THE THOUGHT OF ROBERT FLINT

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by

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To

MY PARENTS
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Brief biographical statement on Flint

Robert Flint, D. D., LL. D., F.R.S.E., was born the son of a shepherd and grieve in the parish of Applegarth, Dumfriesshire, Scotland, in 1834. In 1848, at the age of fourteen years, he entered Glasgow University. He spent ten years there, five in the Faculty of Arts, five in the Faculty of Divinity. After a few years as a minister of the Church of Scotland, he succeeded, at thirty years of age, the renowned Professor Ferrier to the Chair of Moral Philosophy in the University of St. Andrews. In 1876 he was appointed Professor of Divinity in the University of Edinburgh, a post he held until his retirement in 1903. He died in 1910.¹

¹Further biographical information can be had by consulting Donald Macmillan's, Life of Robert Flint (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1914).
I. The importance of Flint's thought as justification of its present examination

By the turn of the century Flint had gained a world-wide reputation for scholarship in the fields of the Philosophy of Religion, Christian Apologetics and the Philosophy of History. He was reputed to have been the most learned man of his time in Scotland. He received two honours very rarely granted to a member of the English-speaking world: he was made a Corresponding Member of the Institute of France, and an Honorary Member of the Royal Society of Palermo. Nine honorary doctorate degrees were offered to him, eight of which he accepted. (He regarded as indiscreet the acceptance of a D.D. offered him by St. Andrews University while he was a professor there.) In 1937, a Principal and Professor of Systematic Theology in Knox College, New Zealand, named Flint "the greatest Presbyterian theologian of the last fifty years."¹ The New Zealand theologian just referred to, John Dickie, also asserts that Flint's "Theism and Anti-theistic Theories probably reached a larger public than any other works of a Presbyterian Divine published in the second half of the last century."² Recorded by Dickie is

²John Dickie, Fifty Years of British Theology, p.73. Dickie is no doubt correct here. These two volumes by Flint were still in print as late as 1929--52 years after the first of its 13 editions for Theism, 30 years after the first of its 9 editions for Anti-Theistic Theories.
the following statement made to him by a Scottish minister friend during Flint's life-time: "I suppose Flint is the greatest preacher we have now."¹ The well-known Professor of Theology at Berlin, in the late nineteenth century, Otto Pfleiderer, declared that Flint's views contained "the quintessence of the best thoughts of modern speculative philosophy and the program of its further development."² R.G. Collingwood points out that until the twentieth century no significant work was done in Great Britain in the philosophy of history except for that done by Robert Flint and F. H. Bradley.³ Rudolf Metz remarks that Flint's earliest volume on the philosophy of history "is specially noteworthy for having brought the German idealistic movement from Kant to Hegel for the first time to the notice of English readers in single conspectus that shows a comparatively high degree of understanding." Metz, who wrote in German in 1935, thinks Flint's account of the French, Belgian, and Swiss theories of history is still unsurpassed.⁴ Writing as recently as 1944, Max Fisch avers that Flint's "two volumes on the philosophy of history have not been superseded."⁵ In addition, Fisch stipulates

¹John Dickie, Fifty Years of British Theology, p. 78.
that Flint's work on Vico "remains the standard exposition in English."¹ In 1960, Christianity Today, by far the most widely-read religious periodical of a semi-technical nature in America,² recommended in "a basic library list for theological institutions and ministers" more of Flint's works in the section on "Apologetics and Christian Philosophy" than those of any other writer except one.³

Why, then, has a man of such scholarly and ecclesiastical stature become, in the fifty years since his death, virtually forgotten in his own country, Church, and university? The answer is two-fold: he was the last of the Scottish Common Sense Realists to occupy a Chair in a British university; he was the last Professor of Divinity in the Church of Scotland to maintain an implacable opposition to Ritschlianism. Naturally, these two factors are directly connected. Ritschlianism involved a conscious attempt at accommodating Kantian phenomenalism in a Christian Theism.⁴ As a Common Sense Realist, Flint was committed to formulating a Christian Theism with the assistance of the other or non-Kantian answer to Hume developed just before the turn of the nineteenth century. The past fifty years have seen Ritschlianism and its partial descendant, Barthianism, receive a much more sympathetic hearing in the

¹Max Fisch, "Introduction," The Autobiography of Giambattista Vico, p.95. Further comments by later authors about Flint's work on the philosophy of history can be found below, pp.182-184.

²Christianity Today, a fortnightly publication whose readers are largely evangelical ministers of religion from most non-Roman Catholic communions, boasts a circulation of 172,500 copies. (Cf., eg., the issue of Sept. 26, 1960, p.2.)


⁴For substantiation of this assertion, see below, pp.251-263.
Church of Scotland than could have been at all possible earlier. After Flint passed from the scene, no philosophical theologian or philosopher appeared who shared his wholehearted confidence in the traditional philosophy of Scotland which from the middle of the eighteenth century to the middle of the nineteenth century had made Scotland the most serious rival of Germany's philosophical hegemony.

The disenchantment of Scottish divines and intellectuals with the Scottish Philosophy by the turn of the century is hardly surprising. Even before J. S. Mill's scathing and not unbiased *Examination of Sir William Hamilton's Philosophy* (1865) the Scottish school was waning. Mill's volume was widely considered to have dealt the death blow. In his recent analysis of the Scottish Philosophy, Grave reports that "those who criticized Mill and wanted Hume answered, with few exceptions no longer wanted him answered in Reid's way, or they wanted Reid's answer taken up into Kant's, or given its modest place in an Hegelian synthesis." Yet in the penultimate paragraph of his work Grave affirms that "very little in philosophy is ever finished with, and the philosophy of Common Sense is not finished

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1 In this thesis the name "Church of Scotland" will be used to refer both to the pre-1929 group and the post-1929 group bearing that name. The context will determine the particular group meant.


with;...the problems with which Reid was concerned...are perennial, and some of the things he says will always need repeating." Grave's final paragraph is as follows:

"There are questions asked by philosophers and answered by common sense, which therefore contains "a philosophy prior to philosophy." With the untroubled assumption that the beliefs of common sense show their metaphysical character as they show their authority, the philosophy of Common Sense came into existence in order to make this claim. It is a claim which cannot easily be settled if it can be settled, and as it involves the nature both of philosophy and of common sense, it is one which should be reconsidered and, in spite of its unsophistication, with some care."  

James Feibleman goes further. Not only does he recount present-day realism's heavy debt to Reid, he also declares that in the organic philosophy of Whitehead "the Scottish tradition of realism is showing not only its vitality, but also validity and truth."  

It appears, therefore, that there is some justification even from the purely philosophical standpoint for taking another look at the thought of the man recently described by Davie as "the last original thinker of the Scottish school."  

It is, however, Flint the philosophical theologian in whom

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2 Grave, Scottish Philosophy of Common Sense, p. 257.

5 In describing Flint as a philosophical theologian the present thesis is intentionally refusing to acquiesce in the attempt by Antony Flew and Alasdair MacIntyre to restrict Paul Tillich's expression "'Philosophical Theology'" to that part of the philosophy of religion not "associated with Idealist attempts to present philosophical prolegomena to theistic theology." (Antony Flew and Alasdair MacIntyre (eds.), New Essays in Philosophical Theology (London: SCM Press, Ltd.; 1955).
the present thesis will be primarily interested. As Dickie, who was trained by Flint, recounts, the goal toward which the latter worked was "nothing less than a synthesis of all human knowledge and thought, and a demonstration of the Nature and Being of God and of the truth of our Christian Faith on the basis of that synthesis." Early in his career Flint set as his goal the formulation of a complete "System of Natural Theology which would deal with four great problems:

1) To exhibit what evidence there is for belief in the existence of God;
2) To refute anti-theistic theories,—atheism, materialism, positivism, secularism, pessimism, pantheism, and agnosticism;
3) To delineate the character of God as disclosed by nature, mind, and history, and to show, what light the truth thus ascertained casts upon man's duty and destiny;
4) To trace the rise and development of the idea of God and the history of theistic speculation.

And, what will later be seen to be of great importance, Flint carried out his thinking in natural theology from the viewpoint and for the viewpoint of one who already knew God through Jesus Christ. The denotation "philosophical theologian", in Flint's case, will be found to include those characteristics which warranted his successor in the University of Edinburgh, W. P. Paterson, to classify him in the "School of National Supernaturalism." This "School," one of six which Paterson defined in nineteenth and early twentieth century Scottish Theology,

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1 John Dickie, *Fifty Years of British Theology*, p. 79.

2 Flint, *Agnosticism* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons; 1903), p. 640. This volume was also published simultaneously by William Blackwood and Sons, Edinburgh and London. (Please note that throughout the present thesis the Scribner publication, whose pagination is slightly different from the Blackwood publication, has been used.)
"while accepting a special Revelation and an inspired record, sought to exhibit the Christian dogmas as essentially intelligible, on occasion to re-interpret them, and to support them by rational considerations, the work being done either from the standpoint of the Scottish Philosophy,... or in sympathy with the spirit and principles of the Hegelian Philosophy."¹

Paterson's definition points up two of the major problems which the present thesis must solve. Not unexpectedly, one is the determination of how, and with what success, Flint endeavoured to keep the "rational" and the "supernatural" elements of his system harmoniously united. The second problem referred to consists of ascertaining the veracity of the claims made by some of Flint's critics, both friendly and unfriendly, to the effect that he had moved unwittingly or not from his Scottish Philosophy over to the threshold of adopting at least the method of the Hegelian philosophy.² With reference to the second problem it may be stated at this stage that even without reading a single line of Flint's one might well suspect him of exhibiting at least some traces of absolute idealism—either the Hegelian version or that of Ferrier, and maybe both. As a leading protagonist in the philosophy of religion of the traditional Scottish way of avoiding all extreme positions, of keeping one's theories tied down to common sense, Flint was faced in his Church with


²The criticisms mentioned may be found on pp.123-126 below.
an opposing view whose influence developed before that of 
Ritschlianism. And it was a view for which Flint had less 
antipathy. For reasons to be discussed later, Ferrier's absol-
ute idealism had a special attraction for Flint. This increased 
all the more the chances that Flint might be lured into a com-
promise with the sophisticated and popular new approach to the 
philosophy of religion being persuasively promulgated by Flint's 
counter-part in Glasgow, the Hegelian divine J. Caird.

It has already been noted that outside theological circles 
Flint is remembered for his pioneering work in the philosophy 
of history. Hence the present thesis will devote a considerable 
amount of space to the investigation of Flint's historical theory. 
Finally, Flint's thought on Dogmatic Theology is of significance, 
for, as Paterson records, Flint "introduced into Dogmatic Theology 
a more scientific method than had been employed by his pre-
decessors."¹ In sum, the present thesis is interested in Flint 
the philosopher, the philosophical theologian, the philosopher 
of history, and the dogmatic theologian.

But, it may be countered, the "philosophical revolution" 
in the last fifty years has completely outmoded, except for 
historical purposes, the contributions to the philosophy of 
religion made by any thinker before that "revolution." The 
dereliction of metaphysics in favour of analysis, of idealism 
in favour of radical empiricism, have rendered irrelevant, it 
may be alleged, any philosophy of religion "associated with 
Idealist attempts to present philosophical prolegomena to Theistic

¹W. P. Paterson, Outline of the History of Dogmatic Theology
p.19.
theology. Such complaints may at least be partially rebutted by the observation that they themselves are beginning to go out of fashion. As Owen C. Thomas asserts by way of justification of his own examination of William Temple's philosophy of religion published a few months ago, "there are signs of a revival of concern with metaphysics and the constructive function of philosophy to-day and in particular with the problems raised for philosophy by various types of religious statement." Thomas continues by pointing out that "as this concern develops philosophy must inevitably come to deal again with the problems of the relation of fact and value, of mind and reality, and others." If Thomas be right, then Flint's endeavours at building a theistic idealistic metaphysic upon the foundation laid by the realistic epistemology of the Scottish Philosophy are at least still entitled to a fair hearing.

1 For the bibliographical data on this reference, see above, p. 6 footnote.

II. The schools of thought determinant of Flint's intellectual milieu

A. The orthodox nineteenth century method of science:

Flint's conception of its proper use and the dangers arising from its misuse by the empiricists, positivists, and naturalistic evolutionists

While at university preparing to be a minister in the Church of Scotland, Flint received from his two favourite teachers two life-long convictions which were of crucial importance for his thought. Under the tutelage of the famous scientist Sir William Thomson (later Lord Kelvin) Flint became imbued with a profound respect for the orthodox nineteenth-century scientific method.¹ This respect was enhanced by the Scottish Philosophy given Flint in copious amounts by his other favourite, T. T. Jackson, who was the nephew and at one time the secretary of Dugald Stewart.²

The equal tenacity with which Flint grasped the Scottish Philosophy and the scientific method taught him is not surprising. The scientific method was an integral part of the Scottish Philosophy right from the beginning. Reid intended to

¹In his second last volume, Philosophy as Scientia Scientiarum (Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood and Sons; 1904), which embodied the fulfilment of a dream his first paper (on the "Relations of the Sciences") in university had given him, Flint, apparently in the sole reference he made in print to his professors, announces that "his dealing with such a subject at all he attributes to the inspiration of the greatest of his teachers, the Professor William Thomson of the time, the Lord Kelvin of today and of all time." (v).

²For the verification of and expansion upon the statement concerning Jackson, see below, pp.184-186.
break through the wall of epistemological scepticism as to knowledge of a real, independently existing self and world by using the method set forth by Bacon and used so admirably by Newton.\(^1\) Of course in Flint's half of the nineteenth century Bacon's method had widely taken the form of Mill's five "Methods."\(^2\) And Flint seems to have been aware of the advances in scientific method being proposed in his century.\(^3\) But the scientific method

\(^1\) According to Reid, "Lord Bacon first delineated the only solid foundation on which natural philosophy can be built; and Sir Isaac Newton reduced the principles laid down by Bacon into three or four axioms, which he calls regularae philosophandae. From these, together with the phenomena observed by the senses, which he likewise lays down as first principles, he deduces, by strict reasoning, the propositions contained in the third book of his 'Principia,' and in his 'Optics'; and by this means has raised a fabric in these two branches of natural philosophy, which is not liable to be shaken by doubtful disputation, but stands immovable upon the basis of self-evident principles." Reid goes on to affirm, that, "if in other branches of philosophy the first principles were laid down, as has been done in mathematics and natural philosophy," then the factual and the fanciful conclusions reached in philosophical reason could be easily separated. (Thomas Reid, Works, ed. Hamilton 7th ed.; Edinburgh: Maclachlan and Stewart; 1872, I; 436-437.) Cf. J. Hutchison Stirling, Philosophy and Theology (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark; 1890), pp. 56-57.


\(^3\) In a footnote to a sermon included in his first publication, Flint laments that Hamilton's revolutions in logical science threaten to abolish the teaching of method in the universities. A better replacement of the old-fashioned but practical logic of Descartes is that of scientific method, explains Flint. If the discoveries of Comte, Mill, Herschel, and Whewell were applied to the physical sciences in the universities, Flint feels certain that this would eventually lead to "the establishment of a scientific doctrine of method for the theological sciences, where, unfortunately, there are no conscientious labours to start from. Such a doctrine is one of the great wants of our age." (Christ's Kingdom Upon Earth /Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood and Sons; 1865, pp. 331-332.)
actually used by Flint was that used by Reid, namely, the simple method of observation, and its extension in experiment and inductive inference.¹ It is the method of allowing the facts to speak for themselves rather than forcing theories on them² as, for example, Reid accused Locke of doing with his theory of ideas.³ It will be seen later, however, that this is not the whole story.

In trying to make theological method scientific Flint advocates the complementation and supplementation of the deductive method by the speculative method. He regards this move as strictly in line with the fact that all scientific method proceeds by means of hypotheses. But it may be doubted already whether Reid would approve. The main thing now is to realise that Flint always regarded his scientific method and his Common Sense Philosophy as being in harmony with each other and with every other element of his thought.

¹F. W. Westaway’s Scientific Method, Its Philosophical Basis and Its Modes of Application (3rd ed.; London: Blackie and Sons; 1924) contains a thorough comparison of the views held by Bacon, Whewell, Mill, Herschel, Jevons and the other methodologists writing before or during Flint’s life-time. Flint remained unaffected by the experimentalism, pragmatism, and instrumentalism which became associated with the scientific method around or soon after the turn of the last century.

²According to Flint, "all the ultimate objects of knowledge, --matter, mind, and Deity,--are known by us in the same way. It is not by attempting to gaze directly into their ultimate natures or spinning logical cobwebs round our conceptions of them, but by laying our minds open to receive aright the impressions and lessons which the facts themselves can alone convey to us, that we come to know them." (Agnosticism, p.405.) Cf. his discussion of the scientific method in theology in his article on "Theology" in the Encyclopaedia Britannica (9th ed., XXIII, esp. 265-267.)

³See below, pp. 26-28. Reid does think hypotheses should be used in suggesting experiments and guiding inquiries. (Works, ed. Hamilton, I, 251.)
The stark fact must now be brought up that during Flint's ten years at university and on through the rest of his life—from the late 1840's on beyond the turn of the century—more and more of his compatriots were learning how to be "scientific" without grounding their method in the philosophy of Common Sense and the theism espoused by the Scottish Church. Instead, they were taught to describe the mind and its functions in a purely mechanical fashion; truth received an empirical definition. The syllogism, causal prediction, and mathematical reasoning were said to have reference only to non-entities. But since these are the moving parts in the machinery of Flint's whole system, he never knew what it was like to not draw and return the heavy fire emanating from the camp of the empiricists and positivists.

The empiricists most directly confronting the position taken by Flint were James Mill's son, John Stuart Mill, and the influential Aberdonian professor of Logic, Alexander Bain. They reissued James Mill's *Analysis of the Human Mind* in 1869 with critical annotations, but the text was not appreciably altered. J. S. Mill had enormous influence on the political and moral issues of the day. David Masson, an important historian of philosophy in the mid-nineteenth century, could say, "It is Mill that our young thinkers at the Universities, our young legislators in Parliament, our young critics in Journals, and our young shepherds on the mountains, consult, and quote, and swear by."

Mill's calling in life was to banish any and all forms of

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a priori thinking. Common Sense and German metaphysical thought were the two current manifestations of it. So when both were being amalgamated in the system of the most revered academic philosopher of his time—Hamilton—he set out, and was regarded by very many to have succeeded, to silence this philosopher. The resultant Examination of Sir William Hamilton’s Philosophy (1865) was widely acclaimed the triumphant conclusion of empiricism’s long struggle against intuitionist philosophy.

Later during Mill’s lifetime the Positive Philosophy of the Frenchman, Auguste Comte, was making itself felt amongst empirical philosophical circles in Britain. Comte applied the empiricistic scientific method to all those areas of knowledge remaining after he had chopped away the theological and metaphysical. Evidently in Flint’s opinion Comte’s Positivism in general, and his sociological views in particular, were unusually insidious. Flint spends forty pages in his Philosophy of History heaping scorn upon Comte’s views—an attitude rarely taken by Flint against anyone. H. T. Buckle, his followers W. E. H. Lecky and Leslie Stephen, and G. H. Lewes, all leading protagonists of Comtian positivism in Britain, were also frequently criticized by Flint.

Another leader of empiricism during its heyday before the influx of German thought was Alexander Bain. He too came in for specific rebuttals by Flint, and Bain’s spectre can be felt hovering over much else of Flint’s writings. Bain was the one

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great empiricist holding a chair in a Scottish university. He was in Aberdeen at the same time as the last of the regular Scottish Common Sense philosophers to hold a philosophy Chair, Fraser, was at Edinburgh, and the first adherent of the rising new philosophy of idealism, E. Caird, was in Glasgow. Bain's interest was in psychology. He brought the associationist views of James Mill up-to-date. Evolutionism and voluntarism can be seen in an incipient form in his books.\(^1\) He avowed no brief for materialism, but his explanation of psychology on physiological grounds, while the result of a sincere desire for scientific accuracy, left little room for anything but materialism. His passion for the scientific method and his interest in psychology, which were also driving interests of Flint's, made Bain's influence, emanating from a Scottish university, that in relation to which Flint had to carefully but strongly define his own views. Flint claimed to be fully scientific in his own method and to be propounding a system based on psychology. It was therefore important for him to counter Bain's conclusions as deftly as possible.

The final important empiricist with whom Flint does battle, Herbert Spencer, was also the leading representative of the natural evolutionists. Spencer authoured a mammoth *System of Philosophy* in which he took an empirical theory of knowledge.\(^2\) But he did make a curious concession to the Hamiltonians on the


point of necessary principles of thought.\(^1\)

Spencer's naturalistic evolutionism had no little influence in the British philosophical scene during the final third of the last century. Spencer himself, though an agnostic, gradually became more vocal in his opposition to Christianity.\(^2\) So anyone defending Christian Theism, such as Flint, had to define his own position on the evolutionism promulgated by Spencer and similarly minded evolutionists, such as T. H. Huxley, John Tyndall, and W. K. Clifford.

The universe, including mental phenomena, is to be explained by the laws of matter, force, and movement, concluded Spencer. But he refused to go all the way into Materialism by inserting Hamilton's and Mansel's Unknowable into his system. The positing of the existence of an Absolute is rationally required by virtue of the finite limitation of human knowledge, but nothing more can be said about the Absolute.\(^3\) This insertion of an Unknowable

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\(^1\)Spencer admitted the existence of certain principles of thought, but would not go so far as to grant their existence prior to experience. Instead, he believed them to be a neurological inheritance accumulated by the successive generations of mankind. Spencer, First Principles, pp.537-539.

\(^2\)Benn cites an article Spencer contributed to the periodical Nineteenth Century, January 1884, in which an intelligent Cause of the universe is, according to Benn, irrefutably denied on strictly "psychological data," thereby circumventing the "usually dishonest charge of materialism and evolutionism." A. W. Benn, The History of English Rationalism in the Nineteenth Century (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1905), II, 443. (In spite of its biased viewpoint, Benn's large two-volumed work is a valuable source of information.)

\(^3\)Inconsistently, he taught that the Unknown was Force—the correlate of known force. Cf. Spencer, First Principles, pp.166-170. (James Seth calls Spencer's inconsistent metaphysical additive a "transfigured realism." James Seth, English Philosophers and Schools of Philosophy (London: J. M. Dent and Sons, Ltd., 1912), p.287.)
into his system made Spencer's view doubly odious to Flint, the born fighter against any kind of unknowable Reality.

All of these men, whether empiricists, positivists, or naturalistic evolutionists, represented positions which presented themselves to the British public as the true interpretations of the assured results of modern natural science. During Flint's life-time the method of the physical sciences was being widely acclaimed as mankind's long-sought panacea. If the conclusions of the various special sciences could be combined into an overall science, the answers to all of men's questions could be solved. If anyone doubted the reasoning behind such a scheme he had only to look at the amazing progress scientific knowledge had made in the previous fifty years.¹

The fortunes of Christian Theism were in great jeopardy. The young intellectuals were being provided with no viable alternative to naturalism by the Church. The Church either capitulated in a manner that lost it more respect than it gained, or else turned its back on keeping pace with contemporary thought altogether. This statement must, admittedly, be qualified. There were valiant and not wholly ineffective defences of Christian Theism, but these can hardly be said to have stemmed the tide. The bulk of the university students were forsaking the traditional religious beliefs even though these beliefs had

¹For a concise yet comprehensive survey of the significant advances made in scientific knowledge and the naturalistic philosophies to which they gave rise from the end of the eighteenth century to the middle of the nineteenth century, see, Meyrick H. Carré, Phases of Thought in England (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1949), pp.343-353.
been rather inarticulately held by a majority of the parents of these students. The best of the Church's efforts were often of no avail. Even churchmen who were fully qualified philosophers or scientists were not able to present their case convincingly. Earnest thinkers were examining Theism's best apologetics and then finding themselves driven to the position where they had to say with G. J. Romanes at the conclusion of his *Candid Examination of Theism*: "The result of this analysis has been to show that...it equally becomes my obvious duty to stifle all belief of the kind which I conceive to be the noblest, and to discipline my intellect with regard to this matter into an attitude of the purest scepticism..."¹

The naturalists had two great doctrines: the law of the conservation of energy and matter, and the theory of the descent of species by natural selection. These two doctrines were supported by the traditional empiricistic theory of knowledge; namely, the theory that the observation of and experimentation with phenomena was the sole means of knowledge. The knowledge yielded could be mathematically calculated and would reveal a

mechanistically determined natural order, it was confidently asserted.

Flint's procedure was to adopt as much of these doctrines and theories as he could in order to be as "scientific" as possible, but at the same time he clearly rejected any and all of the materialistic implications. If there could be a scientific materialism there could also be a scientific Christian Theism, he felt. The specific answers he opposed to the leaders of atheism mentioned above were logically trenchant and decorous. These answers were not, however, especially noteworthy in themselves. They were the standard answers exceptionally well organized and presented. The issues demanding these answers have largely faded into the past, so have the answers. The significance of Flint's thought for the contemporary conflict between atheism and theism lies in the philosophical position underlying Flint's apologetical system. Did he have a foundation for re-interpreting many of the "scientific facts" purportedly demanding a naturalistic interpretation? What was the epistemological and metaphysical position from which Flint dared to withstand the giants of phenomenalism, empiricism, naturalistic evolutionism, and positivism? Attention will now be turned to the system which Flint hoped would provide the philosophical foundation for his answers to these questions.
B. The Scottish School of Common Sense Realism: a critical survey

Scottish Philosophy is given a tripartite characterisation by its most effective missionary, James McCosh, who did much to transplant and nourish his native country's national philosophy into a fairly dominating position in the New World.¹ First, McCosh describes Scottish Philosophy as being the innovator of a truly inductive method and of using it systematically in making psychological observations. Secondly, he is persuaded that Scottish Philosophy was the first to take from its observations of self-consciousness all its formative laws. He intentionally bypasses Descartes and Locke in making this claim. Thirdly, he avers, "all who are truly of the Scottish School agree in maintaining that there are laws, principles, or powers in mind anterior to any reflex observation of them and acting independently of the philosophers' classification of them." The great Scottish philosophers have always agreed with empiricism and sensationalism on the essential role experience has in constructing a science of mind, but the Scots go further by intractably maintaining that "we can discover principles which are not the product of observation and experience, and which are in the very constitution of the mind, and have there the sanction of the Author of our nature." The Scottish thinkers differ from the "a priori" systems to the extent that only those principles or laws found resident in self-consciousness are granted dictatorial powers in philosophic speculation.²

¹Rudolf Metz, A Hundred Years of British Philosophy, p.41.
The school of philosophy thus delineated has the additional identifying mark of its propounders' all being Scots by birth. ¹
It is frequently denominated Common Sense Realism or the Scottish Philosophy of Common Sense. ²

1. Reid

It was founded by Thomas Reid who, in 1764, published his Inquiry into the Human Mind on the Principles of Common Sense in which he advanced a reply to Hume's scepticism ³ remarkably similar, in many respects, to that given by Kant in his Critique of Pure Reason but almost two decades earlier. Yet Reid's labors are dwarfed by Kant's in the various and sundry histories of philosophy that have rolled off the presses since that time. The reasons for this are many, some valid, some not. William Hamilton, the similarly persuaded compiler and editor of Reid's Works puts his finger on one of the primary reasons for the neglect suffered by Reid. The unfortunate nomenclature chosen by Reid, says Hamilton, gave itself to easy misinterpretation. For instance, the name "Common Sense" did not mean for Reid what it

¹T. E. Jessop in his Bibliography of David Hume and of the Scottish Philosophy (pp.75-76) enumerates seventy-nine Scottish Philosophers. He notes that almost half of them were ministers of religion. (vii).


³Reid's harsh judgment of Hume's Treatise of Human Nature has subsequently been questioned, as by N. Kemp Smith in his work on The Philosophy of David Hume (London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd; 1941). But the point which needs to be made here and now is not that Reid should not have so overdrawn the extent of Hume's scepticism, rather that Reid did in fact so regard Hume. Kemp Smith makes this latter point just as clearly as the former. (pp.3-7). Moreover, that Flint followed Reid's analysis of Hume can quickly be discovered by comparing Flint's Agnosticism pp.136-155 with Reid's Works, ed. Hamilton p.103.
seemingly should mean *prima facie*; that is, the opinions prof¬fered by the man in the street. Kant himself is quoted by Hamilton as saying in his *Prolegomena to any Future Metaphysics* that the "common sense" of Reid and his followers was simply "good sense, sound understanding," and so forth. It is not to be supposed, however, that Kant was misled by the name of Reid's philosophy; rather, the thrust of Reid's theories was interpreted by Kant to admirably suit the name "Common Sense" when taken to mean "good sense." In other words, the name given to Reid's philosophy did not serve to make Kant think again before settling on his mistaken interpretation of Reid.

