

Two Methods of Knowing and Teaching

Written by Calvin Fox

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In Neo-Calvinist (Dutch Reformed) theory, there are two, very different ways to approach knowing anything. There are two, and only two, very different ways of interpreting reality or facts, of understanding the meaning of everything.

1. The way that starts from God [Pre-suppositionalism], from Special Revelation and with a regenerated heart in which dwells the Holy Spirit who gives illumination. This is the Dutch Reformed Method. All other Christian approaches are not pre-suppositional. They are, instead, Evidential/Rational or Empirical/Experiential.

2. The way that starts with animus toward God and Revelation and is done with an unregenerated heart and thus, without the Holy Spirit (Christians who are not Dutch Reformed would insist that their methods are valid. I am convinced that the latter are both unscriptural and futile.)

More than being different, these two ways of knowing oppose each other- they are actually inimical [Webster- i-'ni-mi-kal: adjective from latin inimicus enemy – 1. being adverse often by reason of hostility or malevolence 2 a. having the disposition of an enemy : hostile b. reflecting or indicating hostility] *Isaiah 55:8 "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the LORD. 9 "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.*

Isaiah 65:2 All day long I have held out my hands to an obstinate people, who walk in ways not good, pursuing their own imaginations 2 I spread out My hands all day long to a rebellious people who walk in the wrong path, following their own thoughts. (Holman Christian Standard Bible)

Genesis 6:5 The LORD saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time.

All human beings are persons with the attributes of the image of God, ie- all people have the faculties for rational thought, creativity, morality and living in community. These remain "good". Thus, human society, culture and civilization is functionally possible and essentially "good". This is Common Grace- Christians and non-Christians have all this in common. However, unregenerate humans function under the control of "radical corruption" [in their hearts] and with total inability to change that.

The unregenerate function, including how they pursue knowledge, not only apart from God, ie- autonomously, but in opposition to God. The enmity to God is seen very clearly in the vehement opposition, by proponents of Naturalism, to the very idea of Intelligent Design.

Romans 8:7 the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so.

Colossians 1:21 Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds

Proverbs 1:7 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge BUT Romans 3:18 There is no fear of God before their eyes

Romans 1:18 men suppress the truth by their wickedness...21 their thinking became futile

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Ephesians 4:17 So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. 18They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts.

This means that the unregenerate select facts and interpret them accordingly; especially, when it comes to the purpose and connectivity of those facts. In addition, human beings function under the influence of spiritual Evil Powers which manifest themselves in the institutions and structures of society. Thus, human beings are pressured and influenced by Society and personal bias to select, interpret and use [facts] for ungodly objectives, eg- science in support of Eugenics and Racism. All who pursue knowledge, and those who want to be teachers, must examine which approach they are now using and intend to use in the future. There is a line here and thus there is need for Christians to gather to help each other in this matter and support the efforts to do scholarship and teaching from a Reformed, Biblical Way.