuit of God’s truth in general revelation (a subject to be addressed in another upcoming point).

B. Certainly every honest believer must acknowledge that there are dangers associated with mishandling general revelation, even as there are dangers associated with mishandling special revelation.
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1. Any honest Christian must concede that there are some very real dangers associated with the confluent pursuit of general and special revelation. For example:
   a. Liberalism denies the inspiration of Scripture and then places an inordinate, humanistic confidence in the physical and social sciences.
   b. Modern intellectuals seek scientific truth within a presupposed, closed universe while suppressing the truth about God that is indisputably evident within the creation (Rom 1:18f).
   c. Modern psychologist and psychiatrist, who suppress truth about God that is indisputably evident within man (Rom 1:18f), offer humanistic remedies that contradict the supreme authority of the Scriptures.
   d. Some pastors in their preaching over-emphasize the pursuit of truth in general revelation while under-emphasizing the pursuit of truth in special revelation.

2. These things being true, every believer should honestly acknowledge such dangers, and then soberly sort them out accordingly.

3. Here Cornelius Plantinga’s words are worth quoting a second time. Commenting on Calvinists and John Calvin he writes:

   “Why such enthusiasm for Christian colleges among Calvinists? No doubt one reason is that John Calvin himself loved the life of learning. Calvin understood that God created human beings to hunt and gather truth, and that, as a matter of fact, the capacity for doing so amounts to one feature of the image of God in them (Col 3:10). So Calvin fed on knowledge as gladly as a deer on sweet corn. He absorbed not only the teaching of Scripture and of its great interpreters, such as St. Augustine, but also whatever knowledge he could gather from such famous pagans as the Roman philosopher Seneca. And why not? The Holy Spirit authors all truth, as Calvin wrote, and we should therefore embrace it no matter where it shows up. But we will need solid instruction in Scripture and Christian wisdom in order to recognize truth and in order to disentangle it from error and fraud. Well-instructed Christians try not to offend the Holy Spirit by scouring truth in non-Christian authors over whom the Spirit has been brooding, but this does not mean that Christians can afford to read these authors uncritically. After all, a person’s faith, even in idols, shapes most of what a person thinks and writes, and the Christian faith is in competition with other faiths for human hearts and minds.”

4. Here Dr. Donald Oppewal words are also worth quoting a second time:

   “. . . the trustworthiness of both revelations [nature and Scripture] is rooted in God as the writer of both books. Once human beings, being the fallible readers of both, interpret them, then neither reading is final or infallible by itself. God reveals and people read. History should teach us
that the readers of both are not infallible and that confident changes come about when both revelations are honored for their contribution.”

C. Special revelation and general revelation should not be pitted against one another just because the former is more sacred and authoritative than the latter.
   1. The Scriptures are the most sacred and authoritative revelation of truth that God has given us. For this reason, they are given prominence in Christ’s church. For example, they are to be the substance of any faithful preacher’s preaching (2 Tim 3:16-4:1-4). However, such should not lead one to pursue the truths of the Bible exclusively, or to pit its content against other truths God has revealed to us within the created order.
   a. General revelation is not special revelation’s equal in deciding tangly issues in the church. In the kingdom of Epistemology, special revelation is the King, as it were, and general revelation is the Queen. Hence, both are authoritative sources and therefore worthy of equal honor and consideration. Nonetheless, in matters wherein these two convene, converge and then seemingly conflict, special revelation must always trump general revelation. The King’s word, as it were, always trumps the Queen’s word, even if the Queen has added much value to the conversation.