Hamilton, in turn, the great culminator yet dissolutioner of the Scottish School purposed a scientific or "critical" recon¬struction of the Common Sense methodology. He felt that Reid's view on common sense "is only an appeal from the heretical conclu¬sions of particular philosophers to the catholic principles of all philosophy."^3

But to return to Reid, it may next be remarked that he sounds quite Kantian when he postulates existence of certain pro¬positions necessarily believed the minute they are understood. "The judgment follows the apprehension of them necessarily, and

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1William Hamilton, *Reid's Works*, ed. Hamilton, p.753. The present writer has been unable to locate the passage referred to by Hamilton. It is certainly not in the preface to Kant's *Prolegomena* as alleged by Hamilton.


both are equally the work of nature, and the result of our original powers." He refers to them as "first principles, principles of common sense, common notions, self-evident truths." The resemblance of these to Kant's synthetic a priori judgments is obvious.

But before getting any further ahead of the story, it is time to briefly notice the position taken by Hume which provoked Reid's (and Kant's) polemic. Berkeley had eliminated Locke's material substance. Hume completed the other half of the circuit by eliminating Locke's spiritual substance. Using the term "perception" for Locke's and Berkeley's "idea," Hume maintained that the existence of succeeding perceptions is all the knower has warrant to assume. "We have no idea of eternal substance, distinct from the ideas of particular qualities. This must pave the way for a like principle with regard to the mind, that we have no notion of it, distinct from the particular perceptions."  

Along with the elimination of substance of both kinds went any and all supposed relations, for instance, the causal relation, between these substances. Hume's theory was founded on the assumption that relationless units of perception were the sole constituents of experience, and therefore of knowledge. This meant that "every effect is a distinct event from its cause. It could not, therefore, be discovered in the cause.... There is

1 Reid, Works, ed. Hamilton, I, 434.

nothing in any object, considered in itself, which can afford us a reason for drawing a conclusion beyond it.\(^1\) His explanation of the idea of causal relation is that "after a repetition of similar instances, the mind is carried by habit, upon the appearance on one event, to expect its usual attendant," thereby forming "the idea of power or necessary connection."\(^2\)

The known existence of self is summarily annihilated when he applies his analysis of the like-fated relation of identity in objects. Identity is a concept derived by the mental inertia set up by a series of similar perceptions. The mind tends to regard such a series of perceptions as being all one object.\(^3\) The imagination furnishes the mind with this notion. But, he warns, the imagination should not be allowed to deceive the perceiver so! Each perception is distinct, and should be recognised as such. They "have no need of anything else to support their existence."\(^4\) It takes Hume only fifteen pages to arrive at the logical, yet always startling, conclusion that the perceptions having the self as their object also need no self or mind for their support. Each particular perception is capable of


\(^2\)David Hume, *Enquiries Concerning the Human Understanding and Concerning the Principles of Morals*, ed. L. A. Selby-Bigge (2nd ed.; Oxford: at the Clarendon Press, 1902), p. 75. It is interesting to observe that even Hume can be found inconsistently allowing some—four—"relations of ideas" entrance through the back door; namely, "resemblance, contrariety, degrees in quality, and proportions in quantity or number." The justification offered is that these four of the "seven philosophical relations" are intuitively perceived. The three that are not so known are "identity, the situations in time and place, and causation." Hume, *Enquiries*, pp. 372-375.


existing by itself. In fact, all we perceive of the self is just one impression of pain, pleasure, passion, and so forth, after the other. We receive no impression of a self. How then does he account for the idea of the self? Since impressions of the self do not exist, the idea of the self, too, is nonexistent. It is diagnosed as an illusion of the imagination which believes that "the smooth and uninterrupted progress of the thought along a train of connected ideas "is the indication of a self or mind in which these ideas may subsist.²

It may be wise to make a short pause here in order to mention Kemp Smith's analysis of Hume's motives in the Treatise—motives Smith argues Reid failed to comprehend. Smith thinks that Hume intended to demonstrate that Locke's principles were insufficient to account for all the beliefs of common sense. But instead of throwing over the theory of ideas Hume devised a supplementation for them, namely, the theory of "natural belief." Reason is not to be so implicitly trusted as those epistemologists following in the wake of Descartes have been in the habit of doing, decides Hume. "Ideas" are not a satisfactory foundation for belief. As Smith sees it, Hume desires to demonstrate

"the doctrine that the determining influence in human, as in other forms of animal life, is feeling, not reason or understanding, i.e. not evidence whether a priori or empirical, and therefore also not ideas—at least not 'ideas' as hitherto understood. 'Passion' is Hume's most general title for the instincts, propensities, feelings, emotions and sentiments, as well as for the passions so called; and belief, he teaches, is a passion."³

Reid rejected the old view that unrefereed perceptions were the building-blocks of knowledge. Instead, he taught that said building-blocks were judgments which referred sensations to the perceiver as related to an object and as relating that object to the subject (the perceiver). "It is not by first having the notions of mind and sensation, and then comparing them together, that we perceive the one to have the relation of a subject or substratum, and the other that of an act or operation; on the contrary, one of the related things—to wit, sensation—suggests to us both the correlate and the relation."

By the term "suggest" Reid means an heretofore unnoticed "power of the mind...to which we owe many of our simple notions which are neither impressions nor ideas [in the Lockian and Humean sense] as well as many original principles of belief." These "original principles" are not innate but are the result of "experience and habit." Such "natural suggestions" of sensation are "the notion of present existence," "the belief that what we perceive or feel does now exist." Memory's "natural suggestions" are the "notion of past existence and belief that what we remember did exist in time past." The "natural suggestions" that sensations and thoughts as a whole give are "the notion of a mind, and the belief of its existence, and of its relation to our thoughts." Reid also calls these notions "natural principles" and includes under this denomination the notions of cause, extension, solidity, and motion, "which are no [sic] nowise like to sensations, although they have been hitherto confounded with

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1Reid, Works, ed. Hamilton, I, 111.
them."

We do not, and indeed can not, explain the why and wherefore of these natural principles for they are just that, natural principles, thus are presupposed in all cognition. We can ask for no more than the assurance that they are "immediately inspired by our constitution." According to Reid:

Such original and natural judgments are a part of that furniture which Nature hath given to the human understanding. They serve to direct us in the common affairs of life, where our reasoning faculty would leave us in the dark. They are a part of our constitution; and all the discoveries of our reason are grounded upon them. They make up what is called 'the common sense of mankind.'

Continuing toward the goal of immediate perception, Reid informs his readers that usually the mind finds the sensation itself so boring that it turns its attention from the sensation to the underlying reality manifested by the sensation. "Our constitution leads us to consider it as a sign of something external which hath a constant conjunction with it."2

The scene is set for the real inherence of primary qualities in objects, and even more, of our knowledge of these qualities. After discussing how each of the senses gives rise to the notions of the various qualities (that is, that sensations occasion the knowledge of qualities), primary qualities are, he concludes, "neither ideas of sensation nor reflection" but really exist in the object perceived independent of the perceiver. Thus, by positing the independent existence of qualities in objects he has embraced the theory of the immediate perception of reality,

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1Reid, _Works_, ed. Hamilton, I, 110-111.

2Reid, _Works_, ed. Hamilton, I, 114. Cf. pp.120, 124, and 187. Most discussions of Reid point to this theory of sensations as
thereby relieving himself of the continual struggle with scepticism which embroiled the sensational idealists because of their doctrine of representative perception. He triumphantly announces that his discovery of the knowledge of real qualities "overturns the whole ideal system, by which the material world had been tried and condemned."¹

To summarise Reid's contribution to the science of knowing two points should be registered. First, he repealed Berkeley's and Hume's obliteration of the traditional common sense distinction of the primary qualities from the secondary. Second, he unequivocally demanded that judgment be counted the unit of knowledge. "Every operation of the senses, in its very nature, implies judgment or belief, as well as simple apprehension."² The formulation and importance Kant gave to these two doctrines in his own system is obviously strikingly similar to that of Reid's.

natural signs "suggesting" external objects as an unconscious borrowing from Berkeley—a borrowing which brings with it the attendant subjectivism. "It is hard to understand how Reid could have failed to see when he borrowed so much from Berkeley for his doctrine of natural signs, that even if things were perceived only through the ideas of them, or were themselves only collections of ideas, all the fallacies of the senses with which he has been dealing would be possible, ideas signifying ideas." ³

S. A. Grave, The Scottish Philosophy of Common Sense, p.188.


¹Reid, Works, ed. Hamilton, I, 128.

²Reid, Works, ed. Hamilton, I, 209.
The most significant difference between Reid's and Kant's treatment of the first principles of thought was that Kant made them the bulwark of his whole system by denying the possibility of thought without them; whereas Reid simply observed that these principles were commonly accepted by all men; to justify their acceptance by all men did not seem to enter Reid's mind. This statement does, in all fairness to Reid, need some qualification. He can be found to link or substantiate the common sense acceptance of these principles with the "structure and grammar of all languages." He writes, "There are certain common opinions of mankind, upon which the structure and grammar of all languages are founded." But this is hardly a proof of these principles in the Kantian fashion. Kant's "transcendental deduction," the core of his system, has no parallel in Reid.²

Flint found Kantian phenomenalism totally objectionable. But in his acceptance of Common Sense Realism he seems to have realised that Reid's case for the rationality and necessity of relations between objects in the cosmos is rather unsophisticated, not to say truncated. In later chapters it will emerge how he supplemented and complemented Reid on this score. The question of the compatibility of Flint's additions to Reid will also come up for discussion.


2. Hamilton

During Flint's student-years at university Sir William Hamilton was the acknowledged leader of the Scottish Philosophy and the most dominant figure on the Scottish intellectual scene. It was incumbent upon Flint, therefore, to face up to Hamilton's interpretation of Reid. Coming to a decision on Hamilton's views was doubly important for a young mid-nineteenth century divine since the former was claiming Reid's authority or his own denial of the possibility of a rational knowledge of God. It will be seen later how Flint endeavoured to incorporate Hamilton's alleged advances on Reid while simultaneously repudiating Hamilton's theistic agnosticism. For the present, a brief glance at Hamilton's position is in order.

He rejected Reid's substitution of a theory of suggestion for the theory of representative perception. Instead, he tried to replace both theories with a complicated theory which in essence meant that consciousness "declared" external existence as a judgment. According to Hamilton, experience can be studied in two ways. One way is to observe the facts of experience. The critical way is to investigate the implicates of experience. This second way discovers certain "declarations" or "deliverances" of our consciousness which are ultimate truths of consciousness as far as the nature and validity of knowledge is concerned. They, rather than our ideas in their factual existence as items of experience, are the means by which any existence beyond our ideas themselves can be inferred. The inference meant is of an indirect kind; but until the referent of our ideas is proven
erroneous we may safely continue assuming their ostensible validity. 1

In his denial of the direct knowledge of external existence and his assertion of the stronger certainty of the existence of our ideas Hamilton was a regression from Reid. He did go along with Reid far enough to be able to not preclude, and indeed to suppose, the existence of objects other than ideas.

Hamilton's advance on Reid was his more definite proposal that subject and object are different but yet known only in relation or correlation to each other. 2 He clearly set forth the view that the facts of consciousness depend on both the prior existence of the external objects of knowledge and the truths and principles of the mind which are necessary for experience. These latter, the principles of identity, causality, and so forth, are "immediately inspired by our constitution." 3 Experience, as with Reid, is the result of the contributions of two completely different existences: mind and matter.

Nevertheless, Hamilton's more articularly presented doctrine is also more sceptical. Reid knows primary qualities and their perceptions directly; it was the secondary qualities of which he believes "our senses give us only a relative and obscure notion. 4 Hamilton, who tried to combine Kant and Reid, had a peculiar "both...and" theory which can be reduced to the view that

4Reid, Works, ed. Hamilton, I, 313.
neither primary nor secondary qualities can be known directly; that is, the substantial or actual nature of neither mind or matter can be apprehended. "Mind and matter, as known and knowable, are only two different series of phenomena or qualities; mind and matter, as unknown and unknowable, are the two substances in which these two different series of phenomena or qualities are supposed to inhere."¹

3. Ferrier

There was another philosopher in Scotland during these years (1840's-1860's), to whom Flint felt obliged to pay especial attention. This was his predecessor in the Moral Philosophy Chair at St. Andrews, J. F. Ferrier. A close friend of Hamilton's, Ferrier had been groomed as Hamilton's successor until he (Ferrier) began to attack the school of Reid. However, as Davie indicates, Ferrier was the harbinger of a movement which had caught the imagination of an increasing number of influential people in Scotland who were tiring of the traditional philosophy of Scotland and were seeking a more sophisticated one.² If Flint were to be "in step with the times," he would thus have to reveal a certain amount of favourable awareness of Ferrier's ideas. The way Flint did this is rather unusual, as will be noticed later. For now, it is needful that Ferrier's be briefly scrutinised.

Ferrier regarded his position as being "Scottish to the

¹Hamilton, Lectures on Metaphysics, I, 132.
very core."¹ Metz construes Ferrier to mean that his philosophy was "a native product." According to Metz, Ferrier was the first Scot to desert the Scottish School.² Ferrier's own stated "purpose" in philosophy is disclosed in his "definition of metaphysics: Metaphysics is the substitution of true ideas—that is, of necessary truths of reason—in the place of the over-sights of popular opinion and the errors of psychological science."³ Grave, the latest representative of the usual view taken on this matter, asserts that it was Ferrier "with whom the impulse given by Reid to the development of Scottish philosophy exhausted itself." Grave thinks Ferrier profited by the errors of Reid and Hamilton and developed a supposedly native Scottish version of absolute idealism which can better be described as an Hegelianisation of Hamilton.⁴ Davie concludes that Ferrier really remained more loyal to the tradition of Reid than usually supposed. For example, with reference to Ferrier's analysis of the issue between Hume, who denied an experiential justification for the distinction between the act and the object of sense, and Reid, who took the opposite view, Davie concludes that although Ferrier imagines to side with Hume, there is "instead a sort of profound latent affinity between Ferrier and Reid." Similarly, with

¹James Frederick Ferrier, Lectures on Greek Philosophy and other Philosophical Remains, eds. Sir Alexander Grant and E.L. Lushington (Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood and Sons; 1866), I, 487.

²Metz, A Hundred Years of British Philosophy, p.247.

³J. F. Ferrier, Institutes of Metaphysic (Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood and Sons; 1854), p.34.

⁴Grave, Scottish Philosophy, p.129.
reference to the problem of universals Davie decides that
Ferrier (as opposed to Hamilton) was quite close to upholding
"the orthodox common sense" position. It is of special re-
levence to the present thesis that Davie endeavours to prove
that Ferrier was trying to defend the same common sense beliefs
as Reid and Hamilton.

No matter how Ferrier be construed, the truth remains that
Ferrier was a unique appearance on the British scene. He dis-
claimed the parentage of German idealism and claimed to be pro-
pounding a strictly home-grown philosophy. The interesting fact
is that he single-handedly developed in the midst of Common Sense
Realism and empiricism an absolute idealism with remarkable
sagacity. The novelty of Ferrier's method consisted in be-
ginning with the nature or implications of knowledge instead of
with the origin of knowledge. Being can be discussed only after
the nature of knowledge is known. To decide what may or may
not exist as the conditions or causes of knowledge before know-
ledge itself is defined is foolish, he opines.

The philosopher's most pressing task is to ask the truly
primary question. Confusion results from any other procedure.
Instead of getting "to the end," we should start by going "to the

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3J. H. Muirhead borrows Aristotle's panegyric of Anaxagoras
in describing Ferrier "as a sober man speaking among babblers." Muirhead, The Platonic Tradition in Anglo-Saxon Philosophy
Laurie says much of the neo-Kantianism that swept over Brit-
ain soon after Ferrier's time had been "more simply said in the
Institutes of Ferrier." Henry Laurie, Scottish Philosophy, p.311.
beginning," admonishes Ferrier. The proper start to one's philosophical journeys is to ask, What does it mean for an object to be known? The fundamental query of philosophy is "What is the one feature which is identical, invariable, and essential in all the varieties of our knowledge." The problem of mind versus matter should be discussed only with reference to the knowledge situation. Are mind and matter known separately or always together? If mind and matter are found to be never known separately then there is no justification for positing their existence apart from each other. The question of their existence must be preceded by the question of their knowability in any supposed state. In other words, the problem of knowledge precedes and modifies the problem of being. "It is clear that we cannot declare what is—in other words, cannot get a footing on ontology until we have ascertained what is known—in other words, until we have exhausted all the details of a thorough and systematic epistemology." 

What does he find as the definitive nature of knowledge? The answer: All knowledge has two inseparable features—a subject and an object, or a knowing and a known.5 Remembering that under discussion at present is Ferrier's methodology with

1 Ferrier, Institutes, Introduction, paragraphs 16-17.
2 Ferrier, Institutes, p.71
4 Ferrier, Institutes, p.46.
5 Ferrier, Institutes, p.75.
reference to his epistemology, it is to be noted that this characteristic of all knowledge—the union of subject and object—can be described as the main condition of knowledge. However, this does not mean that the two elements of the union, that is, the subject and the object of knowledge, are existences giving rise to knowledge. The question of pre-knowledge existence is meaningless, says Ferrier. The only existences we know are those we know, those contained in knowledge. Obviously Ferrier has left Reid and Hamilton behind at this turn. For them the conditions of knowledge were existences determining its origin.

What is the implication of epistemology for a theory of being if Ferrier’s proposition is accepted? First of all, he claims his method yields the negative knowledge that, in his words, nothing, for example, mind and matter, can be “known to exist, just as it is known, independently of its being known.” This also would imply that what is known can never exist apart from whatever else is known. More explicitly stated, subject and object can never exist independently. “The object of knowledge, whatever it may be, is always something more than what is naturally or usually regarded as the object. It always is, and must be, the object with the addition of oneself, —object plus subject, —thing, or thought, magnum. Self is an integral and essential part of every object of cognition.”¹ Positively, Ferrier’s philosophic method yields the assurance that the constitution of knowledge is the constitution of existence or reality.² And if such were not the case our knowledge would be

¹Ferrier, Institutes, p.93.
²See below, p.78.
worthless. Real and absolute existence is thus discovered to be mind and matter inseparable yet distinct; "minds-together-with-that-which-they-apprehend."¹ Having gone this far, Ferrier has no hesitation in going all the way by declaring that since "all absolute existences are contingent except one . . . the one Absolute Existence which is strictly necessary . . . is a supreme, and infinite, and everlasting Mind in synthesis with all things."² Here Ferrier thought metaphysics must cease; "here ontology is merged in Theology."³ All of which was in stark contrast to Hamilton's conclusion that "the last and highest consecration of all true religion, must be an altar—'Αρρενωτης θεός—'To the unknown and unknowable God."⁴ It will be seen that Flint was not unmindful of this difference between Ferrier and Hamilton on the question of knowledge of God.

C. The British school of Idealism

Some doubt arises when the appropriate classification for Ferrier is sought. Of course early in his philosophical career his deviations from Hamilton were not pronounced. Later he professedly developed an absolute idealism in harmony with the real dictates of common sense. One thing is certain, in the end he emphasised idealism as much as Reid and Hamilton did realism,

¹Ferrier, Institutes, p.500.
²Ferrier, Institutes, p.510. Italics are his.
³Ferrier, Institutes, p.513.
and so could rightfully be placed under the present heading as well as under the previous. J. H. Muirhead has written a learned volume for the purpose of exhibiting the continued existence of Platonic idealism in Britain from the time of John Scotus Erigena. Muirhead claims that Ferrier, the pioneer of the revival of idealism in the nineteenth century, was a direct descendent of Berkeley and Plato, owing little or nothing to Kant and Hegel. On the other hand, a standard historian of British philosophy, Rudolf Metz, stoutly affirms that the nineteenth century outbreak of idealism had no connection with the previous British idealism which he alleges summarily terminated with Berkeley's death in 1753. The first reappearance of idealism upon the British scene was Stirling's work on Hegel in 1865, says Metz. Yet, when discussing Ferrier, Metz states that the former sees Berkeley "through German spectacles" and propounded an idealism which "contained much...of the movement which was soon to develop." 

Be that as it may, in ten or twelve years after Stirling's **Secret of Hegel** appeared in 1865 T. H. Green (whom Flint had

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4 The "secret," according to Sorley, was "presumably the relation of Hegel's philosophy to that of Kant." (W. A. Sorley, *A History of English Philosophy* /Cambridge: At the University Press; 1920?, p. 286.) By way of explication, in Stirling's own words, the "secret" of Hegel was that "as Aristotle—with considerable assistance from Plato—made explicit the abstract Universal that was implicit in Socrates, so Hegel—with less considerable assistance from Fichte and Schelling—made explicit the concrete Universal that was implicit in Kant." (J. Hutchison Stirling, *The Secret of Hegel* /London: Longman, Green, Longman, Roberts, and Green, 1865?, I, ci).
defeated in the contest for the Moral Philosophy Chair at St. Andrews), R.L. Nettleship, W. Wallace, Bradley, and Edward Caird had set idealism well underway. By the end of the century it had in its widely varying forms reached the stage of dominance, at least in academic circles. This applies as well to Edinburgh University which for generations had been the citadel of Scottish Common Sense Realism. The beginning of the present century found the Neo-Hegelians in full control—except for Flint.¹

Idealism was eagerly grasped by many theistic apologists as the much needed ultimate weapon in their battle against scepticism and materialism. Even a student of Flint's can be found who later became enamoured of the method used by the idealistic pantheists following upon Kant,² namely, Professor James Lindsay of Glasgow.³ Earlier in Glasgow University, Flint's counter-part, John Caird, was eagerly being heard by large classes of ministerial students ⁴ as he taught the phi-
osophy of religion from the semi-Hegelian standpoint. His brother, Edward Caird, Professor of Moral Philosophy at Glasgow, let it be known in no uncertain terms that the traditional philosophy of Scotland was hopelessly outmoded by the fashionable new philosophy coming up via Oxford and Cambridge from Germany. In the Edinburgh "Gifford Lectures" of 1898-1890 published under the title Philosophy and Theology, J. Hutcheson Stirling decided that Kant's chief objections to the theistic arguments were summed up in the illustration of the dollars. But, says Stirling, this illustration shows clearly that Kant's objections were beside the point, for all that is needed is for us "to think God." Having done that

"we find that we have thought this universe into its source—we find that we have realised to thought, as a necessity of thought, the single necessity of a one eternal, all-enduring principle which is the root, and the basis, and the original of all that is. The Three Proofs are but the single wave in the rise of the soul, through the Trinity of the Universe, up to the unity of God. The very thought of God is of that which is, and cannot not-be."

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1 W. L. Davidson reports that in his Gifford Lectures, Glasgow, 1892-93, 1895-96, J. Caird "denies" the ultimate validity of the distinction between Natural and Revealed Religion, and maintains, at a high philosophical height, that Christianity as a religion with a distinct dogmatic theology, is as much amenable to Reason as any other systematic religion." Caird is able to do this because he "shuns the idea of the personality of God and sets forth Supreme Being as simply 'the principle of unity' in all existence." (Recent Theistic Discussion /Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark; 1921/, pp.186-187.)


3 J. Hutcheson Stirling, Philosophy and Theology, pp.318-319.
Significantly enough, Flint commended Stirling's "Gifford Lectures" for having given the Kantian objections to the main theistic arguments a "very effective refutation."¹ In the same passage where he makes this unusual commendation of Stirling, Flint explicitly denounces three of his (Flint's) contemporaries for their agreement with the Kantian objections to the theistic arguments. The three writers to whom Flint refers were his professional colleagues in Aberdeen: W. L. Davidson² and W. R. Pirie;³ and in St. Andrews: William Knight.⁴

Andrew Seth Pringle-Pattison, Professor of Logic and Metaphysics in St. Andrews (1887-1891) and later in Edinburgh (1891-1919) gave the Aberdeen Gifford Lectures in 1912 and 1913 in which he repudiated

"the way in which the implications of the doctrine of the Incarnation are evaded in popular theology by dividing the functions of Deity between the Father and the Son, conceived practically as two distinct personalities or centres of consciousness, the Father perpetuating the old monarchical ideal and the incarnation of the Son being limited to a single historical individual."⁵

¹Flint, Theism, p.448.
²Theism as Grounded in Human Nature (London: Longmans, Green and Co.; 1893), cf. pp.403-434. Davidson held that "God is a datum...of man's nature, inasmuch as He is the object of a natural want. To this want, man's spiritual system is organic—which means not only that human nature is dependent for its satisfaction on Him, but also that the want itself could not have arisen apart from Him," God becomes then, for Davidson, not simply an "hypothesis" but "a rational certainty," God's existence "is the necessary presupposition of the case." pp.200-201.
³Natural Theology (Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood and Sons; 1867), cf. pp.69-78 where Pirie argues for the same view as Davidson.
⁴Aspects of Theism (London: Macmillan and Co.; 1893), cf. pp.52-76. Knight argues for a "theistic intuition" which "announces the existence of a transcendent being, whom it
He felt that

"for a metaphysic which has emancipated itself from physical categories, the ultimate conception of God is not that of a pre-existent Creator but, as it is for religion, that of the eternal Redeemer of the World. This perpetual process is the very life of God, in which, besides the effort and the pain, He tastes, we must believe, the joy of victory won."1

Flint always had a certain sympathy with Ferrier's proposals and he tried to accommodate his utterances as much as possible to the Idealist approach; so much so, that he incurred the charge of irresolutely failing to go all the way. The validity of this charge will be ascertained later.

Enough has been said to give an idea of the philosophical influences determining Flint's intellectual milieu. With respect to the strictly theological schools of thought affecting Flint's work as a Scottish Professor of Divinity, it has been found expedient to reserve mention of them until such time as they will individually be touched upon in the course of the ensuing discussion. It is now time to substantiate the claims so far made about Flint by a critical exposition of the views he actually held.


CHAPTER II

THE NATURE AND POSSIBILITY OF KNOWLEDGE

Introduction

The dominant theme and burden of Professor Flint's thought is that mankind is capable of attaining a real and adequate knowledge of the self, the world, and God. The previous chapter has recalled the fact that in Flint's day, as in the present day, there were thinkers who rejected metaphysical doctrines, including religious and theological doctrines, on the grounds that positive or physical science was incapable of dealing with such doctrines. Flint incessantly points out that man's spiritual nature provides other avenues for the pursuit of knowledge besides those of the physical senses. "To confine either knowledge or science within such limits as 'sense-perception,' 'mental picturing,' or 'experimental verification,' admits of no rational justification."¹ "Wherever thought is, even although it be thought about objects of sense, there is something, and even much, which is real, and yet not physical but metaphysical," he asserts.²

¹Flint, Agnosticism, p.341.
²Flint, Agnosticism, p.69.
Nevertheless, Flint does not wish in any way to reduce the significance of experience. He is convinced that the attempts made by such rationalists as Spinoza, Fichte, and Schelling to formulate an epistemology prior to experience comprise obvious evidence for the view that philosophy must "reduce its epistemology, reflectively and critically, from a study of the operations of the laws of thought and of the evidence for all kinds of knowledge; or, in other words, from all the truth attained by humanity through all the means of discovery at its disposal."¹

Flint, then, feels that ordinary knowledge and the physical sciences, which are simply specialised forms of ordinary knowledge dealing with a restricted area, must be presupposed by philosophy as it begins by setting up a theory of knowledge and not vice versa. Rightly or wrongly, he thinks the positive sciences presuppose no theory of knowledge. He hastens to draw the obvious implication that by presupposing no theory of knowledge the positive sciences are not in a position to exclude other possible sources of knowledge. The judging of pretenders to the court of knowledge is the task of philosophy, not positive science. Philosophy must not, however, be content to simply collect and pronounce on the insights into the true nature of reality as these insights are from time to time provided by the various sciences, he cautions, if it wishes to avoid producing a strictly ratiocinative epistemology.² Philosophy's first task must be the ascertainment "of the limits of knowledge inherent in the very constitution and laws of the human intellect."³

¹Flint, Agnosticism, p.343.
²Flint, Philosophy as Scientia Scientiarum, pp.57-63.
³Flint, Agnosticism, p.12.
I. The Nature of Knowledge

Flint maintained that the nature of knowledge is determined by the object of knowledge. As the nature of the various objects of knowledge differ so the nature of knowledge differs.\(^1\) He defines knowledge thus: "Knowledge is always the holding for true what is true; and the true is that which is the expression of external or internal, physical or spiritual, reality, and which is valid, not for one mind only, but for all the same minds."\(^2\)

The form which it will gradually be seen that Flint's epistemology took can be indicated at the outset by recalling that he considered Kant to have "conclusively shown that all our knowledge is a synthesis of contingent impressions and necessary conditions."\(^3\) Fortunately, the agnostic corollaries Kant had assigned to his view of knowledge were inconsistent, and can be easily discarded, said Flint. Although the meaning Kant's definition of knowledge had for Flint will be progressively unfolded, it may here be quickly noted that the "necessary conditions" were regarded by Flint as making sense, understanding, and reason possible; as giving the experienced world intelligibility; and as implying that every object, whether mental or material, evinces, to some degree, these "necessary conditions."

According to Flint, knowledge exists in various levels or phases, each of which must be understood in relation to the others. Animal knowledge is the lowest level or phase. Animal

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\(^1\) Flint, *Agnosticism*, p. 598.


\(^3\) Flint, *Agnosticism*, p. 645.
sensation, cognition, and volition is continuous in nature with that of humans. Unless we are only able to be aware of our own states of consciousness then it is just as possible to be aware of the states of animal consciousness as of the same in other men or in God.

The second level or phase of knowledge is human knowledge. It can be divided into three stages or kinds, namely, "ordinary, scientific, and philosophic knowledge." Ordinary knowledge is possessed by both animals and men. Scientific knowledge is distinguished from ordinary knowledge by its greater "precision and exactness." Philosophical knowledge has "more comprehensiveness and profundity."¹

Ordinary knowledge is not to be despised, however. It is the foundation and source for scientific knowledge. The latter, not content with the perception that something exists, attempts to learn the why and how of it. Each science is pre-limited by the nature of its subject of inquiry. Although sciences begin by being refined forms of ordinary knowledge they often evolve from within with the result that whole new possibilities of knowledge are revealed, affirms Flint.²

¹Flint, Philosophy as Scientia Scientiarum, p. 52.

²Every philosopher influenced by Scottish Common Sense Realism expressly regarded ordinary or common knowledge as the source and foundation of higher forms of thought. The intending critic of this school must be careful to avoid the frequently made error of construing "Common Sense" as being the common denominator of the opinions held by the masses "in the street." A technical meaning was always given to this phrase. However, this meaning was not always uniform even within the thought of one man. Jones catalogues four meanings for the phrase in Reid's works: common experience, principles either natural to the mind or "natural laws of the mind comparable to natural laws in the physical sciences, evidence for general propositions, or opinions generally agreed upon." (Olin McKendree Jones, Empiricism and Intuitionism in Reid's Common Sense Philosophy, Princeton: Princeton University Press; 1927, pp. 45–50.)
For a definition of philosophic knowledge Flint proffers Lotze's in the latter's Grundzüge der Logik; it is "an effort to import unity and connectedness into the scattered doctrines of cultured thought, to follow each of these directions into its assumptions and into its consequences, to combine them together, to remove their contradictions, and to form out of them a comprehensive view of the world; mainly, however, to subject the ideas which science and life regard as principles to a special scrutiny in order to determine the limits of their validity."\(^1\)

The third level or phase of knowledge postulated by Flint is divine knowledge. It will be discussed later.\(^2\)

II. The Possibility of Knowledge

Turning from the nature of knowledge, the obvious question presenting itself is that concerning the very possibility of the acquisition of knowledge so described. This is a most important question for Flint.

A. General criticism of scepticism

To begin with, we should know that for Flint even the slightest degree of scepticism as to the veridicality of either the rational or sensory faculties involves an ultimate reduction to absolute scepticism. A partial scepticism of reason, for instance, is not a logically stable position. It involves a total scepticism of reason and a total scepticism of sensation.\(^3\)

\(^1\)Flint, *Philosophy as Scientia Scientiarum*, p.56.

\(^2\)See below, pp.133-151.

All versions of scepticism from its earliest, Pyrrhonism, on down to the contemporary versions can be found making dogmatic claims, something a consistent scepticism can never countenance, says Flint. These dogmatisms also are contradictory in themselves and untrue. For instance, a doublet of self-contradictory and untrue dogmatisms appearing in Pyrrhonism and frequently in scepticism ever since is the assertion that, on the one hand, things in themselves cannot be known, and, on the other hand, only appearances are known. Flint poignantly asks how a sceptic knows that appearance and reality are disjuncted. Kant and his followers are, needless to say, pilloried for the same reason.¹ There is no need to enumerate all the similar criticisms Flint brings against Pyrrhonism and all other versions of scepticism. It is sufficient at this juncture to point out that he regards all forms of mitigated or partial scepticism as logically reducible to absolute scepticism. And the essence of all his criticisms of absolute scepticism is that the inability of finite minds to attain absolute knowledge is in no way prejudicial to the same minds' ability to possess true knowledge.²

In the history of speculation Flint does not see scepticism as a total blight. For example, the Greek forms that held truth unobtainable by reason caused men to look for it elsewhere, that is, in faith, feeling, tradition, revelation, and so forth. It thereby prepared the way for Neo-Platonism and Christianity, "and

¹Flint, Agnosticism, pp.193-194.
²Flint, Agnosticism, p.296.
inevitably disappeared before them."¹ Flint does not fully mean what he says here. He later reports the existence of scepticism, even in its Pyrrhonic form, in the Church. Pascal, he believes, is a clear example of a definitely Christian thinker who had at the same time espoused Pyrrhonism. He quotes Pascal as declaring that Pyrrhonism was "'the truth,' Pyrro 'the only sage before Christ,' and that 'to mock at philosophy is truly to philosophise.'"² Flint considers Pascal's doctrine of anthropopacity to be much too severe. Although he concedes Pascal's "Wager" to be an ingenious device for circumventing the apologetic stalemate to which the French monk's distrust of reason had brought him, Flint deplores such a view that maintains the equality of justification for believing both God's existence and nonexistence. Nevertheless, Flint lauds Pascal's "method of spiritual verification to the probation of the Christian faith" as being an invaluable contribution to Christian apologetic endeavour.³

It is now time to begin the discussion of Flint's affirmation of the possibility of the knowledge of all three of what he designated "the ultimate objects of knowledge," namely, the self, the world, and God. Flint nowhere develops his case systematically so the ensuing discussion will be framed by an attempted systematisation of his position.

¹Flint, Agnosticism, p.108.
²Flint, Agnosticism, p.132.
³Flint, Agnosticism, p.133.
B. Systematic claim for the possibility of a knowledge of the self, the world, and God

1. All knowledge, including doubt, presupposes the ultimate principles of thought

All knowledge, including all doubt, he says, presupposes the "reality and validity . . ." of the "primary grounds or ultimate principles which are implied in all knowledge and reasoning."¹ The very attempt to deny these principles needs their validity to make the denial credible. The supposition cannot hereby be made that the ultimate grounds of knowledge are immune to criticism. They are not criticised enough. The common-sense thinker simply assumes their validity if he is even aware of them. The scientist and positive philosopher—the philosopher who generalises on the findings of the various sciences but who makes no metaphysical speculations—likewise more or less tacitly assumes their reality and validity. These principles or grounds are "a priori," self-evident, necessary, and universal. Every thinker, whether sceptic or not, is inextricably bound to them and should admit the fact. But to do so would obviously be to expunge the sceptic from his position, alleges Flint.²

The sceptic wants proof of the first principles. Flint does not think such a requirement can be granted even if it were rational. All proof presupposes them. They themselves can not therefore be proven. The principles are self-evident and should be believed for that reason. "All thought must rest on first

¹ Flint, Agnosticism, p. 269.
² Flint, Agnosticism, pp. 270-275.
principles—on truths which have their evidence in themselves, and which, in order to be believed, require only to be apprehended."

Since it is on the basis of their self-evidence that they are believed, there is a criterion by means of which the judgment of all pretending first principles can be made. The belief in first principles is thus not blind or arbitrary, according to Flint.

A clearer example of the argument and doctrine of Common Sense could not be found. There is, of course, nothing new in arguing from the necessity of first principles. Grave notes that Aristotle had given Reid his high respect for such first principles. But the doctrine compounded by Reid had two other ingredients: from Descartes the conviction that the philosophy of the mind dealt with unique facts, from Bacon the inductive method for studying these facts, explains Grave. The resulting doctrine and argument of Common Sense propounded by Reid and his followers is epitomised by Hamilton's explanation:

"Our cognitions, it is evident, are not all at second hand. Consequences cannot, by an infinite regress, be evolved out of antecedents, which are themselves only consequents. Demonstration, if proof be possible, behoves to repose at last on propositions, which, carrying their own evidence, necessitate their own admission; and which being, as primary, inexplicable, as inexplicable, incomprehensible, must consequently manifest themselves less in the character of cognitions than of facts, of which consciousness assures us under the simple form of feeling or belief."

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1Flint, *Agnosticism*, p.278.
2Flint, *Agnosticism*, p.278.
If the first principles are the remote prerequisites for asserting the possibility of knowledge, what does Flint consider to be the immediate prerequisites?

2. Knowledge of the self—the immediate prerequisite for the possibility of knowledge and one of the ultimate objects of knowledge

Knowledge of the self or the ego is the one piece of knowledge which we can never lose nor reject, says Flint. "This knowledge of self inseparable from all knowledge whatsoever, the condition of all human experience, the source of psychology, and the corner-stone of epistemology, is a knowledge at once real and relative." By the last clause he means that although knowledge of the self is relative to objects it is also knowledge of reality, despite Kant's assertions to the contrary. Flint commends Ferrier for conclusively demonstrating this point in the latter's Institutes of Metaphysics.¹

Ferrier has thus ostensibly provided Flint with the corner-stone upon which the latter erected a theory of knowledge which claimed to avoid Kant's phenomenalism. The real nature of Flint's debt to Ferrier will be learned later.²

Kant, too, had started with the self in an attempt to build an epistemology. He was, however, the victim of the "faculty" psychology of his time, avers Flint. Kant assumed, without even determining the nature and historical development of knowledge, that knowledge had to do solely with the so-called intellectual

²See below, pp.77-84.
faculties, laments Flint. But, Flint counters: "The deepest roots of knowledge may lie far below so-called intellectual powers; may be the earliest and simplest impulses of sentient and volitional consciousness; nay, must be so if there be any truth in the modern doctrine of psychological evolution." Knowledge is the result of a self having to act. A few sentences later he says, "The minimum in knowledge is a self with an object or objects in relation to it."¹ In other words, the whole mind, not certain faculties of it, is involved in the self as knower.

Another determinative influence in Flint's epistemology has now announced itself. In keeping with his penchant for being up-to-date with the various sciences, he tried to utilize as much as possible the conceptions of contemporary scientific psychology.² However, Flint's essential position had been constructed before there was much material of use to him in British scientific psychology. Until James Ward's iconoclastic article on "Psychology" in the ninth edition of the Encyclopaedia Britannica, the unchallenged leader of British scientific psychology was Alexander Bain, the last of the great association-psychologists. Although Bain's psychology, being to a great extent a continuation

¹Flint, Agnosticism, pp. 190-191. Italics are his.

²The use of the terms "psychology" and "scientific psychology" is to be distinguished in this thesis. The term "psychology" is used herein with reference to the characterisation of a philosophical method in which an epistemology is built around the investigation of the cognitive processes. British philosophy, at least since Locke, has traditionally adopted this psychological method. "Scientific psychology" also investigates the cognitive processes of perception, memory, imagination, conception, and reasoning but solely for the purpose of describing and explaining them. For example, the particular acts of perception would be studied in the context of other conscious events but with no intention of ascertaining the cognitive pretensions of the perceptions.
of the psychology advanced by the two Mills and Spencer, was strictly empirical, it showed signs of the voluntarism and evolutionism that was imminent on the British scene. It is obvious, by the statement of Flint's just quoted that in spite of his general opposition to Bain, an opposition which became specific and vocal more than once he was paying attention to the voluntarism incipient in the later Bain and developed by James Ward. While not mentioning Ward, Flint does refer to William James who was starting the same movement in America contemporaneously. But as a perusal of J. S. Mill's Examination of Sir William Hamilton's Philosophy will show, any thinker following the "introspective method" of Reid and Hamilton cannot have little to do with the "psychological method" of Mill and his disciples. Flint's rejection of Kant's "faculty" psychology for the contemporary view of psychological evolution as seen in the statement just quoted shows the extent to which he was willing to use the concepts, or at least the terminology, of a purely scientific or empirical psychology for epistemological purposes.

He cautions against an indiscriminate acceptance of all that purports to be testimony of the self-consciousness pertinent to the foundation of a theory of knowledge. Immediate impressions or apprehensions of the self-consciousness alone will suit the purpose. "Self-consciousness is consciousness only of our own

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1E.g. Flint's criticism of Bain with reference to the problem of the cause of belief (The Act of the Will, pp. 469-477); Flint's criticisms of, among others, Bain in the former's article on "Associationism and the Origin of Moral Ideas" in Mind, I, (1876), 321-334.

2Mill did not think it possible to discover the "original
mental states, and only of them as being ours."\(^1\) "Self-knowledge is knowledge of a self as object by itself as subject."\(^2\)

A consciousness of the self or ego is companion to every act of knowing or consciously experiencing. But these acts of knowing or consciously experiencing are not part of self-consciousness. The sceptic, says Flint, usually forgets this point and criticises self-consciousness for not meeting the more extensive claims he thinks are made for it. The scope of reference within which self-consciousness itself claims authority is not that of knowledge learned by inference, induction, or abstraction. Its task is limited to the attestation of what is immediately present to itself, what is presently believed or felt. It leaves me with no doubt that it is I who am thinking, feeling, experiencing, and so forth. Flint reasons that since mediate and indirect knowledge is dependent or presupposes immediate or direct knowledge, self-consciousness, which is immediate and direct knowledge, makes the other kind of knowledge possible. Without it we would not even be able to know our own minds, nor anything beyond our minds as well, including the knowledge of other selves, and thus history, and thus "the universal mind of which history is the record."\(^3\)

data of consciousness" from "present consciousness." Instead, he wanted a scientific method which will find the "original data of consciousness" as "residual phaenomena." (J. S. Mill, An Examination of Sir William Hamilton's Philosophy 3rd. ed.; Longmans, Green, Reader, and Dyer; 1867, pp.219-222.)

\(^1\)Flint, Agnosticism, p.371.

\(^2\)Flint, Agnosticism, p.600.

\(^3\)All that is involved in "the universal mind" for Flint will be discussed later. See below, pp.132-151.
Self-consciousness also allows us to delve down into the sphere of animal consciousness. In fact, the whole promising new science of comparative psychology rests on self-consciousness, exclaims Flint.¹

It is clear that Flint would be in a sorry plight if the certitude of the self-consciousness were successfully impugned. "Self-consciousness is the fundamental presupposition of all knowledge,—that alone which cannot but be known along with all knowledge, and apart from which there can be no knowledge."²

For Flint the ego is a "real, living, self-perceptive, and self-active agent." It is the proper subject of both conscious experience and the science of psychology; a psychology, which, incidentally, cannot be divided into an empirical and a rational section.³

There is more in Flint's appeal to the knowledge of the self as the immediate basis of knowledge than appears on the surface. He is professedly using Ferrier's form of this appeal.⁴ Ferrier, in turn, had used such self-knowledge as the foundation-stone for a system which claimed to be the only system properly establishing the reality of external objects. Starting with a typical Scottish Common Sense concern for the laws of cognition, Ferrier traced the cause of the "errors of representationism and the insufficiency of Berkeleyanism" to the failure to distinguish bet-

¹Flint, Agnosticism, p.373. The importance he attached to comparative psychology will be seen later. See below, pp.194-208.
²Flint, Agnosticism, p.377.
³Flint, Agnosticism, pp.206-209.
⁴See above, p.52.
ween the "necessary and the contingent laws of cognition."¹

It should not be thought that Ferrier was against representationalism as he himself defined it. He defined it to be "the doctrine which holds that we are cognisant of external objects only in or through some subjective medium, called indifferently by the name of idea, images, or species,—in other words, that we are cognisant of things only in, or along with, our own perceptions of them." He felt that such a doctrine is "an undeniable truth."² Ferrier made the odd judgment that the representationists opposed by Reid meant the same thing as Reid did with his "intuitive knowledge," namely, "that real objects stand face to face with the mind."³ Ferrier blatantly rebuked Reid for failing to discern that he and his opponents were simply using different names for the same thing. The doctrine Reid and his followers opposed would have been called "re-representationism" by Locke, Berkeley, and Hume, states Ferrier.⁴ Such an interpretation of Reid goes far to explain the most unusual attitude Ferrier took to the problem of perception, an attitude extremely significant for his whole system. He proposed "to have his cake and eat it too" by espousing both representative and presentative perception, as defined by him. The doctrine of representative perception is thus described as "an approximate, though imperfect, enunciation of the necessary law of all reason, which declares that nothing

¹Ferrier, Institutes, p.386.
²Ferrier, Institutes, p.386 footnote.
³Ferrier, Institutes, p.290.
objective can be apprehended unless something subjective be apprehended as well.\footnote{Ferrier, \textit{Institutes}, p.292.}

According to Ferrier, the "errors of representationism," even advanced by Reid who thought he was opposing them, derive from the failure to ascertain "What is the subjective part which \textit{must} be apprehended whenever any objective counterpart is apprehended?" A true analysis would reveal that "one part of the subjective contribution (the ego) enters \textit{necessarily} into the constitution of cognition (a man \textit{must} know himself along with all that he knows); another part of the subjective contribution (the senses) enters only \textit{contingently} into the constitution of cognition (a man \textit{might possibly} know things in other ways than those of seeing, touching, and so forth)."\footnote{Ferrier, \textit{Institutes}, pp.386-387. Italics his.} Having failed to make this analysis, the representationists have two alternatives before them. One is to regard the senses as necessary to cognition. But this entangles them in the theory that all intelligences must possess human-like senses, a theory which, according to Ferrier, means the World's existence depends on such senses. The second alternative open to the representationists is to assert the contingency of both the ego and the senses in cognition. The loss of a necessary ego permits the absolute and independent existence of the material world. But such a scheme is repugnant to Ferrier because of its implied atheism and its disavowal of the necessary principles of reason.\footnote{Ferrier, \textit{Institutes}, p.387-389.}
The same failure to distinguish between the necessary and the contingent conditions of cognition spoiled Berkeley's otherwise admirable system, laments Ferrier. Berkeley is highly lauded by Ferrier for being "the first to stamp the indelible impress of his powerful understanding on those principles of our nature, which, since his time, have brightened into imperishable truths in the light of genuine speculation. His genius was the first to swell the current of that mighty stream of tendency towards which all modern meditation flows, the great gulf-stream of Absolute Idealism." But Berkeley crippled himself by taking the first of the alternatives mentioned in the preceding paragraph. In trying to satisfy the truth clearly discerned by him that "something subjective was a necessary and inseparable part of every object of cognition," he mistakenly thought it was the senses, or "our perceptive modes of cognition," and not the ego, which "clove inseparably to all that could be known." Thus for him, the senses were an inseparable part of every thought. The logical implication for ontology he took, namely, investing the supreme mind, God, with human-like senses or modes of apprehension.

Berkeley thus unfortunately missed by a "hairsbreadth" the rejection of matter per se. The way to correct this mistake is to analyse properly the conditions or elements of cognition. Such an analysis will show "that our sensitive modes of apprehension are mere contingent elements and conditions of cognition; and that the ego or subject alone, enters, of necessity, into the composition of everything which any intelligence can know."  

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1 Ferrier, *Philosophical Remains*, II, 293.
Ferrier thereby thought himself to have both safeguarded the reality of the material world and to have layed the foundation for a theistic inference.

It has been indicated that Professor Flint claims to have adopted Ferrier's conception of the role of the self in the gaining of knowledge. In order to ascertain the degree to which Flint follows Ferrier's establishment of the reality of matter and the foundation for a theistic inference it is now needful to learn if Flint takes Ferrier's view of the reality of material objects and of their function in the knowledge situation.

3. Knowledge of the world—another prerequisite for the possibility of knowledge and one of the ultimate objects of knowledge

Having seen how self-consciousness is, for Flint, the immediate basis for the possibility of knowledge, we turn next to another equally important—although psychologically second in order of awareness—basis for the possibility of knowledge, namely, the external world. He defines "world" in the sense of an ultimate object of knowledge as "physical nature" and "the material or corporeal universe." It should be noted that throughout the discussion of the knowledge of the world, when the terms "nature," "world," or "universe" are used they will mean all that is not psychical, spiritual, or incorporeal.

1See above, pp. 52.

2Flint, Agnosticism, p. 388.
a) The nature of the perceived object in external knowledge

Flint contends that along with a consciousness of a real self must be the perception of a real world for knowledge to exist. He concedes that the materialist who claims we know nothing except the external world has accomplished the demonstration, denied by few anyway, that the psychical and physical are inextricably intertwined: that selves are connected with non-selves or objects. But he is adamant that it is self-conscious beings who give meaning and value to the world. In fact, with reference to the nature of the external objects of perception, Flint felt with Ferrier that the logical priority of a spiritual mind meant the ultimate reduction of matter into spirit while yet permitting the material objects of knowledge to be regarded as real and external: "We believe that the contents of the world—the bodies of men (our own included), houses, trees, fields, etc.—although the ultimate grounds of them may be spiritual, are real eternal and material things."¹ A study of Flint's case against the standard materialist's doctrine of the mind-matter relationship finds him citing Ferrier for support in his contention that the crux of the problem faced by the materialist is that a reduction of mind to matter means the sole element in cognition is sensation. This implies the knower has no right to assume the reality of the objects supposedly causing the sen-

sations. Thus matter also passes into non-existence. But Flint the realist reiterates: "A real perception of an object is the perception of a real object." He epitomises his position in these words: "Objective reality is the necessary antecedent and universal correlative of the subjective activity in knowledge and that, so far from being absolutely unknowable, it is continuously self-revealing even to our very limited minds." Flint feels that when Plato denied the realities of a science to be its phenomena, he threw out the possibility of ever explaining appearances. Plato, it seems, had no notion of the reciprocal relationship between laws and phenomena; that is, that "phenomena exhibit laws" and "laws manifest themselves in phenomena." The unfortunate result was his claim that phenomena were not real.

But on the other hand, the student of Flint's defense of mind against the materialists can detect an idealism. It has already been observed that when making a plea for the existence of "real external and material things," he makes the interesting comment: "the ultimate grounds of them may be spiritual." The note which can be heard all through Flint's account of cognition is that the world must be "interpreted in terms of mind." Kant, too, operates on this principle, but for him it meant no

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1 Flint, Anti-Theistic Theories, pp.53; 147-150.
2 Flint, Agnosticism, p.293.
3 Flint, Philosophy as Scientia Scientiarum, p.34.
4 Flint, Philosophy as Scientia Scientiarum, pp.75-76.
5 Flint, Agnosticism, p.414.
6 Flint, Agnosticism, p.189. Italics are his.
more than the logical priority of the forms of sense and the categories of understanding for cognition. Whether or not ultimate reality was of the nature of mind or matter was unknowable to Kant. Flint charges Kant with having an "incoherent idealism and arbitrary dualism."¹ He develops on Kant by asserting that ultimate reality is of the nature of mind. "There is no knowing without being, or being unrelated to knowing. Truth and reality, knowing and being, are throughout correlative and coincident."² In view of the logical priority of the mind in the process of cognition, the "being" must be of the nature of mind. If it were of the nature of matter then the possibility would exist for being to be unrelated to knowing. Flint regards the realm of metaphysics to be limited to neither the physical nor the psychical. The task of metaphysics is to study that which underlies the realm of all sciences, physical, psychical, and theological, as well as that which overlies them. In other words, it "deals alike with the first principles and the last results of rational inquiry—alike with the fundamental conditions, categories, and limits of knowledge, and with the ultimate nature, relations, and laws of reality."³ Such a close relation of epistemology and ontology in this way would or could not be postulated by anyone other than an idealist. The following quotation should clinch the point: "Existence and knowableness—reality, truth, and proveability—are coincident and inseparable. In the Absolute

¹Flint, Agnosticism, p.222.
²Flint, Agnosticism, p.327.
³Flint, Agnosticism, p.326.
Reality, with which philosophy and theology are alike concerned although in different ways, there can be no darkness, no unintelligibility, at all. Itself must fully know itself.¹

Lest more be attributed to the thoroughness of Flint's idealism than would be fair, it should be noted that he definitely rejects the notion advanced by Hegel and Schelling that thought and being are identical. "Whatever is known is, and whatever is may be known— infinite knowledge must be coextensive with infinite existence—but that knowing and being are identical is what by no effort of mind can be rationally conceived or believed."² Flint wants to safeguard the real existence of objects conceivable as being distinct from thought and as being presented to the mind before the mind can cognize said objects. What then is the true identity of the idealist strain in Flint's thought? Is he in debt to Ferrier here or is there some other explanation? Half of the answer will appear by the end of the present chapter. The full answer must await the final section of the next chapter.

Thought and existence are, of course, identical in internal perception, for Flint. The object of internal perception, being within the consciousness, cannot exist apart from the consciousness. "Internal consciousness thus carries with it stronger evidence than sense."³ Although an irrefutable case cannot be made that "in external or sense perception things appear to us as they actually— i. e., in themselves—are," it is certain that "internal or self-consciousness apprehends its objects as they

¹Flint, Agnosticism, p. 349.
²Flint, Anti-Theistic Theories, p. 428.
³Flint, Anti-Theistic Theories, p. 183.
really exist."¹ The nature of the object in external perception is different from the perceiving mind which may or may not correspond to that external object. But the objects of internal perceptions necessarily correspond to the perceiving mind because the two are identical in being, believes Flint.

However, just as we are unable to attain to an absolute knowledge of self, so we cannot of the world. "We neither perceive nor conceive what either matter or mind is in itself."² We cannot first look at either matter or mind as pure subject and then as pure object. Flint is persuaded that Ferrier has irrefutably shown that all knowledge is "'an indivisible subjective-objective knowledge.'"³ We have a real knowledge of matter and mind simultaneously. To eliminate either would automatically cause the knowing situation to cease.

b) The structure of the knowledge-situation

This attempt by Flint to combine idealism and epistemological realism is, naturally, founded on his conception of the structure of the knowledge-situation, especially with reference to perception. Precisely what was the relationship existing between the subjective and objective components of the knowledge-situation in Flint's epistemology?

Perceptions are the sole source of our knowledge of the world. These perceptions are determined by both the nature of

¹Flint, Anti-Theistic Theories, p.182.
²Flint, Agnosticism, p.394.
³Quoted by Flint, Agnosticism, p.394.
the world and our senses, body, and mind. ¹ Though we perceive
an independently existing reality, we do not perceive it direct-
ly or immediately. We perceive a given object's phenomena or pro-
perties. In the perception of material objects, for example,
"certain properties of matter are known by distinct primitive acts
or perception. The eye, for example, sees colour."² No object
is known by us as a bare existence.³

"Our supposed immediate apprehensions of matter are states of
mind connected with matter through the action on our sentient
organs and general mental constitution which give rise to the
phenomena that we call physical, although they are largely
psychical. Perceptions of external objects are dependent on
mental activities and on imperceptible external causes or con-
ditions, such as ether-motions without and nerve-motions
within the organs which yield sensations, say of vision, touch,
taste, etc.⁴

So it is, Flint continues, not an "ultimate nature" into which we
must penetrate, nor a "logical cobweb" spun around our conception
of the object which is the means of apprehension.⁵ The objects
perceived contain powers which, acting on the "organs" of the
senses and the "energies"⁶ of the mind, produce images or appear-
ances which are the contents of our apprehensions. This scheme
applies to the cognition of both material and spiritual objects.⁷

²Flint, Agnosticism, p.406. This is why he thinks "all the
ultimate objects of knowledge,—matter, mind, and Deity,—are
known by us in the same way." (p.406)

⁶Flint, Agnosticism, p.407.