D. Unfortunately, the modern, conservative church, misunderstanding and therefore over-emphasizing the sufficiency of Scripture, is neglecting the diligent pursuit of God’s truth in general revelation.
   1. While special revelation is more sacred and authoritative than general revelation, both are equally true.
      a. Special, inspired truths are not truer than natural, observable truths.
         1. Thus, the real issue is not God’s truth (i.e. Scripture) versus the World’s truth (i.e. all other “truth” that is declared to be true in the world).
         2. All truth is God’s truth, whether in the light and laws of nature (general revelation), or in the Scriptures (special revelation).
         3. Certainly, per the Scriptures, a sanctified distinction must be carefully made between the wisdom of God and the wisdom of the world (e.g. 1 Cor 2:1f).
            a. Note: worldly wisdom essentially involves the pursuit of any truth—without duly fearing and acknowledging God.
            b. In our zeal to preserve and protect God’s truth, we must be very careful that we don’t inadvertently put a “worldly wisdom” label on God’s truth in the light and laws of nature (general revelation). To do so is, in reality, to reject God’s truth—even if an inadvertent believer does so with good intentions.
2. Many modern, conservative Christians seem to misunderstand this; consequently, they inadvertently cut themselves off from much of God’s truth that could enhance the quality of their lives and ministries.
   a. For example, some Bible-believing Christians refer to all modern psychological insights within the social sciences as “psycho-babble,” and then completely separate themselves from them as potential truth-sources.
      1. Such Christians inordinately separate themselves from legitimate truth-sources that need to be discretely sorted through.
      2. In an attempt to protect and preserve God’s truth, such believers—in reality—violate and suppress it.

E. The consequences of rejecting or ignoring God’s truth in general revelation are not incidental.
   1. Per the Scriptures, less of God’s truth leads to less love, wisdom, and discernment. Such a loss is catastrophic when one considers that, according to the Scriptures, the acquisition of wisdom is a source of happiness, the value of which is above silver, gold, or jewels (Prov 3:13-18).
      a. Remember the pursuit of Biblical wisdom involves the acquisition of truth from the light of nature as well as Scripture. As you’ll recall, King Solomon’s intense pursuit of truth and wisdom reflected an interwoven, harmonious confluence of both special and general revelation (e.g. 1Kings 3:16-28; 4:29-34; Prov 6:6-11; 21:1).
   2. When the truths of special revelation are hyper-prioritized and the truths of general revelation ignored, an ugly unreality is inevitable. The late Francis Schaeffer writes:\21
      “I believe that when the Bible says that God is a God of truth, it is saying something far deeper than we usually realize. It is saying that God is truth in the sense that He is the God of reality—that there is only one God and only one reality. And if one does not know this God and the reality which flows from understanding Him (including the world as He made it and as it now is through sin), then one has no God and lives in a universe that does not really exist and therefore is untrue in the deep sense of being real.”
   3. The point: God’s truth is the premise for all reality—whether that truth is derived from Scripture or nature.
      a. What is true is also what is real, as truth and reality are to be considered synonymous concepts. So, when the confluence of special revelation and general revelation are considered legitimately interwoven and harmonious, a harmony between truth and reality is possible in the human experience.
b. When the confluence of special revelation and general revelation are considered illegitimate, a harmony between truth and reality is only partially possible in the human experience.

1. An absence of any part of God’s truth will result in an inevitable, corresponding absence of reality.
2. When the truths of special revelation are hyper-prioritized and the truths of general revelation are ignored, such degrades the quality of wisdom, love, and discernment in any believer’s life and conduct.