¹Flint, Agnosticism, p.395.
²Flint, Theism, p.441.
³Flint, Theism, p.443.
⁵Flint, Agnosticism, p.406.
even by the most advanced physical science is still not pure and naked reality, but to no inconsiderable extent made up of illusions and speculation.¹

Because of the somewhat outdated phraseology used by Flint, the precise meaning of his description of perception is a little ambiguous. But compare now another account of the origin of our knowledge of the world.

By acting on the sense organs, matter is perceived as reacting with the mind in every act and sensation. "The mind thus appears to stand face to face with it, and views it as extended, hard, colored, etc." Considered more carefully, however, it becomes clear "that all the sensible properties of matter are no more than phaenomena; or relations and manifestations of powers, partly known, partly unknown, which lie beyond them." The tangible and visible world, then, depends upon three conditions: "the properties of our sensibility," "the powers of material substances," and the "relations of their parts."

"All phaenomena, all sensible appearances depend upon these relations among things, and their relations to our sensibility. But the outward causes of the phaenomena, or the outward powers, act, through the appearances, upon our organs; and are felt, in immediate antagonism with our own powers. We have thus immediate perception of the action of material substances upon our sensibility."

Physical science has fully demonstrated that "the visible, tangible, world of common perceptions, is not the real world of material powers; but a world of imagery, conjured into existence by the relations of powers, mental and material." "The substance of physical science, with its powers and affinities, lies

¹Flint, Agnosticism, p.412; Cf. pp.429-430.
behind the image...." But this does not at all make knowledge of the external world of no account. "The world really exists, apart from the mind; though colour, hardness, extension, be not the essential powers of its existence, but only their relations among themselves, or to the mind." Idealism errs when it forgets that there are "outward causes of the phaenomena which act through the phaenomena upon our sensation-faculties...." Furthermore, it is this process that affords an immediate perception of the action of minds. "As the powers of matter act through the sensible phaenomena, and assure us of an external reality; so the reason of a designer reaches us through his evident plans, that of a speaker, through his words."¹

This second analysis of the knowledge-situation was made, not by Flint, but by a writer named R. A. Thompson.² It takes little perspicacity to see the striking similarity of these two accounts. Any doubt which might remain as to their compatibility vanishes when Flint is found unqualifiedly recommending Thompson's


²Thompson's treatise entitled Christian Theism won the Burnett Prize in 1855. This wealthy prize, awarded every forty years under the direction of the Church of Scotland and the University in Aberdeen, had 203 aspirants when Thompson won. The Rev. John Tulloch, later Principal of St. Mary's College, St. Andrews' was awarded the second place prize. (Thompson, Christian Theism, I, xiii-xvi.) At this time Flint was nearing the end of his theological education at Glasgow University. It is entirely safe to assume that the excitement attendant upon the publication of Thompson's treatise brought it to Flint's attention as being the "latest word" in Scottish Christian Theism.
work on the parallel nature of the knowledge of God and the world as being "the ablest" and most "conclusive" in any language. Flint continues by making the following revealing statement in praise of the condensed edition of Thompson's work (that is, the Principles of Natural Theology, 1857): in referring to the key chapter Flint says, "the twelve parallels there exhibited by comparison of the character and processes implied in our knowledge of God with those implied in other knowledge allowed to be fundamental, convincingly show that our knowledge of God is not dependent on formal demonstrations but given us through God's own manifestations of Himself in the facts of nature, consciousness, and history, and in the principles and conditions of our intellectual life."¹

The significance of this statement of praise will gradually appear. The point being made now is that Thompson's description of perception affords the clarification needed to classify Flint's. The epistemological realism together with the description of the necessary functions of the reason in perception as contained in Flint's and Thompson's views of the origin of external knowledge might at first glance be considered an amalgamation of Locke with Reid, especially with respect to the seeming attempt to combine a representative and presentative view of perception. Closer scrutiny will discern the primary source for these views to be Hamilton.

Reid held that perception was the "Notion or Conception of an object instinctively suggested, excited, inspired, or, as it

¹Flint, Agnosticism, 408.
were, conjured up, on occasion or at the sign of a Sensation.¹

Hamilton denies that perception is a notion or conception.

He maintains that:

On the one hand, in the consciousness of sensations, out of each other, contrasted, limited, and variously arranged, we have a Perception proper, of the primary qualities, in an externality to the mind, though not to the nervous organism, as an immediate cognition, and not merely as a notion or concept, of something extended, figured, etc.; and, on the other, as a correlative contained in the consciousness of our voluntary motive energy resisted, and not resisted by ought within the limits of mind and its subservient organs, we have a Perception proper of the secundo primary quality of resistance, in an extra-organic force, as an immediate cognition, and not merely as a notion or concept, of a resisting something external to our body;—though certainly in either case there may be, and probably is, a concomitant act of imagination, by which the whole complex consciousness on the occasion is filled up."²

¹The account given of Reid here is Hamilton's. Whether or not Hamilton was always faithful to Reid's real meaning is immaterial for the present purposes. Hamilton's edition of Reid's Works together with the long series of appended dissertations by Hamilton comparing his views with Reid's was considered the last word on Reid, at least during Flint's and Thompson's lifetime. If, then, Flint and Thompson differed or agreed with Reid, it was with Hamilton's Reid. Thompson expressly confirms this contention when he says that these dissertations of Hamilton are "incomparably the most profound and learned, and, at the same time, exact discussion of these questions...." (Thomson, Christian Theism, I, 61.) It should be noticed with respect to Hamilton's interpretation of Reid that he admits, as any student of Reid must admit, the difficulty of classifying Reid on the question of perception. Hamilton informs his readers that he came to the conclusion that since Reid's overall purpose in philosophy was to reconcile it with the natural beliefs of man, he (Reid) must have meant to come out on the side of natural realism, and thus representative perception. All of the sizeable list of statements to the contrary—supporting "egoistical representationism" culled from Reid by Hamilton in order to pair them off with the "representative" statements, the latter is certain Reid would hastily erase if he could. The Reid frequently battered about by Hamilton, however, is the Reid of "egoistical representationism." (Hamilton, Reid's Works, ed. Hamilton, II, 820.) The present comparison of Reid's and Hamilton's doctrines of perception is taken from Reid's Works, ed Hamilton, II, 882-886.

Hamilton's point is that a natural realism, based on the common sense of mankind must show not merely, as did the allegedly inconsistent Reid, that we have a subjective representation--of extension, for example, "'called up or suggested'" somehow to the mind when the senses are presented with an extended object; "but that in the perception of such an object, we really have, as by nature we believe we have, an immediate knowledge or consciousness of that external object, as extended." Hamilton's statement must not be read too hastily however, He does not mean that the perception of primary qualities itself reveals the existence and qualities of the external object. The primary qualities of external objects are not known immediately, i.e., perceived. (Perception, for him, is an immediate, not mediate, apprehension.) Rather the primary qualities of external objects are inferred by observation and induction from the sensations which the objects cause. Secondary qualities, in turn, are not immediately, but mediate known; thus they are not perceived. They are only inferred as unknown causes of effects felt by the perceiver. In sensation we do have an immediate perception of "the affected organism, as extended, divided, figured, etc." Hamilton's theory was that the field of apprehension of both sensation and perception is the body of the perceiver.

1Hamilton, Reid's Works, ed. Hamilton, I, 842. Italics are Hamilton's.
Hamilton thought himself to have safeguarded natural realism by means of the Secundo-primary qualities. These are both known immediately, as objects of perception, and mediately, as objects of sensation. They are contingent modifications of the primary qualities which are necessary and a priori. They fall under the category of resistance and pressure. "They are all only various forms of a relative or superable resistance to displacement, which, we learn by experience, bodies oppose to other bodies, and, among these, to our organism moving through space." There are two phases of the secundo-primary qualities, both of which are immediately apprehended. The primary or objective phasis is their manifestation of themselves as "degrees of resistance opposed to our locomotive energy." The secondary or subjective phasis is their manifestation of themselves as "modes of resistance or pressure affecting our sentient organism."

The conclusion, in Hamilton's words, is that "the existence of an extra-organic world is apprehended, not in a perception of the Primary qualities, but in a perception of the quasi-primary phasis of the Secundo-primary; that is, in the consciousness that our locomotive energy is resisted, and resisted by aught in our organism itself."  

As seen above, Thompson also asserts that "the world of phenomena is not itself the material world." But he, like Hamilton, is certain that "the outward causes of the phenomena, or the outward powers, act, through the appearances, upon our

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1 Hamilton, Reid's Works, ed. Hamilton, I, 348. Italics are his.
organs; and are felt, in immediate antagonism with our own powers." The result is that we have an "immediate perception of the action of material substances upon our sensibility."¹ According to Thompson, the mind makes contact with real material objects through the resistance which the perceived object presents to the will. Just as he believes the self is discovered by the will's being opposed by the opposition or resistance of perceived matter, so he thinks the non-ego is likewise revealed. If objective reality is to be asserted of the self it must be given to the external world. "The mind then, as that which wills and perceives, exists apart from matter which resists the will and is perceived." Perception thus becomes "a complex action of the mind, involving both will and sensibility, and interpreted by the reason." The resulting "ultimate fact" of knowledge is the mutual relation of the ego to the non-ego. The concept of power or causation corresponds to this "ultimate fact" of knowledge. And it is this concept of causality which affords the mind a universal principle with objective validity.² In sum, the notion of cause or power arises from noticing the way the mind reacts to the world. But Thompson is adamant that he is not attributing mental characteristics to the material realm. "The two are co-ordinate," he says. There is no equivocation on the point that a real external body causes a mental perception through the senses, i.e. through the "properties" of the nerves. "As long as an object exists it is known as the

¹Thompson, *Natural Theology*, pp. 76-77. Italics are his.

cause of certain sensations; and when no longer known as a cause, it is no longer known as an existing thing.\(^1\)

Hamilton, with his consciousness of the resistance of his "locomotive energy—the quasi-primary phasis of the Secundo-primary qualities, the only immediately perceived quality of an external object; and Thompson, with his "immediate antagonism" of the material world to the ego as will affording the revelation of the non-ego—the resulting universal principle of causality being the sole means of bridging the gap between the subjective and the objective realms—are essentially in harmony.\(^2\)

Now that a somewhat detailed and specific analysis of Flint's, Thompson's, and Hamilton's views on perception has been accomplished, otherwise inconsequential statements by Flint on Hamilton can be used as corroborative evidence for the present contention that Flint's doctrine of perception is basically Hamiltonian. Flint labels Reid an entirely "anti-agnostic" thinker whose only stated faults were his lack of profundity and systematisation when compared with Kant.\(^3\) It is therefore most interesting to hear Flint remonstrating with Hamilton for

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\(^1\) Thompson, *Christian Theism*, I, 399-401. For a similar statement of the position taken in this paragraph and a clear contrasting of it with Reid's position, see Hamilton, *Reid's Works*, ed. Hamilton, II, 285.

\(^2\) Thompson even appears to have followed Hamilton's criticism of Reidianism. Cf. e.g., Thompson, *Christian Theism*, I, 39-42, with Hamilton, *Reid's Works*, ed. Hamilton, I, xv-xviii, 128-129. Thompson also regards his doctrine of the Infinite as "not inconsistent" although "not coincident" with that of Hamilton. (Thompson, *Natural Theology*, p.67.)

\(^3\) Flint, *Agnosticism*, p.169.
being inconsistent by forcing Kant's scepticism as to the knowledge of God on to his (Hamilton's) essentially anti-sceptical Reidian realism. Hamilton's scepticism as to a knowledge of the absolute and Infinite is the only doctrine in Hamilton's theory of cognition to which Flint takes express exception. Flint seems to find nothing needful of criticism in the Hamilton who had "adhered in the main to the teaching of Dr. Thomas Reid." Flint considers Hamilton to have adopted a realism based on the immediate intuitive power of the mind and the presentative or direct apprehension of external phenomena. He only disagrees with Hamilton when the latter begins to "come under the spell" of Kant with respect to the knowledge of God. Hamilton's claim, as reported by Flint, to have rejected the "Transcendental Idealism" of Kant because of a truer analysis of the perceptive faculty resulting in an anti-sceptical position, goes unchallenged by Flint.¹

The crucial fact that Flint construes Hamilton's doctrine of perception to be compatible with Reid's is most clearly shown in his reaction to the "second meaning" Hamilton gave to his (Hamilton's) doctrine of the relativity of knowledge, namely, "that nothing can be known except in relation to the self and its powers of knowing."² Flint's significant comment is that

¹Flint, Agnosticism, pp.604-605.

²Hamilton's own words, as quoted by Flint are the following: "Knowledge is relative, 1), Because existence is not cognisable, absolutely and in itself, but only in special modes; 2), Because these modes can be known only if they stand in a certain relation to our faculties; and 3), Because the modes, thus relative to our faculties, are presented to, and known by, the mind only under modifications, determined by these faculties themselves." (This quotation can be found in Hamilton's Lectures on Metaphysics, II, 146; quoted by Flint, Agnosticism, pp.606-609.)
Hamilton is simply enunciating a "truism" worthy of emphasis.  

There have been two schools of thought on the correct interpretation of Hamilton's relativity principle. J. S. Mill thinks it amounts to nothing more than a truism. On the other hand, Hamilton can be found making such declarations as: "Our knowledge of qualities or phenomena is necessarily relative; for these exist only as they exist in relation to our faculties." Elsewhere, he says the "modes" of being "can be known only if they stand in a certain relation to our faculties . . . are presented to, and known by, the mind only under modifications determined by these faculties themselves." Such statements have led other scholars to accuse him of subjectivism. They charge him with finally subverting Reid's doctrine that all knowledge of substance is relative to knowledge of the attributes of substance.  

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1 Flint, Agnosticism, p.609.

2 With respect to Hamilton's relativity principle Mill concludes: "In the only meaning in which he really maintained it, there is nothing to be maintained. It is an identical proposition, and nothing more." (J. S. Mill, An Examination of Sir William Hamilton's Philosophy, 3rd ed., p.29.)


As seen earlier, Flint, whose analysis of the structure of the knowledge-situation is similar to Hamilton's, does not regard Hamilton to be at variance with Reid here. Accepting Hamilton’s principle of the relativity of knowledge is the same, for Flint, as holding that "quality cannot be thought of apart from a subject." Consequently, Flint cannot understand why Hamilton proceeds to espouse a Kantian phenomenalism with respect to knowledge of God.²

Indubitably there is a connection between Flint's interpretation of Hamilton and the former's avowal that Ferrier's basic rational principle constitutes the "corner-stone of epistemology." According to Flint, Hamilton

"proceeds on the supposition or principle that there is one truth at least common to all intelligences, or absolute in Ferrier's sense of the word,—viz., that no intelligence can know what is out of relation to its own powers of knowing—that every act of knowledge involves the condition of subject and object—that a unity of cognition exclusive of the dualism of subject and object is inconceivable and absurd."

Flint goes on to say that "Hamilton's belief in the relativity of knowledge is quite consistent with Ferrier's belief in an absolute in knowledge" and "quite compatible" with the "rejection of the absolute as understood by Kant, Schelling, Hegel, and Cousin."³

This declaration by Flint is very significant, for Ferrier actually gave a new meaning to Hamilton's fundamental principle that "consciousness" reveals not simply the self (and the belief

¹Flint, Agnosticism, p.610.
²Flint, Agnosticism, pp.604-621.
in real external objects)—which is Reid's view—but always the self and not-self in relation, in order to avoid the subjectivism Hamilton came to read into it.¹ Ferrier altered Hamilton's interpretation of the principle by pointing out the impossibility of ignorance of what is unknowable: since the totality of knowable existence is mind in relation to material objects and material objects in relation to mind there is no justification for talking of the existence of unknowable subjects or objects in themselves, claimed Ferrier.² Or, as Grave has it, for Ferrier "'matter' and 'perception' are the syllables of a single ontological word and are meaningless apart from their place in its structure."³ Accordingly, Flint ostensibly subscribes to the Hamiltonian tenet that "all our conceptions of the world are dependent on our perceptions of it, and the latter are all largely what they are not merely through the world and its contents being in themselves what they are, but also owing to what our senses and bodily and mental constitutions are."⁴

¹This statement of the relation between Reid, Hamilton, and Ferrier on their key principle of the relativity of knowledge is based on A. K. Rogers' analysis. Cf. Rogers' English and American Philosophy Since 1800 (New York: The Macmillan Company; 1922), pp.4-7, 9, 24-25, 43-44.

²In Ferrier's words: the "mere factors of the [subject and object] synthesis cannot either of them be the substantial and absolute in ignorance, because there can be no knowledge of them apart from each other; and there can be no ignorance of what there can be no knowledge of. Hence, the only absolute and substantial reality of which we can be ignorant is a subject in union with objects of some kind or other." (Institutes of Metaphysics, pp.437-438.)

³Grave, Scottish Philosophy of Common Sense, p.130.

And in the same passage he declares the truth of this affirmation to be consonant with, and the result of, the following argument:

All knowledge is "an indivisible subjective-objective knowledge; and there is no other knowledge, as Ferrier especially has conclusively shown. We can have a real knowledge both of matter and mind, both of an object and a subject, the one knowable and the other knowing, but we can know neither apart, and that for the simple reason that when apart there is no knowledge."¹

Flint, then, regards Hamilton's relativity principle as being essentially a truism—and thus in harmony with Reid's view of the relativity of knowledge,² namely, knowledge of substance is relative to knowledge of its qualities—and not as being implicative of subjectivity—that is, the view that knowledge of qualities is relative to the cognitive faculties and their modifying influences, the substance remaining in every respect unknown and unknowable—³ because he (Flint) read Ferrier's meaning into it.

Or, the point being established may be described in a slightly different way. Both Flint and Hamilton assert that "we neither perceive nor conceive what either matter or mind is in itself."⁴ But whereas Hamilton believed that we must infer the existence of matter and mind in themselves as the "subject, or substance, or

¹Flint, Agnosticism, pp.394-395.
³"It is of the highest moment," avers Hamilton, for philosophers to realise "that what we know is not a simple relation apprehended between the object known and the subject knowing,—but that every knowledge is a sum made up of several elements... contributed by sense...and by the mind itself. The phaenomenon of the external object is not presented immediately to the mind, but is known by it only as modified through certain intermediate agencies." (Lectures on Metaphysics. I, 146-147.)
⁴Flint, Agnosticism, p.394. A similar statement by Hamilton appears, for example, in his Lectures on Metaphysics, I, 138.
substratum in which the phaenomenal existence inheres, "Flint, following Ferrier, denied the existence of mind or matter in themselves on the grounds that the totality of conceivable existence and thereby the totality of existence in every sense is knowing mind or minds and their known, but nonetheless real, objects. At the same time, and again as a result of Ferrier's influence, Flint describes the structure of the knowledge-situation itself the same way as does Hamilton, ostensibly subscribes to Hamilton's relativity principle, and speaks about the "phenomenal element" which can never be eliminated from all knowledge. But, --and for this too Ferrier is responsible--Flint maintains further that the phenomenal element in all knowledge must be, and is, "transcended" by virtue of its very existence.

So now the circle has been traversed, leading Flint right back to Reid's position; this explains why Flint thought Hamilton's relativity principle was a "truism worthy of emphasis," and why Flint thought Hamilton "adhered in the main to the teaching of Dr. Thomas Reid" except with respect to knowledge of God. In short, Flint evidently operates on the assumption that Hamilton's

1 Hamilton, Lectures on Metaphysics, I, 137.
3 Flint, Agnosticism, p. 610.
4 Flint, Agnosticism, p. 609.
5 Flint, Agnosticism, pp. 604-605.
analysis of perception, when conjoined with Ferrier's modification of Hamilton's relativity principle, is consonant with Reid's great tenet that perception has a real, independently existing object. And, what is more, Flint evidently imagined this amalgamation of Ferrier and Hamilton to be Hamilton's intended position.

Conclusion: With respect to knowledge of self and world, Flint essentially a follower of Reid

The conclusion, therefore, to which the present investigation of Flint's view on the possibility of external knowledge may be said to have come is as follows: Despite his appeals to, and ostensible adoption of, Ferrier's "basic rational principle," on the one hand, and Thompson's Hamiltonian theory of perception on the other hand, Flint's essential position is similar to Reid's.

Indirect confirmation of this conclusion is forthcoming from Davie's recent book which devotes much space to the vicissitudes of the Scottish school under the leadership of Hamilton and Ferrier.¹ Davie is interested in smashing the standard story that Ferrier's defection from the leadership of Scottish Common Sense Realism signalled the demise of that school in favour of German Idealism. As Davie sees it, Ferrier never flagged or deviated from his defense of the Common Sense Philosophy. But Ferrier decided to accomplish his task by developing a more metaphysical version of that philosophy through a greater stress on

¹Davie's book, as well as his unpublished doctoral thesis on "The Scotch Metaphysics," were not read until the present thesis was all but finished.
rationalism. ¹ Flint's appeal to Ferrier would thus not necessarily mean his own nascent defection to German Idealism. It will be seen later that Flint is sympathetic with Ferrier's goal of developing a metaphysical elucidation of the Common Sense school even although he is not able to go to the extreme of rationalism taken by Ferrier.

There is no doubt, however, that Ferrier lashed out rather savagely at Reid in his Institutes of Metaphysics. So much so that he became identified in the public's eye as the great antagonist of the Scottish Philosophy. When, in 1856, Ferrier sought Hamilton's Chair of Logic at Edinburgh, the leader of the opposing Evangelicals, John Cairns, wasted no time in branding Ferrier a dangerous enemy not simply of the interests of the dis-established Church but also of Scottish Common Sense. The victory of the Evangelical's candidate, A. Campbell Fraser, heralded the final division of the Scottish school into the intuitionist followers of Reid and those following the road pointed out by Ferrier, that is, those who turned eventually to the incoming a priori metaphysics of Germany. ² Flint succeeded Ferrier in the Moral Philosophy Chair at St. Andrews and was likewise defeated by the Evangelicals in his attempt to secure the same post at Edinburgh in 1868. ³

¹ Davie, The Democratic Intellect, pp. 279-285, 298-299. Charles de Rémusat is quoted by Davie as saying, "In Ferrier's principle of metaphysics, there is at bottom, not much more than in Descartes' cogito or, I advance the suggestion diffidently, in the humble fact of consciousness of Reid's school." (Revue des Deux Mondes, April 1856. Quoted by Davie, p. 300).


But Flint was not the born partisan or fighter that Ferrier, John Cairns, Chalmers, and the other leaders of the two opposing parties in the Scottish mid-19th century educational and ecclesiastical scene were. As far as possible he held aloof from the battles of this turbulent period. Although brought up in the Free Church he switched over to the Established Church as a young man. But he was always on the evangelical wing of the latter. This tendency to remain as close to the middle position as possible can be observed in his philosophical utterances. It has already been seen, and will become more apparent, that Flint is basically nothing but a Reidian. Yet he very rarely mentions Reid or Stewart and even seems to bend over backwards to appear as "unprovincial" as possible. His frequent appeals to Ferrier¹ and his claim to have used Ferrier's "basic rational principle" as the "corner-stone" of his own philosophy give the definite impression of being designed especially for the purpose of keeping him from being branded a philosophical reactionary. Since the forces of intuitionism were fading and those of rationalism² strengthening during Flint's professoriate at Edinburgh, Flint faced ever increasing pressure from those who forsook the traditional thinking and pushed off down the road first noticed

¹E. g. Agnosticism, pp.191-192, 210, 214, 373, 384, 394-396.  
²Unless otherwise specified, the term "rationalism" will be used in the present thesis to refer to the methodological emphasis on the validity of synthetic a priori inference. For a lucid analysis of the problem of the relationship between rationalism and empiricism, see A. C. Ewing's Idealism: A Critical Survey (London: Methuen and Co. Ltd.; 1934), pp.250-260.
by Ferrier. On the other hand, however, there is more than
"academic politics" linking Ferrier and Flint. It will become
apparent that Flint, as the Professor of Divinity, is just as
eager as Ferrier to provide a metaphysical elucidation of the
Common Sense Philosophy. Hamilton had developed a theistic
agnosticism allegedly upon the principles of Reid. There were
then three alternatives open to the young Christian apologist
Flint. He could draw into the past—as most of the Evangelical
Calvinists were accused of doing. He could capitulate to the
new "philosophy of the Absolute" coming up from the supposedly
more sophisticated land below the Borders and ultimately from
Germany—as many of the Moderate Calvinists were doing under the
leadership of J. Caird at Glasgow. Or, he could mark out a
mediating position. He wisely chose the last alternative, with
what success, we shall see as the discussion now moves on to an
analysis of Flint's theistic inference.
CHAPTER III

THE IDEA OF GOD DERIVED FROM NATURAL REVELATION

Introduction

God is the third ultimate object of knowledge and a prerequisite for the possibility of knowledge, according to Flint.¹ He firmly believes that God is known in the same way as the other ultimate objects of knowledge—the self or mind, and the world or matter.² The previous chapter has shown that the way Flint considered knowledge of the self and the world attainable was the way of Scottish Common Sense Realism. The purpose of the present chapter is to determine the consistency with which Flint followed the Reidians in the claim for a natural knowledge of God.

¹Flint will accept either of the following definitions of God: "'God is a Spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable in His being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth.'" "'God is the self-existent, infinite, and eternal Being, the Creator, Preserver, and Ruler of all.'" (Agnosticism, p.421)

²Flint, Agnosticism, pp.405; 219.
There is no doubt about Flint's intention to use the same method of knowledge for God as for mind and matter. Explicating his affirmation that all three ultimate objects of knowledge are known in the same way, he says, "it is not by attempting to gaze directly into their ultimate natures or spinning logical cobwebs round our conceptions of them, but by laying our minds open to receive aright the impressions and lessons which the facts themselves can alone convey to us, that we come to know them." Or again, comparing the knowledge of God with the knowledge of the world, he states that the knowledge of both is obtained "only by a continuous and rational use of all our internal powers acting and reacting on external powers and the impressions produced by them."¹ Flint draws a similar parallel between the knowledge of self and the knowledge of God² namely, an inference of a real substance from its phenomena, whether mental or material, inductively studied. Remembering that Flint regarded the inductive study of experience possible only in conjunction with or because of the common sense principles of thought, it immediately appears that Flint's theistic inference will be largely Reidian.

I. Reid's Attitude Towards Knowledge of God

Reid's distaste for metaphysical speculation did not extend fully to the problem of God's existence. God's existence was the one piece of metaphysical knowledge which the common sense principles allowed, aside from the infinity of space and time and the eternality of space.³ Although Reid never developed a natural

²Flint, Theism, p.442.
Theology, the few statements he did utter on the topic plainly mark out the direction of his thinking.

In defining necessary truths as mostly abstract truths and contingent truths as mostly concrete truths, that is, truths that "express matters of fact, or real existences," he excepts the existence and nature of God. This is the one necessary truth which is not abstract. The only necessary truth deducible from the realm of the contingent is the existence of that realm's "immutable and eternal cause."¹

Of the "first principles of necessary truths" delineated by Reid, three of the "metaphysical" ones are elaborated on by him because of Hume's counter-thrusts. The first is that the qualities which we perceive by our senses must have a subject, which we call body, and that the thoughts we are conscious of must have a subject, which we call mind. The second is "that whatever begins to exist, must have a cause which produced it." The third is "that design and intelligence in the cause may be inferred, with certainty, from marks or signs of it in the effect."²

The third truth (as is the case with the other two) is not derived from experience since it is a necessary, not a contingent, truth. This means, avers Reid, that experience does not teach us "that certain effects must proceed from a designing and intelligent cause." We know it necessarily. Moreover, observes Reid, since the connection between a sign and its referent can be learned from experience when both are perceived, experience can

¹Reid, Works, ed. Hamilton, I, 442.
never discern the connection when only the sign is perceived. This means the impossibility of perceiving mind precludes the discernment of the "necessary connection between thought and a mind." Experience likewise cannot discover the connection between a designed article and its designer. The inference of a designer from the experience of a designed article, coming "neither by reasoning nor by experience," must therefore be a "first principle."

The importance of this principle for natural theology is spelled out by Reid thus: "The clear marks and signatures of wisdom, power, and goodness, in the constitution and government of the world, is, of all arguments that have been advanced for the being and providence of the Deity," the most effective. It has the "peculiar advantage, that it gathers strength as human knowledge advances, and is more convincing at present than it was some centuries ago."¹

Later, Reid opines, "he who maintains that there is no force in the argument from final causes, must, if he will be consistent, see no evidence of the existence of any intelligent being but himself."²

It is to be pointed out that Reid does not regard the existence and nature of God as a necessary first principle, but only that God's existence and nature must be inferred when necessary first truths are applied to contingent truths. Or, stated

¹Reid, Works, ed. Hamilton, I, 459-460.
²Reid, Works, ed. Hamilton, I, 461. "It may be doubted whether men, by the mere exercise of reasoning, might not as soon discover the existence of a Deity, as that other men have life and intelligence." (I, 449.)
differently, there are contingent truths—the world displaying marks of design—which, when considered in light of necessary truths—for instance, that "design and intelligence in the cause, may, with a certainty, be inferred from marks or signs of it in the effect"—lead irrevocably to the conclusion that God's existence and nature must be inferred from final causes. In no sense is God known intuitively. It should also be noticed that for Reid the inference to God is analogous to the inference of other selves—selves of which there is no immediate perception.1

Since Flint asserts, with Reid, that God is known in the same way as all other objects of knowledge are known, his treatment of the problem of the knowledge of God will now have to be systematised and analysed in a fashion appropriate to his treatment of any other object of knowledge.

II. The Possibility and Origin of Man's Knowledge of God

It has already become obvious that Flint's Common Sense Realism places him firmly in the camp of those who believe a knowledge of God possible to all reasonable men. Indeed, he goes further by asserting:

"The idea of God so underlies and conditions human experience and human thought that man may not unreasonably be held to be by nature in some measure a religious being. In all stages of his existence he appears to have had some anticipations and conceptions of God. The development of the idea of God and the course of the history of man are so dependent on each other that without a full recognition of the importance of either the other must be unintelligible."2

1Reid, Works, ed. Hamilton, I, 460-461.
2Flint, Agnosticism, pp.419-420.
Flint's abiding interest in the philosophy of history and the comparative study of religions would be expected after reading such a statement. His interest in these disciplines will be reviewed in a later chapter. The above quotation is being employed now simply to establish that Flint had no doubts about the possibility of knowledge of God. The next question is obviously, how does such knowledge originate? The exposition of Flint's answer to this question will now occupy our attention for some time.

"The grounds, or evidences, or proofs of the legitimacy of our belief in God are His own manifestations."¹ This statement by Flint read in the light of his Common Sense Realism as seen previously in his theory of the knowledge of the self and the world gives the key to his view of the origin of man's knowledge of God. When Flint subscribed to the Reidian assertion that all objects are really known through their qualities and only through their qualities he included the object God. The existence of any real object, including God, is, for the Reidian Flint, discovered only "through a knowledge of His attributes and their manifestations." Each of the proofs of the existence of God describes our apprehension of a certain attribute, he explains, "hence the Divine attributes may be classed, according to the processes by which they are apprehended." Accordingly, he sets forth the "proofs by which the Divine existence is confirmed into (1) attributes of power, (2) attributes of intelligence, (3) moral attributes, and (4) metaphysical attributes."²

²Flint, *Theism*, p. 444.
The task now is to set forth Flint's doctrine of the origin of man's knowledge of these divine attributes. By what faculty or faculties of mind does he believe man attains knowledge of the four classes of divine attributes he posits as the proofs of the divine existence?

A. The Attributes of Power

Causality is a principle which is "ultimate, universal, and necessary" for the function of reason, says Flint.¹ "Sensation only gives rise to thought in virtue of it."² The individual's knowledge of the principle of causality first comes through an "immediate and direct experience of causation" resulting from the consciousness of volition. This is the first and most perfect knowledge the mind ever possesses, avers Flint. It is by virtue of the self's knowledge of itself as will and thus as an agent or cause that the reason is enabled to conclude that the ultimate cause is a will.³

¹Flint, Agnosticism, p.652.
²Flint, Theism, pp.98-99.
³Flint, Theism, pp.64-65. In regarding the knowledge of the principle of causation to be the result of man's consciousness of his volition, Flint, knowingly or not, rejects the other view on the origin of the knowledge of causality found in Reid's works. The latter view holds that the knowledge of the principles of causality is not derived from our experience of ourselves as volitional agents but is a first principle and thus not "grounded on experience." (Reid, Works, ed. Hamilton, I, 455.) "It is a necessary truth," says Reid, and "experience gives no information of what is necessary, or of what must be." (Reid, Works, ed. Hamilton, II, 521.)

Flint's view resembles the one stated by Reid thus: "It is very probable that the very conception or idea of active power and of efficient causes, is derived from our voluntary exertions in producing effects; and that, if we were not conscious of such exertions, we should have no conception at all of a cause, or of active power, and consequently no conviction of the necessity of a cause of every change which we observe in nature." (Reid, Works, ed. Hamilton, II, 604.)
Flint maintains causality must be assumed as basic to the theistic inference. What then is assumed? Flint denies that every existence must be assumed to have had a cause. If something eternal could be found it would be causeless. But anything not eternal must have had an origin, which means it must have had a cause. On the basis of the principle of induction, Flint regards the Cosmological argument as an inference drawn from data interpreted on the premise that the cause can be discovered from effects.

It has already been seen that Flint's use of Reid's view of personal identity permits a doctrine of causality in which efficient or originative causality, not simply a doctrine of antecedence and consequence, is considered possible.

Flint is also in harmony with Reid's application of the theory of the origin of our knowledge of causality to our knowledge of Divine causality. Says Reid, "Our notion, even of Almighty power, is derived from the notion of human power, by removing from the former those imperfections and limitations to which the latter is subjective."¹

In setting forth his case for the causal argument Flint is consciously trying to deflect the thrust of the most powerful counter-argument in his day. J. S. Mill held that in addition to the observed changeable element

"there is in every object another and a permanent element, viz., the specific elementary substance or substances of which it consists and their inherent properties. These are not known to us as beginning to exist: within the range of

¹Reid, Works, ed. Hamilton, II, 604.
human knowledge they had no beginning, and consequently no cause; though they themselves are causes or con-causes of every thing that takes place.\(^1\)

Flint is certain that science has collected no data supporting the proposition that the world is not an event. Moreover, it would appear that his (Flint's) disclaimer of an immediate perception of material substance permanently protects his position by precluding the possibility of science ever discovering an uncaused particle of matter.

Faced with the need of finding a cause efficient enough to account for the world, Flint, using the principle of induction with the assistance of the principle of parsimony, decides that even if matter were permanent, as Mill held, the one cause sufficient to explain the existence of both matter and mind in the world is an Eternal Intelligence. Assuming a teleological world, an assumption itself assuming the causality principle, Flint claims that only an Eternal Intelligence can have caused the complicated configurations of matter—even a non-created matter—observed in the world. Flint concludes his presentation of the Cosmological argument by again appealing to the impossibility of knowing the ultimate nature of matter. He is convinced that this fact, together with the fact that all the latest scientific theories as to the origin of matter are amenable to a creation doctrine, leaves the materialist vanquished.\(^2\) The old arch-enemy of the Cosmological argument was, of course, Kant, who considered it "a perfect nest of dialectical assumptions."\(^3\) But Flint, con-

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\(^2\) Flint, *Theism*, pp.96-118.

vinced that science had repeatedly proven that nature was resplendent with evidences of law and order, firmly maintained the concreteness of the argument. In order to provide an explanation for each and every particular effect showing such law and order a particular cause has to be found, and this concrete use of the principle of causality involves going beyond the limits of the sensible world, he maintains. Again, Flint will not allow that the law of causality leads only as far as an infinite regress of causes. A self-existent cause may be known as easily as any other cause. And even though the principle of causality does not explain the nature of self-existent cause, it may legitimately lead the mind up to the place where another rational principle can compel "the affirmation of the self-existence of the cause reached."

The mind automatically and of necessity identifies "the last cause in the order of knowledge and the first in the order of existence" as being a self-existent and eternal cause. "Whenever we come to an existence which we cannot regard as an effect or thing generated in time, we, either in consequence of the very nature of the causal judgment, or some self-evident condition or conditions of knowledge necessarily attached thereto, attribute to it self-existence and eternity."\(^2\)

Observation and reason, therefore, both lead Flint to a First Cause for the effect which is the world. On similar grounds, he is led to describe this First Cause as free, as "a


Will, a Spirit, a Person.\(^1\) This alone satisfies the principles of reason as united in the principle of causation when applied to the phenomena of experience. Having established this, Flint uses the Teleological argument in confirmation of his claim that the First Cause is Mind,\(^2\) and the Moral argument to demonstrate the moral character and moral government manifested by this "Divine Idea" or "Creative Reason."\(^3\)

**B. The Attributes of Intelligence**

It has been seen in the previous chapter that Flint, following Reid, regarded the common-sense belief in the real existence of an independently existing physical object to be produced by our sensations. But sensations are modifications of ourselves which function as "natural signs" "suggesting" the physical object and its properties. The process of "suggestion" is one in which the "natural signs" cause the conception and belief that the object perceived is directly apprehended. But in actuality it is the primary qualities that are directly perceived through the significatory power of the sensations. The external object's substantial nature remains unperceived, its existence inferred as that in which the directly known primary qualities inhere.\(^4\) Similarly Flint holds that the existence of real minds other than the perceiver's own is inferred through

\(^1\)Flint, *Theism*, p.130.


\(^3\)Flint, *Theism*, pp.210-263.

\(^4\)This was explained in the previous chapter, pp. 60-84.
their manipulation of phenomenal objects.

Unlike other objects of knowledge, minds have the characteristics of emotion, will, and intelligence. Because we know our own minds to possess these qualities, and because we know these qualities enable our manipulation of phenomenal objects, the manipulation of phenomenal objects not done by us reveals the existence of another mind to us. "We have no direct or immediate knowledge—no intuitive or a priori knowledge—of the intelligence of our fellow-creatures, any more than we have of the intelligence of our Creator; but we have a direct personal consciousness of intelligence in ourselves which enables us confidently to infer that the works both of God and of men can only have originated in intelligences."¹ Thus "physical and mental facts and laws" are the means by which the reason is able to make the inference from the natural to the supernatural realm.²

Flint looks out on the world and finds everywhere, both in the physical and moral realms, "order and adaptation, proportion and co-ordination," as well as progress almost everywhere. The only conceivable inference to be drawn, he decides, is the agency of a Supreme Intelligence.³ Flint wants it clearly understood that he is not advocating the argument from design but to design. He is not assuming design in the universe and then deducing a designer. Rather he is inferring design from the order, adap-

¹Flint, Theism, p.77, cf.158. The question of the inferential knowledge of other selves will be critically reviewed in the concluding chapter. See below, pp. 342-344.
²Flint, Theism, p.76.
³Flint, Theism, pp.152-153.
tation, and so forth, noticeable in the world of experience.
It is obvious, then, that Flint holds with Reid to the common
sense principle that "design and intelligence in the cause may
be inferred, with certainty, from marks or signs of it in the
effect." Once it is established that the order in creation im-
plies design, the complete Teleological argument necessarily
follows—this is evidently Flint's reasoning. At the same time
he claims to be mindful of the strictures rightly placed on the
extravagant claims made for the argument from final causes.
As far as he is concerned it is only when the concept of final
cause is used to mean "merely the inherent order and adjustment of
things—not when it means designs and purposes regarding them—
that the search after it can possibly lead to scientific truth." When so construed, Flint believes the concept of final cause
"leads to truth in all sciences alike," the claims of many modern
biologists and sociologists notwithstanding.

The modern biologists and sociologists discountenanced by
Flint were those espousing naturalistic evolutionism, considered
by many of his contemporaries to be the most important enemy of
the doctrine of final causes and of teleology in general. This
fact raises the question of Flint's attitude toward the sciences
of his day and especially toward the theories proclaimed by the

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1See above, pp. 88-89.

2In a Manuscript ("H.16") Flint declares that Hume's criti-
cisms of the Teleological argument failed to cause a "general
revolution" amongst Scottish students of natural theology because
"Dr. Reid met his objections to the teleological argument calmly
and carefully, and, on the whole, with success. So did Dugald
Stewart who treated of the argument very fully." (Manuscript "H.16
is part of Flint's class lecture notes on the Teleological argu-
ment.)
evolutionists in all fields.

First, with respect to Flint's attitude toward the sciences of his day it must be reported that he held the utmost respect for them when properly conducted. He thought theists, in contrast to such non-theists as the materialists, were the ones who really and truly respected the assured results of scientific endeavour. If and when the scientist discovers a fact or law of nature the theist is ready and willing, in full consistency with his system, to "modify his theology" accordingly. The materialist is not so favourably positioned, argued Flint. "If force be not explicable by matter—the living by the dead—species by evolution—mental phenomena by physical properties—materialism must be erroneous. Were all these positions proved theism would not be disproved."¹

A scientist could hardly hope for a healthier respect for his work by a theologian and philosopher. The latest findings of science were of the greatest moment to Flint. A typical tactic employed by him in his struggles with such anti-theists as the natural evolutionists Herbert Spencer, Professor Tyndall, Romanes, and others, would be to call forth as witnesses for the impermanence of matter, such physicists as Lord Kelvin, Clerk-Maxwell, Balfour Stewart, and Tait. Nevertheless, Flint vehemently denies the unjust charge levelled against him by Romanes of pinning his arguments on a particular physicist's theory.²

¹Flint, Anti-Theistic Theories, pp.145-146.

²Flint, Anti-Theistic Theories, pp.451-452. The criticism by Romanes to which Flint alludes can be found in the former's Candid Examination of Theism, pp.156-158.
Secondly, with respect to Flint's attitude toward the particular scientific theory of natural or Darwinian evolution, as far as that theory's denial of teleology is concerned, it is to be recorded that Flint regarded that theory as the latest of the frequent attempts from Democritus on down to circumvent the problem posed by the order displayed in the world by restricting attention to the process yielding the order. The decisive refutation of such a procedure is likewise ancient, avers Flint, being Aristotle's doctrine of final causes.\(^1\) Flint does not mean to commit himself against Darwinism as a scientific theory. His counsel is to avoid attacking such theories needlessly, "or to reject the truth which is in them, under the influence of a senseless dread that they can hurt religion. In so far as they are true, they must be merely expressions of the way in which Divine intelligence has operated in the universe."\(^2\) Darwin, then, if correct, has provided a wealth of confirmatory evidence in support of Paley's Natural Theology rather than in opposition to it, according to Flint.\(^3\) "Nothing can be more certain than that Dr. Paley would have held the design argument to have been in no

\(^1\)Flint, Theism, p. 189.

\(^2\)Flint, Theism, p. 203.

\(^3\)Flint, Theism, pp. 198-199; 208. Cf. Agnosticism, p. 630. Flint's respect for Paley is no doubt partially the result of the influence of his favourite teacher, Lord Kelvin. Flint quotes with "pleasure" a passage from Lord Kelvin's address to the British Association in 1871 in which the latter complains of the misinformed commenting on Paley's Natural Theology which, at the behest of "recent zoological speculations" has "had a temporary effect of turning attention from the solid irrefragable argument so well put forward in that excellent old book." (Flint, Theism, p. 397.)
degree weakened by the theory of evolution." Likewise, Flint, con-
ceding that the theory of evolution had "to a considerable extent
antiquated" the Bridgewater Treatises, did not think the prin-
ciple and argument of these treatises had been disproved but
strengthened.¹

Why was Flint so confident that such theories of natural
evolutionism as Darwin's were innocuous to the Design argument?
The answer is that Flint did not consider evolution properly con-
ceived to be a theory of the origin of the universe, only creation
was that. Evolution presupposes either creation or self-existence.²
A large part of Flint's Anti-Theistic Theories is devoted to the
refutation of materialistic or non-creation type speculations on
the origin of the world. It is noteworthy that of the many par-
ticular criticisms of materialism made by Flint, the one to which
he gives primacy of position and characterizes as being the only
one which "completely blocks the path of the materialist" is the
one he describes as essential to Ferrier's Institutes of Meta-
physic, namely, the impossibility of the mind's conceiving of
matter existing prior to or apart from mind.³

With respect to Flint's estimation of Darwinian evolutionism
not regarded as a theory of the origin of the universe the
following may be said. To begin with, Flint thinks Darwin's
theory of evolution, unlike the evolutionism of Hegel, was derived
from a proper scientific method. Flint is adamant that every

¹Flint, Agnosticism, p.653.
²Flint, Theism, p.390.
³Flint, Anti-Theistic Theories, pp.147-150.
theory of science must be based on a direct, inductive, analytic study of nature. ¹ Again, Flint does not believe associationism can claim evolutionism as an inalienable ally. Although Darwin and Spencer had linked these two theories, Flint sees no necessary connection since each theory must stand upon its own principles eventually. ² Next, any theory of development or evolution presupposing creation nicely suits Flint's notion of the everincreasing enlightenment and improvement of humanity. Taking God to be the supreme and infinite reason to whom the dependent world of rational human nature, physical order, and intellectual and moral progress point, Flint feels it is glorious to see how God has worked, by discerning with the help of the evolutionists how the inorganic world was gradually prepared for the organic, then the organic for humanity, and finally humanity for its bright and hopeful future. In other words, the whole evolutionary process could be and actually has been fitted by Flint into a kind of summary of his Teleological argument. ³ In fact, Flint can be found in his final publication going so far with the science of his time as to make the following statement: "Apparently there were many and long ages before there was any life and intelligence on Earth; but conceivably also the sources of consciousness and knowledge may have been present in the cosmic ether before our world became a globe differentiated from all other worlds. Nor

¹Flint, Philosophy as Scientia Scientiarum, p.159.

²For the specific reasons given by Flint for making associationism and evolutionism independent see his "Associationism and the Origin of Moral Ideas," Mind, 1 (July 1876), 328-330.

³Flint, Agnosticism, pp.507-510, 630.
is it entirely certain, perhaps, that vegetable and animal vitality may not have had in an incalculably remote age on earth their origins in the same proplasmic substance.  

But no matter how much Flint was willing to bend with the scientific winds blowing around him, he never for a moment wavered in his opposition to the Darwins or Huxleys, for instance, who construed any or all of their so-called laws, such as natural selection, to be mechanical or the work of blind forces. If natural selection be a law of nature it both implies and necessitates design and intelligence, according to Flint.

Moreover, Flint calls on evolution for assistance in solving the perennial theodicean problems threatening the Design argument:

"In the measure that the theory of evolution can be established, the wisdom and benevolence displayed in pain would seem to receive confirmation. So far as that theory can be proved, want, the struggle for existence, the sufferings which flow from it, and death itself, must, it would appear, be regarded as means to the formation, improvement, and adornment of species and races."

To summarize this discussion of Flint's attitude toward evolutionism and its implications for his Design argument, the first clause of the above quotation can be used as the key: "In the measure that the theory of evolution can be established...." Flint's attitude was one of caution rather than fear or eager acceptance. He vehemently rejected the naturalistic presuppositions many of the evolutionists espoused. Yet he was sure that their scientific labours had uncovered much honest information

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1 Flint, *Philosophy as Scientia Scientiarum*, p. 49.
needing to be assimilated into a virile theism. He felt that a "de-naturalized" or creative evolutionary theory could be entirely compatible with theism, theology, and the assured facts of science. "In nature and so in religion, society, morals, etc. the rule of development is neither revolution nor reaction, but evolution." But throughout, his watchword is tentativeness and caution.

Returning to Flint's Design argument it is next to be noted that he refuses to allow his form of it to be regarded as resting on the analogy of the works of nature and the products of art. This was the form of the Design argument Hume and Kant considered themselves to have confuted. Flint grants the analogous nature of the works of art and nature which permits their comparison and also the comparison of their causes. But he affirms that such an analogy and comparison is an illustration, not "a condition of inference." The fact of the matter is, says Flint, that a direct inference is made both in the case of art and nature. Human beings producing art-work are not directly perceived by the observer to have intelligence. Their intelligent capacities are inferred from their manipulation of material objects in an intelligent manner. So it is with God. We have no more nor no less of a reason for inferring his intelligence. The knowledge of an intelligent artisan could be attained without a knowledge of the Designer of nature and vice versa. A knowledge

1 Flint, Theism, p.25. Italics are his.

of either is reached through an inference of equal nature.\(^1\)

The argument from order applies to the moral realm as well as the physical, in Flint's view. The existence of a moral being, mortal or Divine, is inferred from the manifestation of moral purpose. Moral purpose is revealed by means of conscience. Indeed, the "very existence" of conscience is a "proof of purpose."\(^2\) This mention of moral purpose brings up the subject of the apprehension of God's moral attributes.

C. The Moral Attributes

1. Flint's views on knowledge of God's moral attributes

It is through conscience that God's moral character and government of creation is revealed, according to Flint.\(^3\) He will not go so far as Kant, Hamilton, or John Newman by limiting our knowledge of God to the conscience. But he does surmise that "probably no living practical belief in God...does not begin with the conscience."\(^4\) The moral argument is not thereby self-sufficient. "It cannot be stated in any valid form which does not imply the legitimacy of the arguments from efficiency and order." Flint never tires of asserting that all of man's capacities or faculties are addressed in God's manifestations, and so the Divine attributes apprehended through "all the principles of human nature," not simply that from the "principle of conscience."

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\(^1\) Flint, Theism, pp.154-158; cf. Agnosticism, pp.227-230.

\(^2\) Flint, Theism, p.213.


\(^4\) Flint, Theism, p.212.
must concur in the idea of God.¹

The proper place to begin the moral argument is the conscience, says Flint. This will permit the separation of the morally evil facts in the world from the morally good. Unless such separation took place, the morally evil facts would have to be ascribed to God as their author. But conscience will not allow that God is the author of evil.²

As would be expected from his Reidian epistemology Flint rejects the theory that in conscience man has an immediate intuition of God.³ The immediate object of conscience is "the right and wrong in actions." "God can therefore only be the presupposition or postulate of conscience, ---can only be given in conscience as implied in morality."⁴

The theistic argument from conscience is a "simple" and "obvious inference," according to Flint. Assuming the definition of conscience as the consciousness of a moral law which is not original with the conscience, Flint argues that the plain fact of the existence of conscience necessitates the inference that the originator of the moral law is God.⁵ The moral law to which conscience attests is the expression of God's will. And this will on behalf of which the conscience makes its categorical claims is represented by conscience as "perfect, authoritative, and supreme."⁶

³See above, pp.89-90.
⁴Flint, Theism, pp.216-217; 400-401.
⁵Flint, Theism, pp.217-220.
⁶Flint, Theism, p.219.
The most important opponents of Flint's moral argument because of their opposing theory as to the origin of conscience were, of course, the associationists and the natural evolutionists, namely, J. S. Mill, Bain, Spencer, Darwin, and their followers. That Flint fully realised the significance of their opposition can be learned from his lengthy article on "Associationism and the Origin of Moral Ideas," in Mind.¹ After a critical examination of the positions taken by the men just named plus those of Hartley, Sir James Mackintosh, and Sidgwick, Flint, in the fashion of Common Sense Realism, concludes that the source of the difference between these men's views and his own on the origin of moral ideas lies in the difference between theirs and his conception of the nature of consciousness. For them consciousness is "primarily emotive," for him "primarily cognitive;" for them feeling is "the condition of thought," for him thought is "the condition of feeling."²


²Flint's own resumé of his argumentation is the following: "If feeling be primary in consciousness, associationism, in supposing two or more feelings which have no moral character when taken separately to produce by their union a moral feeling, which, in its turn, gives rise to a moral idea, is perfectly self-consistent; if feeling necessarily presupposes perception or apprehension, if it is preceded and occasioned by cognition and can only be discriminated in consciousness through cognition, such a supposition cannot possibly be entertained." Flint, the follower of Reid, not unsurprisingly asks, "does sensation not involve a variety of cognitive elements? Can single sensation, even of the simplest character, be ever realised in consciousness otherwise than as an existence, as what is; likewise as one, as a sensation; as what I feel, as mine; as here and now, etc? Can any sensation whatever be experienced except under the conditions of existence, time, number, relation, etc.?" ("Associationism and the Origin of Moral Ideas," Mind, I (July 1876), 333-334.)
Mental states "exist and operate only as modes of a conscious and active mind," affirms Flint. The mind constructs its mental states by virtue of its "ideas or intuitions of time, space and likeness." This means the origin of complex ideas is not sensations or impressions of any kind. So feelings of pleasure, expediency, etc. cannot become through a supposed "process of entire transmutation through association" cognitions of moral law.  

Some evidence of an interesting vacillation or at least uncertainty on the problem of the relation between thought and feeling can be found in Flint's writings. He agreed that there are certain feelings attendant on moral cognitions. He also maintained with conviction the impossibility of feelings ever transmuting in an evolutionary process into moral cognitions. But when he comes to criticize Franz Brentano's Psychologie vom Empirischen Standpunkt he "decidedly" rejects the empiricist's complaint that the determination of the fundamental classes of psychical phenomena is made difficult because of "the impossibility of inner perception becoming inner observation"—an allegation, which if true, it may be incidentally pointed out, would strike at the heart of the Scottish Philosophy. The real reason for the difficulty, contends Flint, is the indescribable variety of forms in which the ultimate facts of mind manifest.

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2 He stipulated that the "feelings, emotions, and affections" concomitant with moral apprehension corroborate the Moral argument. (Flint, Theism, pp. 223-224.)
themselves. Explaining, he remarks on the extremely formidable task of finding a distinction which will hold for all thought and all feeling, "between thought as thought, and feeling as feeling." The reason for the difficulty, he contends, is "the countless forms, shades, changes, and combinations, of both thought and feeling." As confirmation he avers that seven of the eight distinctions between thought and feeling set out by Fleming in his *Manual of Moral Philosophy*⁴ were invalid for the above reason.² A year later, in the same journal, he defends, point by point, his charge against Fleming in the Brentano article. But this time Flint dissents from all eight of Fleming's proposed distinctions between thought and feeling. And Fleming has exhausted the field of possibilities, admits Flint. The conclusion he draws is that there is a pressing need for "a new and searching investigation into the nature of the relationship...of thought understood in its widest or generic sense to feeling understood in its widest or generic sense...." To call attention to this need was the reason for his authorship of the Fleming article, Flint confides.³

Further evidence of Flint's uncertainty on this matter appears in his account of the Moral argument in *Theism*. By way of

1 Flint does not indicate which one of the eight distinctions listed by Fleming is acceptable. The list to which Flint is referring can be found in William Fleming, *A Manual of Moral Philosophy* (London: John Murray; 1867), pp.8-13.


³ Flint, "On some alleged distinctions between Thought and Feeling," *Mind*, II (January, 1877) 118.
anticipating a challenge from the associationists and the natural evolutionists concerning his view on the origin of conscience, Flint admits that, properly, he should vindicate his view by a thorough examination of his differences with the associationists and evolutionists. But then he surprisingly flees from the battlefield with the confession that "no psychological investigation of a difficult and delicate nature is, so far as I can judge, essentially involved in the theistic argumentation at any stage." It is enough for the Moral argument that conscience exists, whatever its origin.¹

Turning from the inference of God's moral character on the basis of conscience, Flint's discussion of the confirmatory evidence in the moral world² betrays a similar, but honest and understandable, uncertainty; Flint's tone here is less dogmatic and confident than usual. He feels the need to substantiate or qualify his discussion by nearly thirty pages of footnotes in the appendix of the volume on Theism. In one of these footnotes he confesses his lack of surprise that the most doubt as to the conclusiveness of his presentation of the theistic arguments was expressed with reference to the difficulties facing the Moral argument owing to sin and suffering.³ The problem of sin and suffering is indeed so difficult, in Flint's estimation, that he devotes half of one and all of the next lecture to it.⁴

¹Flint, Theism, pp.225.
²Included under this designation are the related problems of the alleged "defects in the constitution and course of nature." (Flint, Theism, p.234.)
³Flint, Theism, p.439.
⁴Flint, Theism, pp.227-263; cf. Flint's Manuscript marked "E" which deals with the same problem.
Throughout his theodicean deliberations Flint retains his belief in the testimony of the moral world to the moral character of God. But there is no doubt about his cognisance of the problems attending thereto. In the end, and appealing to the fact that "evidence cannot be manufactured," he asks his critics to submit any other reasons for holding to a good and just God. The "recognition of our intellectual disability with reference to divine things" is not an alternative for Flint since it yields "blind and irrational belief."\(^1\) The same attitude is exemplified in Flint's acceptance of Quenstedt's doctrine of the providential Concursus. While subscribing to that doctrine, Flint makes the comment: "The doctrine of concursus when extended to sinful actions must be admitted to suggest very great moral difficulties."\(^2\)

In spite of the "perplexing anomalies" arising from the "enormous mass of sin" on the earth governed by "an omnipotent God who hates sin," Flint sees incessantly operating "internal moral laws," and a social progress presupposing moral laws which inexorably point to a moral God.\(^3\) This belief in social progress was, of course, a prominent doctrine of the nineteenth century. It crops up frequently in Flint's thought; indeed, it was one of the bulwarks of his general outlook. He does not, it should be carefully noted, think that man's moral disposition is progressing upward from generation to generation. But a scrutiny of history as a whole unfailingly produces the impression of "a process of

\(^1\)Flint, Theism, pp.439-440.