a. As an example, what if a session (i.e. a board of elders) was providentially called upon to decide whether they have sufficient, Biblical grounds to excommunicate a sinning believer who has fallen into chronic alcoholism and drug abuse. And, upon considering the circumstances, they find that the church member’s chronic sin is indisputable and increasingly well-known within the church. Moreover, as they review the Scriptures, they find that such a level of sin, and its impact, is certainly excommunicable. Then, discussing this among themselves, they decide that at the next official session meeting they will act upon this dangerous “leaven” and begin excommunication proceedings. Yet, one among these conscientious elders later has second thoughts about proceeding to excommunication, as he wonders “what emotional pain lies behind this drinking and drug abuse?” Consequently, soon afterward, he makes gentle contact with the straying member and determines to give them an open ear. After many words are exchanged, the addict-member emotionally reveals that as a teenager he was sexually molested by a close relative, and that he has not been able to unload the unbearable pain. Moreover, his turning to drugs and alcohol is rooted in managing the pain and carefully maintaining the embarrassing secret. Afterward, this wise elder takes this invaluable information back to the next session meeting, and the other elders—now better informed—become inclined to approach this situation from another, less severe angle. Now, what if this session had proceeded to excommunicate this man without knowing this additional truth? What if the one empathetic elder hadn’t acted upon the observation he’d learned from the light of nature; namely, that alcohol and drug abuse are usually rooted in managing emotional pain? Surely, this session would have inadvertently acted too swiftly and too harshly. Moreover, they would have prematurely wounded a
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bleeding sheep that needed understanding rather than a
good spiritual beating. Hyper-prioritizing the truths of
special revelation and ignoring the truths of general
revelation would have degraded this session’s quality of
wisdom, love, and discernment. Such an oversight of God’s
truth would certainly not have been incidental.

F. In their day-to-day lives believers often inadvertently act upon “truths” they
assume to be true from their observations and experiences—even if they
intellectually deny that general revelation is a legitimate, authoritative source of
God’s truth.

1. A case in point: Kathy, a devout, wise, caring Christian, who knows her Bible
from cover to cover, sits down to make a “to dos” list for the upcoming week. As
she does so, three situations cross her mind. First, her beloved grandfather
(currently feeling distressed) needs to get to the eye doctor, as his glasses were
recently broken and his independence has been put in jeopardy. Second, she wants
to firm up the routine of getting her young children to bed at a more regular time,
as she’s observed some behavior problems that reflect the current irregularity.
Third, Kathy has a dear friend who lost her only child nearly a year ago, so she
wants to make sure she makes meaningful contact with this friend on the one-year
anniversary of the child’s death.

   a. Implicit in Kathy’s musings are three firm truths she’s observed and has
determined to act upon:
      1. The loss of independence is among the greatest fears of the
         elderly, so their psychological well-being is significantly enhanced
         when they can maintain as much independence as possible.
      2. Young children need structure and routine when it comes to bed
         times, to maximize the potential for their best behavior.
      3. When someone loses a loved-one, anniversary milestones are
         critical emotional junctures in the grieving process.

   b. None of these truths are primarily derived from the Scriptures.
   c. As a devout Christian, Kathy needs to know why she knows what she
      knows, epistemologically.
   d. Claiming that the Scriptures are sufficient to address these critical day-
to-day issues is simply dishonest. Other sources of God’s truth—in
general revelation—must inevitably be sought to wisely and lovingly
navigate these circumstances.

2. Every believer needs to be able to justify his or her use of every truth they act
upon. So, where does the truth come from in your life that is not derived from the
Scriptures? You also need to know why you know what you know,
epistemologically.

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G. God’s truth in general revelation (like special revelation) is not always plain and clear.

1. In general revelation, some things are crystal clear.
   a. For example, one plain and clear truth derived from general revelation is that the quality of any relationship is determined by its capacity to meet each partner’s needs. No one in his or her right mind would deny or dispute this self-evident relational law. Like the physical law of gravity, it’s indisputable—crystal clear.

2. On the other hand, there are some issues in the realm of general revelation that are quite unclear.
   a. For example, why are homosexual passions appalling to most young adolescent boys but alluring to others? There may be a few minor explanations for this, but there are more mysteries than answers associated with this question. Another example might be the problem of global warming. Is it truly a threat, or is it merely a perceived problem? Smart scientific minds, who differ much, are still debating this issue.

H. Believers who would maximize their wisdom must deliberately track down God’s truth wherever it is found.

1. Believers who would have much wisdom must diligently study their Bibles, and observantly study God’s vast world for all of His revealed truth.
   a. The wisdom believers are called to pray for in James 1:5-8 is never acquired by believers who sit around waiting for it to be magically deposited into their spiritual experiences.