\(^2\)Flint, MSS "H.5," p.10. (This manuscript contains Flint's class lecture notes on the doctrine of providence.)

\(^3\)Flint, Theism, pp.227-229.
moral progress, of moral growth.\(^1\)

A clue to his early and abiding interest in the philosophy of history has no doubt introduced itself here. The same applies to his interest in the comparative study of religions, a study he considered demonstrating Christianity to be the culmination of all other religions.\(^2\) Both the philosophy of history and the comparative study of religions were developing rapidly on the Continent in Flint's life-time and he no doubt recognised their potential utility in the Moral argument. It is strange, but true, that no earlier theologian in Great Britain followed the lead in this direction given by Bishop Butler with the purposiveness and thoroughness Flint exhibited.\(^3\)

The degree to which Flint was prepared to come to terms with Darwinianism is shown by his concession that if human progress could be so explained it would still be "no disproof of design in social evolution." God could just as easily use Darwinian principles as any other in manifesting his moral character through moral progress.\(^4\)

The conviction of moral progress so grips Flint that in the face of the "enormous mass of sin" on earth he confidently pre-

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\(^2\)Flint, *Agnosticism*, p.450. Nevertheless, he maintained Christianity to be a *sui generis* religion. (*Sermons and Addresses*, p.291.) Flint's views on these topics will be reviewed in the following chapter.

\(^3\)Collingwood points this out and makes the empiricist tradition of the nineteenth century responsible for the lack of interest in the philosophy of history. (*R. G. Collingwood The Idea of History*, pp.142-143.)

dicts that the moral process of which history is simply "the initial or preliminary portion" will eventually reach its goal.¹ And from the vantage point of the victorious conclusion of the moral struggle Flint feels sure that we will be able to justify it. In fact he can do it even now: The fact of sin has occasioned the most glorious manifestation of God ever, namely, His manifestation of Himself in Christ.²

For those not so persuaded about Christ but yet despairing of the divine sanction of virtue Flint counsels reliance on the firm rock of conscience. The voice with which conscience speaks of God can never be silenced, even in the stormiest sea of doubt. "Faith in duty helps us to faith in God: faith in God helps us to faith in duty. Duty and God, God and duty, that is the full truth."³

So the conclusion to Flint’s deliberations on our knowledge of God’s moral attributes is that conscience and the means thereby afforded for observing the moral order of the universe are valid grounds for inferring the existence of a "moral Governor and Judge."⁴ The conscience, then, is one channel for the apprehension of one of the kinds of attributes manifested by God in the same way as the moral character of a fellow-human is apprehended

¹Flint’s conception of Christ’s Kingdom on earth is involved here. However, it is expedient to postpone its discussion until the next chapter on Flint’s philosophy of history.

²Flint, Sermons and Addresses, p.96.

³Flint, Theism, p.263; Anti-Theistic Theories, pp.242-244.

⁴Flint, Theism, p.261.
or the colour of a physical object is perceived. In each case the attribute or quality apprehended is only one of several which the knower automatically refers as belonging to the one unperceived substance. (Says Flint, "It is not more certain that by the eye we see colours... than that by conscience we discern good and evil.")

2. The determinative influences upon Flint's moral theory and Moral argument

It is now possible to determine the most important determinative influences upon the psychological basis of Flint's moral theory and upon his presentation and use of the Moral argument. The affinity between Flint's and Reid's psychology of man's moral nature is obviously very close. Reid, as does Flint, regards the first principles in morals to be part of the first principles of all thought. The moral principles are thus known intuitively, immediately, self-evidently. Reid even calls the conscience the "Moral Sense" and likens it to the external senses. He draws the following same analogy between the "Moral Sense" and the external senses as Flint has been seen to do: "That, as by them [the external senses] we have not only the original conceptions of the various qualities of bodies, but the original judgment that this body has such a quality, that such another, so by our moral faculty, we have both the original conceptions of right and wrong in conduct, of merit and demerit, and the original judgments that this conduct is right, that is wrong."

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1 Flint, *Theism*, p. 216.
The presentation and use of the Moral argument made by Flint has obvious affinities with that of Bishop Joseph Butler. This is to be expected for several reasons: First, Butler's works were an integral part of the philosophical heritage of Flint's native land. And Flint was very much a beneficiary of that heritage. Dugald Stewart asserts that Reid's views on Christianity and natural religion resemble those of Bishop Butler more than any other author. Reid, says Stewart, held Butler "in the highest estimation," and recommended Butler's "Dissertation of Virtue" and the "Discourses on Human Nature" "as the most satisfactory account that has yet appeared of the fundamental principles of Morals." Stewart also reports the existence of a carefully drawn up abstract of Butler's Analogy among Reid's private manuscripts.¹

Reid's psychology of ethics has just been seen to be similar to his psychology of epistemology. He regards man's moral nature as cognitive of the first principles of morals intuitively in the same way as the other first principles of thought are known. The faculty for immediately perceiving these self-evident, common sense, principles he calls conscience.² While not working out the psychology as thoroughly as Reid, and though holding a Lockian theory of knowledge, Butler could find in Reid a true disciple.

¹Dugald Stewart, "Account of the Life and Writings of Thomas Reid," prefixed to Hamilton's edition of Reid's Works, I, 32.

²The knowledge of right and wrong is to be ascribed to "an original power or faculty in man" called "the moral sense, the moral faculty, conscience." "The truths immediately testified by our moral faculty are the first principles of all moral reasoning, from which all our knowledge of our duty must be deduced." (Reid, Works, ed. Hamilton, II, 590.)
Reid knows of "no author who has made a more just and a more happy use" of the analogical mode of reasoning than Bishop Butler in the *Analogy*. Reid goes on to show that he himself holds to the wider efficacy of analogical argumentation. The narrower view holds that analogy is of use only to answer objections but not to make positive assertions about a previously established view. The wider interpretation of analogy permits its use in establishing probability.  

Another external evidence of Flint's high estimate of Butler is afforded by a copy of the *Analogy* amongst Flint's private papers which are deposited in the New College Library of the University of Edinburgh. This well-worn copy of Butler's *Analogy* is an edition in which blank interleaves have been inserted every few pages. These blank leaves have been carefully filled in a small fine handwriting by Flint with his own running summary of Butler's argumentation, together with class lecture notes, questions, answers, and even class announcements, the names of class members with their recitation marks, and so forth. It appears that Flint regularly lectured through the whole of Butler's *Analogy* as well as less exhaustively through the *Sermons*. It is significant that Flint's notes record only a few minor disagree-

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Even a casual perusal of Butler's Dissertation "Of Personal Identity" will prompt the reader to wonder at first if he has picked up a copy of Reid by mistake. Cf., Butler, *The Analogy of Religion to the Constitution and Course of Nature; also Fifteen Sermons*, ed. Joseph Angus (London: The Religious Tract Society; 1855), Dissertation "Of Personal Identity," pp.313-320. For further evidence of the influence of Butler upon the followers of Reid and upon the general intellectual climate of Scotland and England in the 18th and 19th centuries consult Ernest Campbell Mossner's *Bishop Butler and the Age of Reason*. (New York: The Macmillan Company; 1936, pp.177-228.)
ments with Butler. Indeed, Flint regarded Butler's *Analogy* as being "the most remarkable apologetic work in English literature," a work which "really does more than it promises, while it admirably accomplishes all that it promises."¹

Turning to the internal evidence provided by Flint's thought, there are further grounds for asserting that Butler had an important formative influence upon Flint.

To begin with, compare the general procedure of the theistic writings of both men. Both are attempting to thwart the scepticism and fatalism of their day, Butler the Deists, Flint the naturalistic scientists. Both subscribe to demonstrative rationalism in their Christian apologetic. Both use the Moral argument only as presupposing the Cosmological and Teleological arguments. Butler should not be over-hastily classified as strictly an ethical theist, that is, as one relying ultimately on the Moral Argument. His writings deal almost completely with this argument, but this fact was the result of his choice to fight on his opponent's field.² Several times Butler emphatically points out that his recitation of the Moral argument presupposes the discovery of an "Intelligent Author of Nature and natural Governor of the world," a discovery "often proved with accumulated evidence."

¹Flint, *Sermons and Addresses*, p.329.

²"I desire it may be considered that in this treatise I have argued upon the principles of others, not my own; and have omitted what I think true and of the utmost importance, because by others thought unintelligible, or not true." The editor explains that by "arguing upon the principles of others" Butler means "not proving anything from those principles, but notwithstanding them." (Butler, *Analogy*, ed. Angus, pp.297-298.)
Butler goes on to enumerate the "accumulated evidence" as follows: "from this argument of analogy and final causes; from abstract reasonings; from the most ancient tradition and testimony; and from the general consent of mankind."\(^1\)

Turning to the Moral argument the resemblances between Butler and Flint are even more striking. First, with respect to the relation of the Moral argument to the rest of their theistic proof it bears repeating that if Butler would have presented his full case systematically and on his own terms his use of the Moral argument would not be so dominant. The amount of space given over by Butler to the consideration of the Moral argument would have been probably the same as by Flint. Second, the formulation of the Moral argument itself is similar in both men's writings. Both go from the direct consciousness of a Moral Law to the Law Giver. Both take conscience to be the immediate apprehension of the right or wrong in actions.\(^2\) For both, the Law apprehended by conscience is the expression of God's Will.\(^3\) An action is vir-

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In the conclusion to Part I (Angus edition, p.841) Butler states, "That there is an intelligent Author of Nature and Natural Governor of the world, is a principle gone upon in the foregoing treatise, as proved and generally known and confessed to be proved. And the very notion of an intelligent Author of Nature, proved by particular final causes, implies a will and a character." (by "particular final causes" Butler means the Teleological argument.) Cf. the opening statement of Part I, ch. iii (Angus edition), p.52. The Cosmological argument he states thus: "It is as certain that God made the world as it is certain that effects must have a cause." (Butler, *Sermons*, "Upon the Ignorance of Man" [ed. Angus], p.518.) Cf. Butler, *Analogy*, ed. Angus, p.42.


tuous, then if it corresponds to God's Will. God is by nature righteous. And so through the ability to discern God's Will in conscience man can learn of God's moral character. This presupposes, if communication of God's nature to a man be possible, a corresponding character in man—\(^1\) which allows Butler to maintain that virtuous acts are those appearing "suitable and correspondent" to man's nature. Thus he brings himself to confessing that "conscience and self-love, if we understand our true happiness, always lead us the same way. Duty and interest are perfectly coincident," as would be expected from God's "good and perfect administration of things."\(^2\) Flint explicitly agrees with Butler on this. He writes, "Human nature, as Butler has well shown, is a constitution framed for virtue under the government of conscience."\(^3\) In another context, Flint thinks Butler has "conclusively shown" human nature to be "a constitution, a system, an organic whole" "because its various powers and passions are organized by "the power which distinguishes right from wrong."\(^4\) The same view is expressed without deviation in Flint's Manuscripts whenever the topic of ethics or morals is commented upon.\(^5\)

It is a major goal of Butler's Analogy, of course, to substantiate this position by collecting and analysing the facts of man's


\(^3\) Flint, Agnosticism, p.445.

\(^4\) Flint, Agnosticism, pp.505-506.

\(^5\) E.g., cf., MSS "H.3" and "E."
moral history. Among these facts Butler finds instances of sin and suffering which seem to militate against the belief in God's providence. But Butler's claim is that these are "analogous to what is experienced in the constitution and course of Nature." And since the Author of nature is accepted as proven, there is no reason why moral aberrations should discount his Authorship of the moral realm ("natural religion," for Butler), any more than aberrations in the natural realm can discount God's Authorship of it. Also, he points out that both God's moral and natural governments are to a significant extent "incomprehensible." In fact, Butler contends that this very incomprehensibility is largely responsible for man's supposed observations of imperfections in God's natural and moral governments. It has been seen that Flint attempts for one and one half lectures in his Theism to answer the same puzzle of theodicy and with the same results. He agrees with Butler, implicitly, that the evils in the moral world which seem to impugn God's goodness and justice "are analogous to, and closely connected with, those facts which have been argued to be defects in the physical constitution of the universe inconsistent with wisdom, or at least perfect wisdom, in the Creator." And so Flint devotes many pages answering the question, "Are there such defects in the constitution and course of nature that it is impossible for us to believe that it is the work of a wise and holy God?" His answer is substantially

3Flint, Theism, pp.233-234.
the same as Butler's, namely, man's limited view of nature probably accounts for most of the "defects," many of the remainder are explainable on natural terms or else the consequences of human sin. (Mere pain remains a mystery to Flint).\(^1\) And so by analogy he infers that the fact of overall moral progress in history and the culmination in Christianity of the world's religious searchings show God's effective moral governorship of the world. Or to state it in a more properly, logical form, he infers that the moral aberrations observable in history are no more proof against God's moral governorship than natural aberrations are proof against His Authorship of the world. He agrees with Butler that in spite of the vast amount of evil in the world, "virtue is self-rewarding," that "virtue tends of its very nature to honour and life."\(^2\) Although the "vast amount" of evil sorely tries "faith in the justice and holiness of God," yet "the general conditions of social life testify that God loves virtue and hates vice."\(^3\) Hence Flint is directed to the philosophy of history as well as the comparative study of religions. Butler is likewise interested in formulating a philosophy of history by an inductive study of the moral facts in order to show that the God of history is just and holy, does love virtue and hate vice, in spite of the aberrations.

By way of summary of the internal evidence, the following similarities between Butler and Flint have been seen: Both are

\(^1\)Flint, *Theism*, pp. 234-263.

\(^2\)Flint, *Theism*, p. 228.

\(^3\)Flint, *Theism*, p. 230.
morality, the content of the intuition being the cognition of a Law, the expression of God's will, which in turn is the expression of God's nature. Both make an a posteriori inference from conscience to the just and holy character of the Creator, Author, and Governor of the world. Both make the Moral argument presuppose the Cosmological and Teleological arguments. Both formulate and present the Moral argument itself in much the same way, even down to using certain key terms and phrases similarly. Both resort to an inductive study of the facts of history.

The internal as well as the external evidence, therefore, clearly shows the strong formative influence of Butler upon Flint's Moral argument and moral theory.

D. Knowledge of God's Metaphysical Attributes

Returning to the discussion of the origin of knowledge of God in Flint's thought, it will be recalled that he claimed the conscience to be the "faculty" by which man apprehends the moral attributes of God. There remains another class of attributes to be discussed, namely the metaphysical attributes. They must be combined with the attributes already mentioned in order to define fully the God whom Flint believes is known through creation. The metaphysical attributes meant are known in a different way than the others since they are not at all mediated by the external world. Flint openly admits that the absoluteness, infinity, and perfection of God cannot be inferred from the finite, relative, and imperfect universe. Yet these are essential attributes of Deity. Not finding evidence for such attributes in external nature, Flint searches within man's internal nature. He discovers
that "there are within us necessary conditions of thought and feeling and ineradicable aspirations which force on us ideas of absolute existence, infinity, and perfection, and will neither permit us to deny these perfections to God nor to ascribe them to any other being."  

It is important to realise at this juncture that Reid did not consider the metaphysical speculation of the a priori argument within the grasp of the common sense principles of thought.  

How, and to what extent, then, has Flint deviated from Reid's position on this matter? The discussion will now endeavour to ascertain the answers. The first step will be to show that Flint, contrary to at least one of his critics, was not sliding toward the idealistic pantheisms of the post-Kantians.

1. The foundational structure of Flint's theism not tainted by idealistic pantheism

The fact that Flint deals with the a priori or ontological arguments after the other arguments is a clue to his estimation of them. He claims to not be adopting the traditional use of the a priori argument in which the method was one of deduction from intuitive principles and innate ideas. In order to cross over from the ideal to the actual or real he first induces the "existence, power, wisdom, and righteousness of God" from the facts of experience. Not until then does he think it legitimately possible to refer the natural ideas of absolute being and perfection to

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1 Flint, Theism, p.68.

God and only to God. Flint therefore is not overly concerned to defend or to develop the Ontological argument as such. He concedes that "there may be serious defects" in it, that "the principles on which" it rests "do not directly involve the existence of God." Yet the argument is not, in any stretch of the imagination, worthless, according to Flint. It is based on an irrefutable characteristic of the human mind, namely, that the ideas of absolute existence and perfection cannot be withheld from the previously discovered First Cause. Reason cannot conceive of any other possible referent for these notions. But the method by which this First Cause is made an established fact of human knowledge is a posteriori; Flint is adamant on the impossibility of demonstrating God's existence from ideas. Nevertheless he is equally positive that the conclusion to the Ontological argument must be accepted unless "the fundamental conditions of thought" be ignored. "It may be that the a priori arguments are faulty as logical evolutions of the truth of the Divine existence from ultimate and necessary conceptions, and yet that they concur in manifesting that if God be not, the human mind is of its very nature self-contradictory; that God can only be disbelieved in at the cost of reducing the whole world of thought to a chaos."  

Caldecott charges that by making such statements as these just quoted Flint is enunciating what Caldecott denominates the "Transcendental" position on the a priori method. But since Flint never admits holding this position Caldecott severely reprimands

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1Flint, Theism, p.267.
2Flint, Theism, p.268.
him for irresolution.¹ Although Flint emphatically and justly repudiates some other "serious misrepresentations" by Caldecott, he never mentions the present accusation.² Was Caldecott right? In order to make a judgment, Caldecott's conception of "Transcendentalism" must be briefly described.

Instigated by Kant and developed pre-eminently by Hegel into the form affecting Great Britain and America at the turn of the last century, Transcendentalism was acclaimed by many theists as the desperately sought haven of safety from the ever-increasing harrying of the empiricists and sceptics. "The kernel of the full doctrine," says Caldecott, "is that necessary thought is constructive of intelligent experience, and that the 'idea' or object which it presents is entitled to our full belief as real." Beginning with the data of perception, the mind, after imposing subordinate categories upon them, moves up into a higher level of existence to make the final organisation of experience. There are three Ideas in this higher level—the Ideas of Self, the World, and God. Functioning dialectically the mind concludes that the highest and most complete of these three is the Idea of God. The Idea of God is conceived as able to make the perfect explanation of the manifold of experience by finally uniting subject and object. If, then, a final explanation of experience has been reached by the mind, whatever the mind regards to be the objects of knowledge must be the real objects. What the mind necessarily thinks to be real must be real; there is no conceivable alter-

²Flint, Theism, Preface to tenth edition, (1902), and pp.450-454.
native. Conversely, to be real is to be thought as necessary.¹

This, in condensed form, is what Caldecott describes as Transcendentalism. In constructing such a position the Hegelians have obviously forsaken, in Caldecott's opinion, the "Ding an Sich" unknown but ever lurking behind Kant's world of appearance. Instead, Hegel and his followers have chosen to insist that "Necessary thought is itself always and inherently strictly correlative with objective reality." But objective reality is not in the realm where the ordinary ideas of the self, the world, and God apply. The Real world of the self, the world, and God is the world of Reason which "transcends" the world of sense-knowledge and the Understanding.²

Since the Ideas of Self and the World and God are needed to explain experience, and since the Idea of God explains the Ideas of Self and the World, it is not unexpected to read Caldecott applying Transcendentalism to theism thus: "The ordering of the lives of finite spiritual beings like ourselves—nay, the very lives themselves, each of which is inexplicable so long as it is regarded in isolation—depends upon the reality of the ordering principle, which is therefore, as an object of belief, inevitable and necessary; and this ordering principle is God."³

When Flint states that the a priori arguments have definitely

¹Caldecott, Philosophy of religion, pp.29-30.
²Caldecott, Philosophy of religion, pp.30-32.
³Caldecott, Philosophy of Religion, p.32. Italics are his. Caldecott includes under the heading Transcendentalism what J. Caird called "Speculative Idealism," Green called "Spiritual Idealism," and Hegel called "Absolute Idealism." (p.36)
shown "that unless there exists an eternal, infinite, and unconditioned Being, the human mind is in its ultimate principles, self-contradictory and delusive," \( ^1 \) it may at first sight seem as though he were a man not unrelated to the Transcendental Idealism with its method described above. Other prima facie evidence for this accusation is available. A cursory look at Flint's frequent appeals to Ferrier could lead the unwary reader to adduce them as evidences of Flint's alleged shift from Reid's methodological position. \( ^2 \) Then there is Flint's commendation of J. Hutcheson Stirling's Philosophy and Theology for its "very effective refutation of the Kantian arguments" against the theistic proofs. \( ^3 \) Again, there is Otto Pfleiderer's judgment, based mainly on Flint's article on "Theism" in the ninth edition of the Encyclopaedia Britannica \( ^4 \) that "the speculative theism towards which [Andrew] Seth [Pringle-Pattison] seeks to bring Hegelian speculation is represented also in the writings of Robert Flint." \( ^5 \) Next, there are declarations by Flint to the effect that the "anti-agnostic movement which culminated in "Hegel, was concerning itself with a philosophy of the Absolute" which for the most part was a "great

\( ^1 \) Flint, Theism, p.285.

\( ^2 \) It will be recalled that in the previous chapter Flint has been shown to have actually regarded Ferrier's basic rational principle as simply another statement of Reidian realism. Further, Flint did not make it, as did Ferrier, the starting point for a chain of deductions.

\( ^3 \) Flint, Theism, p.448.

\( ^4 \) The relevant part of this article on "Theism" was re-published in Flint's Agnosticism, pp.641-664.

\( ^5 \) Otto Pfleiderer, The Development of Theology, p.350.
advance towards a philosophical theism."¹ There is even a reference by Flint to "the Universe itself as a mighty whole whose body is Nature and whose soul is God."² Finally, there is the following pronouncement appearing in one of Flint's unpublished manuscript lecture notes:

"The ideas which condition thought and are the light of the mind also pervade the world of experience and illumine it,—some permeating and enlightening the whole of it, and others sections of it. There are metaphysical categories, mathematical categories, physical categories, moral categories, etc. These categories are the primal and essential threads on which our thoughts only but the entire web of the universe has been hung. There is nothing known to us in earth or heaven which is not an exhibition of these categories in certain respects. The mathematical sciences, for example, do no more than show us truths implied in number, time, space, the physical sciences only help us to grow into knowledge of force and life; Ethics and the Sciences of Law but labour to evolve the contents of the ideas of goodness and justice. All sciences, and even all phases and varieties of experience, are but developments of ideas in the sense here used, and the developments have in no instance exhausted the ideas. At the same time these inexhaustible ideas are linked together, so that each has its own place, and is part of a whole; but all of them are needed to contribute whatever is in them to the idea of God, in whom is the whole truth of the universe as well as of the mind. The metaphysical categories are included therein, for God is the Absolute Being; the physical categories for He is absolute force and life; the mental categories for He is Absolute Personality; the moral categories for He is the Absolute Good,—Perfect Holy Love."³

All of these statements could have come from one whom Calde-

¹Flint, *Agnosticism*, p.648. Flint maintained that "a theist who does not sympathise with their main aim, and even accept most of the results as to which they are agreed, cannot be credited with having much philosophical insight into what a thorough and consistent theism implies. A God who is not the Absolute as they understood the term, not the Unconditioned revealed in all that is conditioned, and the essential content of all knowledge at its highest, cannot be the God either of a profound philosophy or a fully developed religion." (p.648.)


³Flint, MSS "27," 3rd page from end.
cott would call a Transcendentalist. But not necessarily so. Even the seemingly damning utterance about the body of the Universe being Nature, its soul being God, can carry more than one interpretation. J. M'Cosh, a theist who strictly adheres to the tenets of the Scottish Philosophy, is willing to allow a person to say this without charging him with pantheism, since that person could still mean by these words that God and the universe are distinct.

There are no valid grounds for charging Flint with subscribing to the pantheism involved in Transcendentalism. He does not hesitate to assail "the philosophy of the Absolute" for its inherent pantheism brought by its inability to assure the personality and transcendence of God. The view Flint is intentionally advocating is a Theism which stands midway between deism and pantheism, avoiding the errors of both while assimilating or properly presenting their truths. Theism, alleges Flint,

"maintains with deism that God is a personal Being, who created the world intelligently and freely, and is above it and independent of it; but it maintains also with pantheism that He is everywhere present and active in the world, "'upholding all things by the word of His power,' and so inspiring and working in them that 'in Him they live, and move, and have their being.'"

Flint is most adamant that God has manifested "His omnipotence and omniscience, His holiness and love, His Creatorship, Fatherhood, or Sovereignty" to us. But he is equally in earnest in denying

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1 However M'Cosh does think such a statement "prepares the way for pantheism." *Intuitions of the Mind*, new and rev. ed. (1865), p. 397.
that God's manifestations "fully or exhaustively" express His Being; he refuses to admit the pantheistic combination of monism and determinism.\(^1\) In place of the inferior pantheistic unity, Flint puts "the unity of a single creative intelligent Will—the one infinite personal God of theism."\(^2\) Flint can conceive of no higher absolute unity.

In equally uncertain terms does Flint protest against the method of what is herein being designated Transcendentalism. He described "the speculative dialectics or metaphysical hypotheses... of Hegel or Green... as being merely a fog-bank."\(^3\) He felt "the philosophy of the Absolute" leaned too heavily on "the necessary and formal in thought," leaving its idea of God too abstract and unrelated to man's personal religious and moral self.\(^4\) Elsewhere he announces that "there must be no doubt as to the completion of my rejection of the Hegelian view of reason and its evolution."\(^5\) Moreover, Flint's outright rejection of the Hegelian

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\(^1\) Flint, *Anti-Theistic Theories*, pp.336-337.


\(^3\) Flint, *Sermons and Addresses*, p.333.


\(^5\) Flint, *Philosophy of History*, 1st. ed., pp.501-505. Yet on pp.496-500 he gives credit to Hegelianism to the same extent that he does in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* articles on "Theology" and "Theism" published in 1886 and (the article on "Theism") republished unaltered in *Agnosticism* in 1902. The fact that Flint's analysis of, and attitude toward, Hegel and the idealism culminating in him seems to have remained the same from 1874 (the publication date of the 1st ed. of the *Philosophy of History*) through 1902 constitutes another important contribution to the conclusion that Flint's philosophical and theological views changed very little. Compare, for instance, *Christ's Kingdom Upon Earth* (1865), pp.302-303, 331 with "Theology" (1886) pp.263-264, 217; or with *On Theol., Bibl., and Other Subjects*, (1905). pp.104-110.
view of religion and its "'speculative idea'" of God as set forth by Caird in the latter's *Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion* is clear, as will now be shown.

In criticising Caird's important *Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion*¹ Flint reveals both that he understands the essence of Caird's position and that his own position is unequivocally and fundamentally opposed to it as far as his philosophical method is concerned. Flint chooses the following statement from Caird's book as containing the sum and substance of the Hegelian position on religion and the knowledge of God: "The real presupposition of all knowledge or the thought which is the *nous* of all things, is not the individual's consciousness of himself as individual, but a thought or self-consciousness which is beyond all individual selves, which is the unity of all individual selves and their objects, of all thinkers and all objects of thought."²

This passage contains what Caird believes to be the proper basis for the "Ontological Argument." He does not use the term "transcendental method," but Caldecott cites the same passage as illustrative of the crux of the development made by Transcendentalism on the Ontological argument.³ Despite the apparent discrepancy in terminology between Caird and Caldecott, the latter's acceptance of this passage as a *locus classicus* of the Transcendentalist's position on the basis of the *a priori* proofs will

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¹ Glasgow: Maclehose, Jackson and Co; 1880.

² This unspecified quotation from Caird by Flint can be found on p.148 of Caird's *Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion*. The quotation appears in Flint's *Theism*, p.435.

mean that Flint's criticism of the passage will amount to a criticism of Caldecott's allegation of Flint's virtual espousal of the same position unawares.