2. Wisdom is not passively infused or imputed to a believer, it is imparted via a believer’s deliberate pursuit and participation in the hard work of its acquisition.
   a. When it is acquired, it is the result of a confluence of a believer’s blood, sweat, and tears (effort) and the grace of God via the Holy Spirit.

“A half truth presented as a whole truth is an untruth.”

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1 Some historical positions on whether the light and laws within general revelation (or nature) are adequate or inadequate, in and of themselves, to bring men to salvation:

According to some, nothing whatever may be known of God from nature. God is known only as his living Word, the eternal Christ meets an individual personally. The Bible is a pointer or a witness through which people may come to know God personally (Karl Barth).

On the opposite extreme are those who hold that no special or direct acts of God are involved. All that may be known of God is obtainable indirectly through a study of man and nature. Everyone has some knowledge of God, but the best theology is found in the highest achievements of human philosophy, science, and psychology of religion. These correct the teachings of Scripture (Liberals).

Others maintain that all who will reason logically from their observations of nature must conclude that God exists. Apart from faith in Christ or the teachings of the Christian Church, all may see that God is the uncaused cause of the world and its design.
knowledge creates a hunger for more truth about God which is supplied by the authoritative teachings of the one true Church (Thomas Aquinas and the Roman Catholics).

Although God's existence and glory are plainly revealed to all people by the things that are made, some argue that people do not in fact see this because sin has blinded their minds to all spiritual truth. While there is general revelation of God, there is no way for the unsaved person to understand or even perceive it. Only believers enlightened by the Holy Spirit can see God's glory in nature (Reformed theologians or Calvinists).

By the light that God gives to all people, everyone may clearly see God's existence, power, and righteousness. In spite of their knowledge of God, however, none of them worship him as God. Instead, they worship and serve his creation. General revelation, like Moses' law, is holy, just, and good, but because of the weakness of man's sinful nature, it results not in man's salvation, but his condemnation. And like the law it should then be a tutor leading all people to the saving grace of Christ (Evangelicals).

2 Canons of Dort: The Third and Fourth Main Points of Doctrine

Article 1: The Effect of the Fall on Human Nature
Man was originally created in the image of God and was furnished in his mind with a true and salutary knowledge of his Creator and things spiritual, in his will and heart with righteousness, and in all his emotions with purity; indeed, the whole man was holy. However, rebelling against God at the devil's instigation and by his own free will, he deprived himself of these outstanding gifts. Rather, in their place he brought upon himself blindness, terrible darkness, futility, and distortion of judgment in his mind; perversity, defiance, and hardness in his heart and will; and finally impurity in all his emotions.

Article 2: The Spread of Corruption
Man brought forth children of the same nature as himself after the fall. That is to say, being corrupt he brought forth corrupt children. The corruption spread, by God's just judgment, from Adam to all his descendants—except for Christ alone—by not way of imitation (as in former times the Pelagians would have it) but by way of the propagation of his perverted nature.

Article 3: Total Inability
Therefore, all people are conceived in sin and are born children of wrath, unfit for any saving good, inclined to evil, dead in their sins, and slaves to sin; without the grace of the regenerating Holy Spirit they are neither willing nor able to return to God, to reform their distorted nature, or even to dispose themselves to such reform.

Article 4: The Inadequacy of the Light of Nature
There is, to be sure, a certain light of nature remaining in man after the fall, by virtue of which he retains some notions about God, natural things, and the difference between what is moral and immoral, and demonstrates a certain eagerness for virtue and for good outward behavior. But this light of nature is far from enabling man to come to a saving knowledge of God and conversion to him—so far, in fact, that man does not use it rightly even in matters of nature and society. Instead, in various ways he completely distorts this light, whatever its precise character, and suppresses it in unrighteousness. In doing so he renders himself without excuse before God.