In criticising Caird, Flint feels called upon to summarise his view on knowledge of God's existence. This summary is set forth in eleven propositions true to the precepts of the Scottish Philosophy which say, in essence, that any and all knowledge of God depends upon the objective validity of the "categories or conditions" or "forms of thought" which make experience possible. And these categories are systematised, perfected, culminated and "rendered organic" by the "idea of God." In a manuscript lecture note, Flint enumerates these "categories or conditions" or "forms of thought" as follows: "existence, number, time, relation, and in a limited sphere, space, beauty, and rightness." These, when read in terms of Flint's Common Sense Realism, are obviously a long way from the presupposition upon which Caird claims to base all knowledge. Says Caird, "Even we are compelled to think of all existences as relative to thought, and of thought as prior to all, amongst the existences to which it is prior is our own individual self." Moreover, and this is of great importance, it has been seen in the previous chapter as well as the present chapter and will be further shown that the method by which Flint ascertains and uses these categories is psychological. It is through the observation of and induction from the phenomena presented by

1 Flint, Theism, pp. 436-437.
2 Flint, M35 "27," 3rd page from end.
3 John Caird, Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion, p. 149.
the human mind reacting to its environment that Flint concludes the possibility of a valid natural knowledge of God no less than of the self or the world. Therefore, there is no justification for charging him with all but founding an a priori metaphysics on the idea of God.¹

The modified Transcendentalism of A. J. Balfour is just as stoutly rejected by Flint as is Caird's position. Balfour criticises the speculative excesses of Transcendentalism but adopts it for the scientific, ethical, and aesthetic aspects of life.² Caldecott, nevertheless, classifies Balfour as a Transcendental Theist.³ In a discussion on the kind of reason proper to religious belief, Flint throws out the "transcendental" sense of reason, "the Logos or Absolute Reason" of Balfour, with the explanation that reason in the sphere of religion "is no isolated entity, separate faculty, or abstraction of any kind."⁴

2. A positive characterisation of Flint's metaphysical assumptions with respect to knowledge of God

Let it now be granted that through an inductive study of

¹An indirect confirmation of the contention that Flint did not adopt or almost adopt Transcendentalism comes from a student of his who later switched over to it. In criticising Flint, the former student, James Lindsay, even goes so far as to accuse him of "adopting what, by its stress on an extra-mundane Cause, is really a Deistic mode of conception." (Fundamental Problems of Metaphysics (Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood and Sons; 1910), p.95.


³Caldecott, The Philosophy of Religion, pp.168-175.

human consciousness and conscience the Common Sense thinker Flint has discovered categories or conditions of thought whose objective validity must be assumed. And then, for the sake of argument, yield to his claim that universal, necessary, and self-evident truths may be had which are neither general abstractions from particulars nor self-subsistent. It is thereby incumbent upon Flint to explain what metaphysical implications he does attribute to these truths. Or, to state the proposition in a way focused more upon the real problem at hand: Flint may now be expected to justify his use of Reid's system in order to go beyond Reid in rational speculation as evidenced by his (Flint's) declaration that "there are within us necessary conditions of thought and feeling and ineradicable aspirations which force on us ideas of absolute existence, infinity, and perfection, and will neither permit us to deny these perfections to God nor to ascribe them to any other being."¹

The answer is signalled in Flint's belief that "what is essential" in the Platonic "theory of ideas, and in the theism inseparable from that theory" has not been gainsaid by the empiricists and positivists.²

It is important to remember that he does not approve of beginning the theistic inference by proving God's "necessary existence, absolute perfection, infinity, and eternity" from in-

¹Flint, Theism, p.68.
²Flint, Theism, p.271.
tuitive principles or innate ideas, and inference from a priori ideas. Hence, Flint prefers the Platonic form of the a priori argument, because he feels it is "a priori inasmuch as it rests on necessary ideas, but a posteriori inasmuch as it proceeds from these ideas upwards to God in a manner which is essentially analytic and inductive." 2

While not championing any particular argument of Plato's, Flint affirms Platonism to be "substantially true." "What is essential in its theory of ideas, and in the theism inseparable from that theory" can never be gainsaid, declares Professor Flint. 3 And anyone after Plato who establishes God's existence upon the essential principles of knowledge wins Flint's approbation even although he elsewhere concedes that no one had presented a conclusive argument. 4 What is certain, in Flint's opinion, is that the opposition lodged by the empiricists and positivists against

1 Flint, Theism, p.257. In his review of Kant's criticisms of the Ontological argument, Flint notes that Kant, "proceeds from the idea of an all-perfect Being." "But," retorts Flint, "to arrive at such an idea, the elements of it, the perfections included in it—power, wisdom, goodness, righteousness—must surely have been cognised or believed in as attributes of the Divine. And they could only be cognised or believed in by some such modes of apprehension or inference as are designated the cosmological, physico-theological, or moral proofs. To the extent that God is known in any of these ways He is known as existing." (Agnosticism, p.221.)

2 Flint, Theism, p.271.

3 Flint, Theism, p.271.

4 "We cannot deduce the infinite from the finite, the perfect from the imperfect, the absolute from the relative." (Flint, Theism, p.68.)
the followers of the Platonic approach is ineffective. The universal possession of the "ideas or intuitions of infinity, eternity, necessary existence, and perfection" cannot be denied and must be explained.¹

To say with Herbert Spencer or Mansel that reasoning about an infinite and absolute Being involves one in irresolvable or equally inexorable self-contradictions is to withdraw all confidence in human reason, Flint claims. Indeed, self-contradictions of thought are avoided by attributing infinity to the First Cause. "It is only by the apprehension of a Being who passeth knowledge that knowledge can be rendered self-consistent."² At the same time, Flint wants critics such as Spencer and Mansel to realize that he is not purporting to comprehend God when apprehending Him. All a theist claims to know is that whatever the First Cause is, it is opposite of the finite, relative, and imperfect.³

Man's apprehension of God, according to Flint, involves the a posteriori use of the a priori argument, that is, it is an inference from an "intuition of reason." God is not intuitively known,⁴ but the rational intuition of infinity is intuitively attributed to the idea of an Intelligent and Moral First Cause formed from the a posteriori arguments. The idea of God capable of being conceived by man naturally is not complete until this

¹Flint, Theism, p.290.
²Flint, Theism, p.297.
³Flint, Theism, pp.297-300.
⁴Flint, Theism, pp.445-446.
final intuition is added. "The conclusions of the a posteriori arguments fail to satisfy either mind or heart until they are connected with, and supplemented by, this intuition of the reason—infinity. The conception of any other than an infinite God—a God unlimited in all perfections—is a self-contradictory conception which the intellect refuses to entertain."¹ Flint is saying, therefore, that the idea of an infinite God is the result of an inference necessary for thought. The mind cannot operate coherently without it, once the notion of a First Cause has been formulated, a notion itself necessarily formulated by the mind, "The first and ultimate Being, and not any derived and dependent being, must obviously be the infinite eternal, and perfect Being," declares Flint.²

It is thus understandable how Flint can disapprove of all forms of the a priori or ontological arguments regarded as formal demonstrations and yet approve of their conclusion. The simplest statement of the a priori argument is the best in order to avoid confusion, he contends. All that is needed is just enough reasoning to show that God is not known in an immediate intuition. But any and all such reasoning presupposes "an immediate apprehension of the infinite." The sole function of the a priori arguments is to establish "that that apprehension implies the reality and presence of God."³ So it is that Flint finds the first statement of the a priori argument to be the best. It is the simplest.

¹Flint, Theism, p.291.
²Flint, Theism, p.266.
³Flint, Theism, p.289.
The "Platonic argument from necessary ideas" is capable of going as far as any other form of the a priori argument and less likely to confuse. The other forms are not so catholic because of their abstruse character, he asserts. However, Flint dutifully defends all forms from their traditional enemies since he finds it impossible to assume, with Kant, that "existence cannot be given or reached through thought."¹ That form of the a priori argument Anselm derived from Cleanthes the Stoic—"that from the very idea of God as the highest Being his necessary reality may be strictly deduced"—Flint vindicates of the standard charge of having four instead of three terms. According to Flint, Gaunilo overlooked the fact that Anselm was claiming to predicate specific or determinate existence, not mere existence which admittedly is not predicative. And "real and necessary existence" is necessary for a complete idea of God.²

A similar approach is taken by Flint to the two a priori Cartesian proofs. Descartes may not have been correct when asserting the conclusiveness of the argument that the only possible cause of the idea of an infinite and perfect being is such a being. But the standard refutations are certainly invalid, alleges Flint. The ideas of infinity and perfection are not simply generalisations from experience, nor are they merely subjective. The infinite must be thought of as outside the human mind. The infinite is the verbal correlative of the finite, similarly with perfection and imperfection, admits Flint. But this admission

¹Flint, Theism, p.284.
²Flint, Theism, pp.277-280.
does not mean they are nothing more than verbal correlatives. The reason given by Flint is the impossibility of thinking them to be so limited. The claim that not all men have the idea of perfection is also granted without refuting Descartes' argument, says Flint, because the argument is "founded on the existence of the idea of a perfect being, and not on the perfection of the idea itself." The other Cartesian a priori argument is treated like Anselm's by Flint. He does not think Cudworth, Leibnitz or Mendelssohn improved on it.

Of the eighteenth century a priori arguments "based on the notions of existence and causality" Flint finds some "not easy to detect flaws in." The more he studies them the more convinced he becomes "that they are pervaded by a substantial vein of truth." In his Encyclopaedia Britannica article on Samuel Clarke, Flint defends Clarke from the usual but misinformed interpretation of his view of time and space in relation to God as set forth in Clarke's demonstration of the existence of God. The truth Flint

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1 Flint, Theism, pp.280-282.
2 Flint, Theism, pp.282-284.
3 Clarke has been wrongly accused of using a strictly a priori argument, Flint maintains. The truth is that Clarke claims to use and did use an a posteriori argument. The a priori element comes in only after an "immutable, independent, and necessary being" has been proven, says Flint. Thus, while admittedly holding space and time, eternity and immensity, to be attributes of a self-existent being, Clarke did not begin his theistic argument here, but rather with the a posteriori arguments. (Flint, "Samuel Clarke," Encyclopaedia Britannica, 9th ed., V, p12.) This is Flint's analysis. Apart from Clarke's definition of space and time as attributes of God there seems to be a great similarity in the general method of Clarke's and Flint's demonstration of God. However, there is another difference. Clarke regarded God as demonstrated; Flint did not have so much confidence as Clarke. For Flint, God was not demonstrated completely but far more than all the alternatives.
sees in all such theistic demonstrations appearing in the
eighteenth century was their attempt "logically to evolve what
was implied in certain primary intuitions or fundamental con-
ditions of the mind." To deny propositions like the following is
rational suicide, asserts Flint: "Something has existed from
eternity; the eternal Being must be necessarily existent, immu-
table, and independent; there is but one unoriginated Being in the
universe; the unoriginated Being must be unlimited or perfect in
all its attributes, etc." Even although the existence of an
"infinite and eternal Being" is not thereby established, Flint
maintains that the only alternative open is the complete dis-
avowal of the trustworthiness of the reasoning faculties. ¹ The
a priori arguments do not yield a "direct positive proof, but
they constitute a reductio ad absurdum, which is just as good,"
concludes Flint.²

In short, Flint's conception of the a priori arguments is
the following. The idea of the Intelligent and Moral First Cause
gained a posteriori is incomplete because all the sources of in-
formation have not been tapped. There exist in the minds of men
the "ideas or intuitions of infinity, eternity, necessary exist-
tence, and perfection." To whom should they be attributed? Who
else but the Intelligent and Moral First Cause previously dis-
covered, is Flint's reply. And in his Anti-Theistic Theories he
systematically eliminates all other contenders for the title of
infinite, eternal, and so forth. The atheist, the materialist,

¹Flint, Theism, pp.284-286.
²Flint, Theism, p.287.
the positivist, the secularist, the pessimists (Buddhists, Schopenhauer, Von Hartmann, and so forth), and the pantheists are bound to the finite and so are unable to account for the universal ideas of infinity.

The time has obviously come for an investigation of the metaphysical assumptions which lie behind Flint's appeal "to what is essential" in Platonism.

To begin with, it is clear that the Common Sense Realist Flint is not advocating what he regards\(^1\) as the Platonic deprecation of the "science of phenomena" in favour of a "region of types, exemplars, conceptions, ideas" "beyond phenomena." To do so would be, in his eyes, "directly antagonistic to the spirit of modern science."\(^2\) Flint accuses Hegel, Fichte, and Schelling of making the same error as Plato and his followers, namely, that of imagining that "science is not to be reached through observation, analysis, and generalisation of phenomena; that there can be no true science of the laws of phenomena."\(^3\)

Instead, Flint taught that all scientific investigation serves "to extend our knowledge of laws...physical, moral, or spiritual...which all agree in being laws of God, the operations of His will, the expressions of His character, the rules which

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\(^1\)There is no doubt that Flint detected only the ontological idealism in Plato. He expresses approval of Groom Robertson's comment that "'Platonic Realism and Platonic Idealism are one and the same doctrine, Plato is a Realist because of the reality he ascribed to ideas, and an Idealist because it is ideas to which he ascribed reality.'" (Elements of General Philosophy, p.72; quoted by Flint, Agnosticism, p.399.)

\(^2\)Flint, Philosophy as Scientia Scientiarum, p.74. Cf. Agnosticism, pp.399-400; Anti-Theistic Theories, pp.542-543.

\(^3\)Flint, Philosophy of History, 1st. ed., p.434.
He has implanted in His creatures and assigned to them as the conditions and limits of their workings."\(^1\) In another passage Flint affirms that "the laws and relations discovered by science—the adjustments and harmonies which prevail throughout creation—are expressions of the thoughts of Infinite Intelligence into communion with which it is permitted us in some feeble degree to enter—are revelations of the character of the Creator!"\(^2\)

It is in the light of statements such as these that Flint's defense of "the Platonic argument from necessary ideas" must be viewed.\(^3\) Flint is willing to pronounce as "substantially true" the "reasoning"—not any particular argument—"which underlies and pervades ... [Plato's] ... entire philosophy as a speculative search for certainty."\(^4\) It will now be shown that the reason Flint is willing to say this is because he has complemented his Common Sense Realism, with the Christianised version of the Platonic theory of ideas.\(^5\)

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3. Flint, *Theisa*, p.276. As explained earlier, Flint understood the Platonic argument to be "a priori inasmuch as it rests on necessary ideas, but a posteriori inasmuch as it proceeds from these ideas upwards to God in a manner which is essentially analytic and inductive. Only when God—the principle of principles—is reached, can it become synthetic and deductive." (p.271)
Flint approves of Augustine's doctrine that "the laws of our intellectual and moral constitution ... are eternally inherent" in God. Similarly, Flint registers satisfaction with Anselm's conclusion that "the goodness constitutive of good actions has necessarily its source in God, and that the absolutely and essentially good is identical with God;" the same applies to Anselm's convictions that "the absolute and ultimate truth must be God." To this extent Flint finds Aquinas in harmony with Anselm: "The very nature of knowledge seemed to him [Aquinas] to show that it was in man only through the dependence of the human intelligence on an undrerived and perfect intelligence." Flint is further pleased to find the same doctrine in Lord Herbert of Cherbury: Flint has reference to Herbert's "universal notions of ... the rational instinct ... --the laws of all thought, affection, and action ... [which are] thoughts of God present in the mind of man ... [yielding] intuition [of ... Divine attribute]. Again, Cudworth, the great Cambridge Platonist is commended for his doctrine that "knowledge ... is possible only through ideas which have their source in an eternal reason." Flint concedes that Leibnanche and John Norris have exaggerated this doctrine; he thinks "better guarded statements of the Platonic argument from necessary ideas will be found in Leibnitz, and Bossuet, and Fenelon," as well as in the more recent theisms of "Ulrici, Hettinger, and Luthardt, of Saissat and Simon, of Thompson and Tulloch." Cousin is charged with squeezing more out of the argument than is in it. But Flint proceeds to make the following comments:

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1Flint, Theism, p.272.
"We may reject, however, his Cousin's opinion that reason is not individual or personal, without rejecting with it the substance at least of what he has so eloquently said regarding the necessary ideas which govern the reason, or the reasoning by which he seeks to show that truth is incomprehensible without God, and that all thought implies a spontaneous faith in God."

Flint's approval of Cousin's Platonism takes on added significance when the following assertion by Flint concerning Cousin is read:

"Discounting a few inaccurate phrases, his theory as to the nature of the theistic process is substantially identical with that expounded in ... Cousin's/ lecture/s/. Its purport is not that reason directly and immediately contemplates the Absolute Being, but that it is enabled and necessitated by the essential conditions of cognition, the a priori ideas of causality, infinity, etc., to apprehend Him in His manifestations."

The question immediately arises as to the possibility of an intellectual debt to Cousin on the part of Flint. The answer is

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1 Flint, Theism, pp.272-276. Flint probably has in mind Cousin's lectures on "Du Vrai, du Beau, et du Bien" which had been delivered in 1817 but not published until rewritten in 1845, thereby reflecting Cousin's gradual separation from German Idealism and recasting of his philosophy in a "Cartesian sense" after 1828. (Oberweg, History of Philosophy, 2nd Eng. ed. From 4th German ed., II, 342. Cf. Flint's comments on this volume of Cousin's in Philosophy of History, 2nd ed., pp.453-454.) In the published form of those lectures Cousin justifies the "universal and necessary truths" which "govern our intelligence" by finding them resident in God. He claims to be following the lead of Plato who, alleges Cousin, regarded "Ideas as being at once the principles of sensible things, of which they are the laws, and the principles also of human knowledge, which owes to them its light, its rule, and its end, and the essential attributes of God, that is to say, God himself." (V. Cousin, Lectures on the True, the Beautiful, and the Good, trans. C. W. Wight 3rd ed., Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark; 1854, pp.76 and 83.) Then after twenty-two pages of citations from Augustine, Aquinas (only one citation), Descartes (although Cousin does not think Descartes ever read Plato), Malebranche, Fenelon, Bossuet, and Leibnitz, Cousin makes the following claim. "From Plato to Leibnitz, the greatest metaphysicians have thought that absolute truth is an attribute of absolute being. Truth is incomprehensible without God, as God is incomprehensible without truth." (p.105.)

2 Flint, Theism, pp.355-356.
difficult to ascertain because of Cousin's own debt to the Scottish school. There is no evidence for supposing that Cousin gave Flint anything that has heretofore been argued to have come from Reid, Hamilton, R. A. Thompson, and Butler. But Flint's explicit appeal to the Augustinian theory of ideas, underlined by his laudation of Cousin, contrasts sharply with Reid and Hamilton who throw out such a theory, and with Thompson, and Butler who obviously are in some debt to the theory in question but are extremely taciturn on the subject. Indeed, a comparison of Cousin's work, *The True, The Beautiful, and The Good*, pp. 80-108, with Flint's *Theism*, pp. 269-276—pages dealing with the a priori proofs of God—will reveal too many similarities of approach, thought, and expression to suppose that Flint did not have Cousin's volumes, among others, in front of him as he wrote these pages of *Theism*.

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1 Cousin's predecessor, friend, and favoured teacher was Hoyer-Collard, who, "abandoning Condillac, turned for inspiration to the Scottish School (particularly to Reid)." (Gunn, *Modern French Philosophy*, p. 23.) Cousin went on to develop an "Eclectic Philosophy" the greatest component of which was the "idealism" "constituted by Plato, renewed by Descartes." Cousin thinks that in the 18th century this idealism was "especially represented in different degrees, by Reid and Kant." Cousin further opines: "We wholly accept Reid, with the exception of his historical views. There are two parts in Kant—the analytical part and the dialectical part... we admit the one and reject the other." (*Lectures on the True, the Beautiful, and the Good*, pp. 408-409. Cf. p. 28.) "We regard Reid as common sense itself." "Common sense is to us the only legitimate point of departure, and the constant and inviolable rule of science. Reid never errs; his method is true, his general principles are incontestable. Kant is far from being as sure a guide as Reid." (p. 403.)

2 Several other examples of a striking similarity between Flint and Cousin could be cited; one suffices: According to Flint we have "necessary conditions of thought and feeling and ineradicable aspirations which force on us ideas of absolute existence, infinity, and perfection, and will neither permit us to deny these perfections to God nor to ascribe them to any other being." (*Theism*, p. 68.) Says Cousin: "The true, the beautiful, and the
Granted the close connection and agreement of the metaphysical assumptions and procedure of Flint's theistic inference with that of Cousin, it is possible to use statements by Cousin to clarify what might seem a discordancy between Flint's position and that of another thinker beside Cousin, R. A. Thompson, with whom Flint expresses essential agreement.\(^1\) Thompson is listed by Flint as being a protagonist of the "Platonic argument from necessary ideas" for God.\(^2\) Yet Thompson, taking his Hamiltonian view of perception more seriously than did Flint, laid far more emphasis on the law of causality as the ultimate hope for the mind's movement from the subjective to the objective. Hence, he announces that Descartes' psychological form of the a priori argument for God is decidedly the best.\(^3\) Remembering that, as Mascall says, "for Descartes our knowledge of God's existence arises . . . not from our experience of the world . . . but from an innate idea implanted in our minds by God at our creation,"\(^4\) it would appear that Thompson is taking up a position contrary to Flint's. In reality, however, there is no discrepancy between Flint and Thompson, just a difference of emphasis. Thompson adds:

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\(^1\) Flint, Agnosticism, p. 408.

\(^2\) Flint, Theism, p. 276.

\(^3\) That is, the form in which Descartes represents God as the cause of the conception of an infinite, eternal, all-perfect Being. Thompson, Christian Theism, I, 286, 289, 292.

mits that his conviction of God's cause of the idea of God, unless it be regarded as a ratiocination, must be "established on common principles of knowledge."¹ This entails, for him, that the various a posteriori arguments for God must first be adduced before the a priori is brought up. Both kinds of arguments thus taken together show that actually only one proof of God is valid, namely, that "whole proof" which "consists in the exhibition of the process by which the mind gains possession of the idea"—a possession gained spontaneously and almost instantaneously by the mind in its "intercourse" with the objectively real world.²

The order of the several arguments in this "whole proof" is determined in Thompson's system by their own logical and chronological order: first the cosmological, then the "physico-theological," and lastly the "psychological," which he describes as "a statement of the whole result of the process in the mind, and the ascription of the resulting idea to an adequate Cause."³ From the foregoing examination of Flint's views it is clear that by so qualifying his assertion of Descartes' psychological argument Thompson has removed any bone of contention between himself and Flint.⁴ At least Flint must have thought so, for he regards Thompson as one who uses the Platonic argument.

This unusual adaptation of Descartes by Thompson, and by consent Flint, to fit what is presented by Flint as being in line

¹Thompson, Christian Theism, I, 292.
²Thompson, Christian Theism, I, 292-293. Italics are his.
³Thompson, Christian Theism, I, 294.
with "what is essential with the Platonic theory of ideas"\(^1\) receives clarification from the similar approach of Cousin. Although recognising that Plato had no direct influence upon Descartes, Cousin finds the Cartesian philosophy to be "full of the Platonic spirit." By that he means "the notion of the infinite and the perfect is for Descartes what the universal, the idea, is for Plato." Despite their differences—Plato going from "Ideas to God by the principle of substances," Descartes, using rather the principle of causality, going from the idea of the infinite and perfect to an infinite and perfect cause of these ideas—they are both the progenitors of his own method, confesses, Cousin. They both look to consciousness to find the way which "elevates us above the senses, and, by the intermediary of marvellous ideas that are incontestably in us, bears us toward him who alone can be their substance, who is the infinity and perfection." "For this reason," concludes Cousin, "Descartes belongs to the family of Plato and Socrates."\(^2\) It is for this same reason that Flint includes Thompson, as well as himself, within "the family of Plato."

It may be concluded then that Flint is an eclectic as well as Cousin. Both begin their philosophising with, and by agreeing to the results of, Reid's inductive study of the phenomena of consciousness. Both continue their system building after Reid, finished with his analysis, stops. Under Reid's tutelage their psychological analysis has revealed that, in order to apprehend

\(^1\)Flint, Theism, p.271.

either itself as an object or the independently existing real external world, the mind makes use of certain universal and necessary principles which are neither abstracted from phenomena nor reflectively known by the mind until after its confrontation with its object(s). These principles—that of causality, of substances, of time, of space, of the infinite, etc.—are not, as Kant would have it, limited to the classification of our sensations. Thus far Reid went. He did not venture out on the topic of why first principles must be regarded as objectively valid, except to explain that the "intuitive" "judgment of the truth" of certain propositions "follows the apprehension of them necessarily, and both are equally the work of nature, and the results of our original powers."¹ But Flint and Cousin are ready to push the search further. They want to know more about the universal and necessary truths which the first principles of thought enable man to discover. Deciding against Kant that these truths are not manufactured by man; and against Aristotle that they do not reside solely in nature, in particular beings; and against the view they (Cousin explicitly,² Flint implicitly) consider Aristotle to have erroneously attributed to Plato, namely, that absolute truths subsist in and of themselves eternally; resort is made to Plato as they believe him to be correctly interpreted. Interpreting Plato's theory of ideas in terms of the Common Sense principle that "truth necessarily appeals to something beyond itself; that every phenomenon has its subject of inherence, as our faculties, our

¹Reid, Works, ed. Hamilton, I, 434.
thoughts, our volitions, our sensations, exist only in a being which is ourselves," Cousin and Flint see Plato as the first to have propounded their own conclusion that, in the words of Cousin, "truth supposes a being in which it resides, and absolute truths suppose a being absolute as themselves, wherein they have their final foundation."¹

Before leaving Cousin, a little should be said about how he differs from Flint. Flint's repudiation of Cousin's doctrine of the impersonality of reason² is well conceived. This doctrine of Cousin's led him perilously close to pantheism, for God became the substance and cause of the world in every sense. It is not necessary to labour through Cousin's view here;³ suffice it to say, Flint did not come close to pantheism⁴ and he rejected that portion of Cousin's metaphysics which led to it.

The point being made in this section is that the metaphysical assumptions of Flint's theistic inference, in particular his a priori argument, while often expressed in the terminology of "the philosophy of the Absolute" are based on the Platonic theory of ideas modified and brought into Christian thought by Augustine, and again modified to fit the modern concepts of substance and causality. In short, Flint holds that finite reason is able to


⁴This was shown above, pp.122-132.
apprehend the Infinite God by virtue of the necessary and universal truths of finite reason which are manifestations of Absolute Reason, revelations of God's attributes, thoughts of the Creator reflected in the laws of creation and linking man and God.¹

The following are a few more quotations from Flint's writings which substantiate this point:

"Whenever our views of truth, of righteousness, of love, of happiness rise above experience; whenever we have ideals of existence and conduct which transcend the actual life...--our minds and hearts are really, although it may be unconsciously, feeling after God. It is only in and through God that there is anything to correspond to these ideals and longings. The sources of...all mental, moral, and religious progress...are the truths and affections by which Infinite Goodness is drawing men to itself...All philosophy is forever indebted to Plato for his great message to the world, that the actual and the ideal meet and harmonise in God, who is at once the First and the Final Cause, the Absolute Idea, the Highest Good...God, as the presupposition of all elevating ideals, and the object of all ennobling desires, is the primary source and the ultimate explanation of all progress."²

"We may, indeed, speak of God as the idea of ideas, the ideal of ideals, but only intelligently when we then also think of Him as the ens realissimum, the source of all existence and energy, truth and goodness."³

"The Creator Himself--the absolutely perfect God--the Highest Good--is, as Plato and Anselm so profoundly taught, the only best possible Being. In Him alone the actual is coincident and identical with the possible, the real with the ideal."⁴

"God as the perfectly good is not only Absolute Truth, and Absolute Holiness, but also Absolute Beauty. He is the source, the author, the giver of all beautiful things and qualities."⁵

¹The last part of this sentence is a paraphrase of the concluding statement of R. B. Perry's discussion of Cousin's philosophy. (R. B. Perry, Philosophy of the Recent Past [London: Charles Scribner's Sons; 1927], p.106.)
²Flint, Theism, pp.56-58.
³Flint, Agnosticism, p. 205. Italics are his.
⁴Flint, Theism, p.240.
⁵Flint, Sermons and Addresses, p.29.
"Human thought, with all its limits and imperfections has what is absolute in it as well as what is relative, and can, while truly remaining thought and obeying the laws of its own nature, reach a knowledge of the Absolute, because the Absolute is knowledge and Thought, not the Unknowable, not what is extraneous and alien to Thought."^1

"There is a world of verities, accessible in some degree to the mind of man, beyond the created world,--there are absolute truths which cannot be thought of as otherwise than certain before a particle of matter or any finite spirit was called into being--truths essential to intelligence as such, and therefore truths which must from all eternity have belonged to the self-existent intelligence."^2

Flint praises Vico for the latter’s "conviction that the entire history of mankind is but the eternal idea of that history which existed in the divine mind realised and manifested in actual events." Vico is thereupon designated as being "of the kindred of Plato, Augustine, and Dante."^3

3. The relationship of Flint’s view on knowledge of God’s metaphysical attributes to the views of others of the Common Sense school

By metaphysically establishing through the use of a Christianised Platonism (in the sense described above) the unusually strong role he as a Reidian gave to rationalism in his method, Flint has not necessarily removed himself from the main stream of the Scottish Philosophy. In commenting on the fact that the Scottish Philosophy never seriously attempted to work out an ontological system of its own, A. Seth (Fringle-Pattison) says of the adherents of this school: "for their personal ontology,

^1Flint, Vico, p.108.
if we may so speak, they simply fell back upon the language of
religion, which relates God to the world as its Creator, and to
man also as his Creator and, in a special sense, his Father and
God." Seth goes on to point out that the Scottish school always
had a natural inclination toward the "interests of rationalism."
The dualism of the Scottish Philosophy "is an opposition in which
both the factors are known." He contrasts this view with that of
the "representationists and relativists" who "assert an opposition
between mind and something which is essentially unapproachable by
mind, and which might, therefore, be plausibly cited as an
irreducible surd in the universe of being."1

As far as the relationship of Flint's position to that of the
three great leaders of the Scottish school (Reid, Hamilton, and
Ferrier) is concerned, it is now possible to say something more.