See http://www.opc.org/whatis.html#I (see point #2: “The Formation of the OPC”). This online posting details how my own denomination, the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, formed in the context of a battle against liberals who denied the authority of Scripture. Liberalism, in its so-called quest for “truth,” elevates the sciences above the Scriptures. Consequently, looking at general revelation seriously, as a legitimate source of truth, makes many in our ranks understandably nervous. In addition, it has been instrumental in causing many among us to inadvertently over-emphasize special revelation and under-emphasize general revelation. For example, I believe such an anxious fear is at the root of nouthetic counseling’s popular influence among us (a method of counseling that I believe is much too narrow in its field of knowledge, epistemologically). Consequently, as a denomination, I believe we must soberly realize that the pendulum can swing too far after such struggles, and if it does, errors can be as serious as errors are on the left.

Epistemology (i-pis-tuh-mol-uh-je) is derived from the two Greek words, epistemon, meaning "understanding" and logos meaning "word."

Epistemology is the science of knowledge; it is concerned with the nature and origin of knowledge. Epistemology seeks to find the true assumptions that account for reality. Epistemology asks the question “How do we know what we know?”

1. How our knowledge is obtained, its bases, forms, and criteria
2. The origin, nature, methods, and limits presumed in our knowledge of what we conclude to be true and real
3. What is presupposed when one says, “I know” or “I believe”

Theologically, the OT and NT Scriptures are considered “special revelation,” as they are specific in content and revealed to a specific audience—God’s chosen people. Moreover special revelation is redemptive or salvific in nature, making known God’s saving and sanctifying
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grace. Three major categories of special revelation include: miraculous events, divine speech, and visible manifestations. Today, the OT and NT Scriptures sufficiently reveal all three of these to the church.

6 “General (or ordinary) revelation” is general in content and revealed universally to a general audience. It is given to all people at all times and at all places. The three primary categories of general revelation are through nature, human history, and human nature—internally—for example, via conscience.


9 Westminster Standards: WCF 1:1, 6; 10:4; 20:4; 21:1. LCQ: 151. (available online @ http://www.reformed.org/documents/)


15 Oppewal, Dr. Donald, *Reformed Matters: General and Special Revelation in Conversation Waiting on God* (Banner magazine, Issue: February 2006, pg 36. (Please note that this article, while very insightful in many ways, also betray some flirting with liberal rationalizing. For example, the author (a man surrounded by many conservatives in the CRC), may be sticking his toe in the waters of Liberalism to test the denominational waters. Such, I suppose, may depend on what he means by some of his statements related to the ordination of women, homosexuality etc. To utilize general revelation in these matters is certainly not wrong—in and of itself—however, general revelation is not special revelation’s equal in deciding such tangy issues in the church’s courts. In the kingdom of Epistemology, special revelation is the King, as it were, and general revelation is the Queen. Hence, both are authoritative sources and therefore worthy of equal honor and consideration. Nonetheless, in matters wherein these two convene, converge and then seemingly conflict, special revelation must always trump general revelation. The King’s word, as it were, always trumps the Queen’s word, even if the Queen has added much value to the conversation.

16 The Belgic Confession, Article 2: *The Means by Which We Know God* (available online @ http://www.reformed.org/documents/)


18 Nouthetic counselors are often sincere believers who really aim to help other people, and their use of the Bible is certainly helpful in many issues that the Bible clearly addresses. However, their field of knowledge/truth is all too often limited to the Bible alone, as though it is sufficient to address every relational issue that surfaces. Personally, I respect and consult nouthetic counseling resources; however, I certainly don’t limit myself to either their influences, or the Bible’s, exclusively. For a fuller understanding of Nouthetic counseling, see

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20 Oppewal, Dr. Donald, Reformed Matters: General and Special Revelation in Conversation Waiting on God (Banner magazine, Issue: February 2006, pg 36.