At the end of the second chapter it was noted that all four
men were attempting to explain or defend the Common Sense prin-
ciples of thought. Both Reid and Hamilton, the latter self-
assertedly less than the former, were eventually restricted to

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1 Andrew Seth, Scottish Philosophy, pp. 214, 216. Cf. J. M'Cosh,
Scottish Philosophy, p. 290. On p. 268 M'Cosh relates that "the
Scottish Philosophy never attempted, as the German philosophy did
(greatly to the injury of religion), to absorb theology into it-
self; but keeping to its own field, that of inductive psychology,
it allowed the students to follow their own convictions, evan-
gelical or rationalistic; but training all to a habit of skilful
arrangement and exposition. It enabled and it led the theological
professors to dwell on the relation between the truths of God's
Word, and the fundamental principles of human nature; to lay deep
and solid foundations for moral principles, to impart a moral
tone to their teaching in divinity, and to expound, clearly and
wisely, the arguments for the existence of God and the immor-
tality of the soul."
simply believing, for instance, that a real and independently existing external world is the object of perception.\footnote{Davie explains it thus: In contrast with Hume on the far left who asserted that our common sense beliefs, while unretac-
itable, have no final justification since they are "in fact con-
tradicted by experience," Reid and Hamilton took a middle posi-
tion. They held that "while beliefs of common sense are not in-
consistent with experience, and are not logically discreditable,
they are nevertheless defensible in empirical terms only up to a
certain point, and contain in fact an irreducible element of
mystery." (The Democratic Intellect, p.275.)} Ferrier, on
the other hand, not content to simply trust the authority of
our natural beliefs laid it down as his foundational rational
principle that the percipient must know the reality of the not-
self for the same reason that the percipient must know his own
reality. From that rational principle of the necessary synthesis
of the subject and object, self and not-self, in cognition,
Ferrier deduced that since the subject-object synthesis comprised
all knowable existence, and since ignorance is possible only of
the knowable, there existed in every respect nothing more than a
mind or "minds-together-with-that-which-they-apprehend."\footnote{Ferrier,
Institutes, p.510.}
\footnote{Ferrier, Institutes, p.500.}
This, in turn, lead to the further conclusion that the one, necessary
Absolute Existence "is a supreme, and infinite, and everlasting
Mind in synthesis with all things."\footnote{Davie decides that "Ferrier
clearly elected a middle way between the extremes of monism and
pluralism, and his programme involved neither the Coleridgean
inflation of Common Sense nor a Benthamitic mutilation of it." (The Democratic
Intellect, p.281.)}
Ferrier, then, while not leaving the defense of Common Sense principles has advanced by
means of rationalism rather far toward a metaphysical monism.\footnote{S. A
Grave, writing a year before Davie and at Ferrier's own
university, St. Andrews, is not so easy on Ferrier. Grave bluntly

1Ferrier.

2Ferrier, Institutes.

3Ferrier, Institutes.

4Ferrier, Institutes, p.510.

5Ferrier, Institutes, p.500.

6Davie, Democratic Intellect, p.275.

7Ferrier, Institutes, p.510.
Not seeing any disharmony between Ferrier's and Hamilton's conception of the "absolute" of knowledge, Flint claimed to adopt Ferrier's basic rational principle. But Flint has now been shown to have not gone over into absolute idealism (despite his attempts to appear as palatable as possible to the absolute idealists), but to have stayed in the camp of Reid. Yet, while believing with Reid in the Common Sense first principles, Flint advances beyond Reid by finding a Christian metaphysical justification for our acceptance of the authority of our natural beliefs. That justification is that the universe is constructed according to the "eternal thoughts" of the Creator. Thus Flint is not so bold as Ferrier in his answer to Hamilton's agnosticism; but if, in accordance with Davie, Ferrier be classified as "on the rationalist extreme" of the Common Sense school, then Flint may be said to stand between that position and the "intuitionist centre" of Reid. Moreover, the fact that Ferrier and Flint were on the same wing of the Scottish Philosophy, Flint not as far out as Ferrier, further explains Flint's frequent appeal to Ferrier's "basic rational principle" as the "corner-stone" of his own epistemology, as well as his generally high regard for Ferrier.

decrees that Ferrier "Hegelianised Hamilton with a version of absolute idealism which he claimed was native to Scotland." (Scottish Philosophy, p.129.)

1 See above, pp.52, 77-84.

2 Democratic Intellect, p.279.

3 He refers to Ferrier as "this most subtle thinker and most graceful writer." (Theism, p.434.) Flint also gifted leather-bound two-volumed sets of Ferrier's Institutes as class prizes in his Moral Philosophy classes. (The New College Library of Edinburgh University contains two of these volumes with Flint's dedication message in the fly-leaf.)
Flint's disallowance of an immediate or intuitive knowledge of God is a characteristic distinguishing him from most fellow-theists using the Scottish Philosophy, while aligning him with Reid and R. A. Thompson. James M'Cosh also took a position similar to that of Flint but there is no evidence of a direct influence of M'Cosh upon Flint. The other theists using the Scottish Philosophy whose works were capable of influencing Flint in his intellectually formative years held that God was intuitively, however inarticulately, apprehended. These men were John Tulloch, H. Calderwood, and W. R. Firie. Later in Flint's career,

1Reid, Works, ed. Hamilton, I, 434-441, 452-461.
4John Tulloch, Theism (Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood and Sons; 1855), pp.288, 291-292. Flint's disagreement with Tulloch's position here and elsewhere (e.g., compare Tulloch's introductory summary of his theistic argumentation in which he combines the Cosmological and Teleological arguments together in such a way as to lay the whole stress on the Teleological argument [pp.11-137]), underlines Flint's debt to R. A. Thompson because of the following considerations: (1) Tulloch's Theism was the second place Burnett Prize Essay of 1854 (the reader will recall that competition), hence it is likely that Flint read both Tulloch's and Thompson's works at the same time. (2) Tulloch was one of the most important and influential philosophical theologians in the Church of Scotland during Flint's years of training, pastoral ministry, and as a young university professor. (Whereas Thompson remained an obscure pastor in Lincolnshire, England.) Indeed, there is evidence that Flint, not unmindful of Tulloch's position, overtly sought to enlist Tulloch's interest in his scholarly pursuits and abilities while still a pastor. (Cf. Macmillan's Life of A. Flint, pp.104-105.) It should also be known that Tulloch was Principal of St. Andrews University when Flint went there a few years later as Professor of Moral Philosophy.

5The Philosophy of the Infinite (3rd ed.; London and New York: Macmillan and Co.; 1872), pp.24-23. Calderwood was the Professor of Moral Philosophy at Edinburgh at the same time Flint held the Divinity Chair.

6Professor of Divinity at Aberdeen. For his view, see above, p. 41.
W. Knight\textsuperscript{1} and, to a certain extent, W. L. Davidson\textsuperscript{2} were among those who argued for an intuitive, distinguished from an inferential, natural knowledge of God.

A word should here be said about Chalmers' influence upon Flint. No ministerial student and young, philosophically inclined pastor in Scotland in the 1850's and 1860's could have been unaware of Chalmers' contributions to natural theology. Moreover, Chalmers, like Flint, does not allow an intuitive knowledge of God. But there are too many significant differences between Chalmers and Flint to permit the designation of the latter as the disciple of the former.\textsuperscript{3}

E. Summary and Conclusion of the Discussion of Flint's Views on the Origin of Man's Knowledge of God

Flint has been seen to regard our ideas of infinity as referring to attributes of God in the same way as our ideas of God's other attributes are referred to their objects. "Our knowledge of God is not dependent on formal demonstrations but given us

\textsuperscript{1}Professor of Moral Philosophy at St. Andrews. (For his view, see above, p.41.)

\textsuperscript{2}Professor of Logic and Metaphysics at Aberdeen. (For his view, see above, p. 41.)

\textsuperscript{3}Chalmers had far less confidence in the a priori argument and correspondingly more confidence in the a posteriori arguments, especially the Moral argument, than did Flint. Moreover, the concept of an "organic proof" does not appear in Chalmers. (Thomas Chalmers, \textit{Works}, ZGlasgow: William Collins; 1835\textsuperscript{7}, I, 90-120.) Further, Chalmers has less respect for the "first principles" of the Scottish Philosophy than Flint; Chalmers thinks only one "first principle" is necessary for the theistic inference, namely, the "instinctive belief" in the "constancy of nature." (Chalmers, \textit{Works}, I, 138-139.)
through God's own manifestations of Himself in the facts of nature, consciousness, and history, and in the principles and conditions of our intellectual life."\(^1\) God's metaphysical attributes are known by us no differently than His other attributes or the attributes of any object of knowledge. And as an object of knowledge God is only known as fully as possible when all knowable attributes are ascribed to Him. "The essence of God," avers Flint, "is simply the nature of God as inclusive, not exclusive, of all the perfections which belong to God and which distinguish Him from His creatures." And so he concludes that the only knowledge of God's existence comes through knowledge of His manifested attributes. To know any object as mere existence apart from its qualities is impossible.\(^2\) A man does not even know his own nature "apart from its powers and affections," and there is no reason to suppose God to be known any more intimately, Flint strongly contends.\(^3\)

Flint's analysis of the process by which the idea of God is formulated should be apparent. It is a complex process of inference. "Like the idea itself," says Flint, it is "complex, and capable of being analysed." "It supposes distinct applications of the principles of causality, teleology, conscience, and speculative reason, as well as their combination and co-operation. It implies, in order to be complete, all the essential principles

\(^1\)Flint, *Agnosticism*, p.408.
\(^2\)Cf. Thompson, *Christian Theism*, I, 76.
of human nature."¹ This is why Flint regards the theistic arguments as an "organic" whole, each supporting the other and together, but only together, forming "parts of one comprehensive argument," "stages in a single rational process."²

In stressing the "organic" nature of the theistic inference, Flint is hoping to obviate the criticism that none of the "proofs" accomplish what they claim. Kant, for example, attacked each "proof" by itself.³ But while admitting Kant's case to be strong when the "proofs" are considered separately, Flint rejects his strictures when applied to the "proofs" considered together. An object cannot be expected to be known until all its observable attributes have been apprehended and referred to it. Moreover, the attempt to split up the process of knowledge is insulting to the "image of God" in man. Full recognition is thereby not given to the fact that all of man's faculties are used in apprehending God's manifestations, says Flint.⁴

The intimated analogy of knowledge of God drawn by Flint to

¹Flint, Theism, pp.445-446, Cf. pp.343-348. The idea of God, says Flint, is an analysable complex involving "all that is great and good in nature and man" as well as "perfections" not found on the mundane level. (p.76.)


⁴Flint, Theism, pp.68-69.
our knowledge of other selves will now be spelled out more specifically.¹ In an appendix footnote to Theism Flint's argumentation for this analogy is so succinctly, peculiarly, and typically stated that it is advisable to allow the contemporary reader to hear Flint speak for himself:

"The analogy between our knowledge of God and of the world obviously fails. Certain properties of matter are known by distinct primitive acts of perception. The eye, for example, sees colour. But surely the knowledge of God is not a primitive, perception, like the vision of colour. Then, as to self, in every act of consciousness, self is not merely implied but directly and immediately apprehended. Is God then apprehended in every act, or any act, of consciousness? Take away the universe, and we should no more know God than we could know a man who had no body. That just as between our fellow-men and us, so between God and us, there are media, while between certain properties of matter and our senses, and between ourselves and states of ourselves, there are no media, is a fact."²

In favour of the analogy of our knowledge of other selves he points out that in the case both of our knowledge of other selves and of God we infer certain qualities to be inherent in them because of the similarity between the manifestations of those qualities to our own directly or immediately known qualities. We do not immediately perceive intelligence in another man, for example, yet we perceive it immediately within our own consciousness. Because the other man exhibits intelligence in his acts, I assume he possesses the characteristic of intelligence.³ Even another man's existence is not perceived immediately but must be inferred

¹ The Common Sense view of personal identity permitting this analogy was noticed earlier. See above, pp. 87, 91.


³ Flint, Theism, pp. 76-77. In passing, it may be noted that here lies one of the main reasons for Flint's conviction of the progressiveness of man's knowledge of God. As more of God's acts are observed, inference of his character becomes more accurate.
from the manifestations of his characteristics compared with one's own, according to Flint.¹

The kind of knowledge man can attain of God through creation and ordinary providence, then, according to Flint, is inferential. And it is an inferential knowledge made possible by that view of the structure of the knowledge-situation in the knowledge of self and the world which Flint has been shown in the previous chapter to have adopted, namely, that of Reid. This means that for Flint the inference of the existence and nature of other selves, and by analogy the inference of the existence and nature of God, from the observed manifestations of their attributes is grounded or made possible by a knowledge of self and the world in which the essential attributes of the objects of knowledge are directly known even though their substantival natures are not so known. Our knowledge of these substances is relative to their attributes, but not, as with Hamilton, relative to our cognitive faculties. Hence, Flint's ultimate stronghold against the Hamiltonian denial of the possibility of a natural knowledge of God lies in his claim to have a direct or immediate perception of the primary qualities or attributes of the objects known and thereby a valid, though relative, knowledge of their substantival natures, thus permitting a reliable inference to the existence of other selves including God.

¹The inference of another man's existence and character from his manifestations was one of Reid's "first principles." (Works, ed. Hamilton, I, 456.) Reid compares knowledge of other selves and knowledge of God in exactly the same way as Flint. (p.46C.)
III. The Method of Knowledge of God

In final answer to Caldecott's allegation that Flint was practically adopting the method of Transcendentalism, it may now be affirmed that the idea of God does not, for Flint as it does for "the philosophers of the Absolute," arrange a higher order after lower categories have exhausted their ability to arrange the manifold data of experience known through perception. The Neo- Hegelian "Ideas of Reason" culminating in the "Idea of God" which "vindicates" the "subordinate reality" of the self and the world is a theory incompatible with Flint's.\(^1\) The idea of God in Flint's system originates from all experience as arranged and ordered by the categories and conditions of thought. A priori principles are essential to Flint's claim for knowledge of God. But the process of knowledge is from these necessary a priori principles to God through an inference whose underlying logic is both inductive—the experiential element, and intuitive (in the Reidian sense)—the mental element, but neither element originates nor functions independently. The idea of God is not an a priori principle nor is it the result of a primarily demonstrative or deductive inference. This fact must never be overlooked when analysing Flint's thought.

According to Flint (and R. A. Thompson), the conditions and principles of thought used in the theistic inference are discovered to exist only after an inductive investigation of the facts of the experience of consciousness, the phenomena of the mind. Of course these common sense principles operate spon-

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taneously and before their discovery. But reflection and the subsequent inferences made from them must await their detection through an a posteriori induction in the same way as physical laws are discovered. And the same procedure applies in Flint’s theistic inference.\(^1\) The a priori argument plays an important role but only after the a posteriori arguments have been adduced and only as part of the evidence.\(^2\) Speculative reasoning yielding conclusive demonstrations from a priori propositions not derived from observation and induction has no place in Flint’s method because for him the mind is not aware of a priori principles or of a priori ideas as abstract or general ideas. The real principles of metaphysical philosophy, for Flint as for Reid, are the definite principles by which our minds function. But these do not come before the consciousness as general principles; they are discovered only by induction. And only then can a scientific use of them be made in philosophical or theological speculation.

In the study of the mind an introspective method hopefully devoid of theorising was employed by Reid and Flint. And it is through this observation of the phenomena of mind that they claimed to have learned the fact that man’s knowledge penetrates to reality and Reality. The confirmation or proof of this fact employs the same method. How does and must the mind function? This is the most important question, says the Common Sense Realist. The proper answer, he replies, is to observe, collect the evidence, and make the indicated inferences. According to

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\(^1\)Cf. Thompson, *Christian Theism*, I, 292-297; *Natural Theology*, pp.54-55.

Flint, there are two and only two methods "which can possibly lead to truth." These methods, "which, however, may, and often must, be conjoined" are "induction—the gradual and regular ascent from experience to science, from facts to laws" and "deduction"—the method which "must start from principles which are either self-evident to every sound intellect, or fully established by a foregoing induction." To begin with "the absolute" of "Kant, Schelling, Hegel, and Cousin" is unacceptable to Flint.¹

It may also be affirmed that in spite of Flint’s desire to give experience its full hearing his method is not that of the theist who holds to an empirical philosophy of religion. Bertocci defines James Martineau, A. Seth Pringle-Pattison, James Ward, William Sorley, and F. R. Tennant as setting-forth the empirical argument for God. Bertocci explains that they all "reject any logical rationalism and sense-bound empiricism"; they "all deny the validity of a priori arguments for theism and profess to proceed inductively to the conclusion that the existence of a certain kind of God is the best explanation of the whole of man’s experience."² But Flint has been seen to regard some of the traditional a priori arguments as valid when allied in a final position to the other arguments. Moreover, the God he discovers through natural revelation is not simply the "best explanation of the whole of man’s experience." God must be regarded as existent if man’s rational faculties are not totally delusive. Assuming

²P. A. Bertocci, The Empirical Argument For God In Late British Thought, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press; 1938), p.3. Bertocci includes A. E. Taylor in this classification, (footnote on p.3.).
Bertocci's use of the term "empirical" here to be correct, Flint is definitely not an empirical theist. Neither would Flint be an empiricist in the sense of one whose philosophical method was primarily experimental. This will be demonstrated in the next chapter by showing that the "experience" of God upon which Flint bases his strictly Christian knowledge of God is much too selective and subjectively-conditioned to place it among the data immediately observable to the "tough-minded" empirical investigator.

But the question should be put: If Flint wants to use a scientific method, what right does he have to call God anything more than the "best explanation"? As far as natural knowledge of God is concerned the following would be his answer: Admittedly God is not conclusively demonstrated, but the premises from which God is inferred are themselves the results of scientific observation and induction. The mind has been scientifically investigated and been found to operate in such a fashion that when confronted with Nature, it must think of God as existent.

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IV. Criticisms of Flint's Natural Theology

As already indicated, the problem of a solely inferential knowledge of other selves will come under scrutiny in the last chapter. The criticism that Flint has bound himself too closely to particular nineteenth century scientific theories will also be aired in the concluding chapter.

Criticisms of the type which would dismiss Flint's labours because he is to be numbered amongst those whose minds were still dominated by the Aristotelian metaphysics of substance and its qualities, with the attendant subject-predicate form of logic, are naturally much more serious. These objections call in question the very nature of scientific theories and their relation to the real world. Since, however, the basic issues involved in these criticisms are broader than the subject-matter of the present chapter, and since the developments in science and mathematics and logic provoking this type of stricture appeared mostly after Flint's time of writing, it will be expedient to postpone discussion of this matter until the final chapter.

The criticisms which Flint must under no circumstances be allowed to evade now are those inspired more directly by Hume and Kant, for it is precisely their objections to demonstrative rationalism in the philosophy of religion which he essayed to silence.

Hume, it will be recalled, in the Dialogues makes the character Philo argue that
"Every thing is surely governed by steady, inviolable laws. And were the inmost essence of things laid open to us, we should then discover a scene, of which, at present we can have no idea. Instead of admiring the order of natural beings, we should clearly see, that it was absolutely impossible for them, in the smallest article, ever to admit of any other disposition."¹

Again, Hume has his character Cleanthes proclaim as a truism that "whatever we conceive as existent, we can also conceive as non-existent." From this he moves to the following: "There is no being, therefore, whose non-existence implies a contradiction. Consequently there is no being, whose existence is demonstrable."²

Kant, it hardly needs mentioning, will be equally difficult for Flint to convince, for the former taught that:

"Our consciousness of all existence (whether immediately through perception, or mediately through inferences which connect something with perception) belongs exclusively to the unity of experience; any alleged existence outside this field, while not indeed such as we can declare to be absolutely impossible, is of the nature of an assumption which we can never be in a position to justify."³

Consequently, Kant felt that "the ideal of the supreme being is nothing but a regulative principle of reason, which directs us to look upon all connection in the world as if it originated from an all-sufficient necessary cause."⁴


³Kant, Critique of Pure Reason, trans. N. Kemp Smith, p.506. The bracketed word is the translator's.

⁴Kant, Critique of Pure Reason, trans. N. Kemp Smith, p.517. Italics are his.
It is manifestly beyond the scope of the present thesis to undertake a first-hand analysis of the viability and relative merits of the positions held by Hume, Reid, and Kant. By and large, the consensus of informed opinion on this question is typified in the following pronouncements made within the last couple of years: According to James Collins, the

Scottish school of common sense remained well within the ambit of empiricism despite its repudiation of the 'Cartesian' premises of modern philosophy. Its substitution of the function of mental suggestion for ideas did not resolve problems in a satisfactory way, since it left the precise nature of this suggestion a mystery. How the operations of the mind can suggest the existence of the material world and how the evidence of order in nature can suggest a first cause received no explanation at the hands of Reid and Stewart. Their appeal to the sanction of the intrinsic constitution of human nature for the causal principle, could be accommodated within Hume's theory of nature or habits of association and thus could be readily deprived of transsubjective import. It could also open the way to Kant's explanation of universality and necessity as functions of the mental forms or structures of the mind.\(^1\)

S. A. Grave, in the closing paragraphs save two of his mainly well-received\(^2\) critical examination of the Scottish Philosophy says the following:

"The philosopher who rejects a belief of common sense is bound, Reid thought, to show that it is mistaken and why it is universal; he has to find 'a cause of the error, as general as the error.'\(^3\) In fact, however, if the metaphysical beliefs of common sense are held to be self-evident and incapable of proof, he seems to have done his work sufficiently well when he has shown why the belief is universal. An empiricist like J. S. Mill, for instance, claimed to be able to account for the universality of certain beliefs by means of the laws of association of ideas.\(^7\) Questions of validity are indepen-


\(^3\) Grave is quoting Reid, *Works*, ed. Hamilton, I, 440.
dent of questions of origin, but not when evidence is self-evidence. But balancing this, when evidence is self-evidence, the beliefs it authenticates are always likely to appear more obviously true than any account of them which explains away their self-evidence. Self-evidence is always better and worse than other evidence in competition with it.

With Mill's Examination (1863), the philosophy of Common Sense, already old-fashioned, went quite out of date, both for those who thought with Mill and for most of his critics. Those who criticized Mill and wanted Hume answered, with few exceptions no longer wanted him answered in Reid's way, or they wanted Reid's answer taken up into Kant's, or given its modest place in an Hegelian synthesis.  

But, it might be argued, Flint did not depend solely upon Reid for the foundation of his theistic inference. Instead, he moved beyond Reid in the direction of rationalism by availing himself of the Christianised version of the Platonic theory of ideas. Reid had no explanation for the universally accepted causal relation. The sign and the thing signified in perception were somehow connected, but Reid did not know how. Hence, without a knowledge of real causation from the world perceived, he could not, in the final analysis, account for his claim that from an experienced world a real causal agent can be demonstrated. Theoretically at least, Reid had no justification for describing the teleology which he observed in the world as a caused teleology demanding a really existent, intelligent cause. The all-important question which Reid left unanswered was why a cause for the objects of knowledge or for the world as a whole was naturally "suggested" to the mind. Apparently Flint realised the great extent to which he as a Reidian would be dependent upon natural belief—the same

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1S. A. Grave, Scottish Philosophy, pp. 256-257. O. M. Jones would find himself in agreement with both of the above scholars. (Cf. O. M. Jones, Empiricism and Intuitionism in Reid's Common Sense Philosophy, esp. pp. 60-87. This topic will be pursued further in the final chapter of the thesis.)
natural belief upon which Hume depended—if he limited the arguments for God to the Cosmological and Teleological arguments, as Reid had done. Flint has been seen to admit that the God thereby known is not the infinite, perfect, and absolute God. Flint also has been observed acknowledging the force of the Kantian objections to the traditional arguments for God when those arguments are each considered as independent, self-sufficient units. It is only when the Platonic form of the a priori argument is added and when all the arguments function reciprocally that man's natural apprehension of God is properly described, according to Flint.

And the reason he thought it was an irrefutable characteristic of the human mind that the ideas of absolute existence and perfection cannot be withheld from the previously discovered First Cause is epitomised in the following statement:

"There is a world of verities, accessible in some degree to the mind of man, beyond the created world,—there are absolute truths which cannot be thought of as otherwise than certain before a particle of matter or any finite spirit was called into being—truths essential to intelligence as such, and therefore truths which must from all eternity have belonged to the self-existent intelligence."¹

Accordingly, Flint expresses approval of such arguments as Augustine's from the very nature of truth to the conclusion that "the laws of our intellectual and moral constitution cannot have their source in us, but must be eternally inherent in an eternal, unchangeable, and perfect Being."²

The reader is already aware of Reid's contention that such metaphysical speculation was beyond the grasp of the human under-

¹Flint, Philosophy of History, 1st ed., p.498.
²Flint, Theism, p.272.
standing. But the significance of one member of the Common Sense school disallowing the self-evidence of what another member affirms should perhaps receive further explication.

In essence, the Common Sense schools's retort to Hume and Kant was to the effect that there are some things we know, and we simply know that we know. To say that we do not know, to enunciate all kinds of paradoxes allegedly involved in our knowing what we know, is to raise false problems. The psychological facts are that we know, proffered logical arguments notwithstanding.

One of the common sense beliefs specified by Reid was "that from certain signs or indications in the effect, we may infer that there must have been intelligence, wisdom, or other intellectual or moral qualities in the cause." This being assumed, he wants the sceptics who refuse to see the "works of nature" as "the effects of a wise and intelligent Cause" to understand that, if consistent, they should also deny the "evidence of mind or design in any of their fellow-men." This has all been noted earlier in the discussion. The important thing to notice now is that for Reid the common sense belief involved here is "a principle which we get, neither by reasoning nor by experience": it is "a first principle,"¹ There can, then, be no doubt about our knowledge of the moral and Intelligent First Cause, unless there be some hesitation about the knowledge of other human minds; and, of course, for a Common Sense Philosopher there was not nor could be any such doubt about our fellow-men's minds. It is a psychological certainty admitting of no epistemological hypothesisation or "problemisation"

¹Reid, Works, ed. Hamilton, I, 460-461.
(if you please). The epistemological problem of the justification of such common sense beliefs was not to be distinguished from the psychological problem of their origin. Philosophy and common sense should not be set at cross-purposes, as Hume seemed to be doing, in Reid's estimation. It is self-contradictory to deny the dictates of common sense. The psychological facts constitute all the epistemological justification needed in such cases.

Keeping this in mind, and remembering that Reid would not countenance the metaphysical speculation necessary for any a priori theistic argument, it appears somewhat anomalous to find another adherent of the Scottish Philosophy not only evincing some uncertainty about the a posteriori arguments for God considered separately and apart from an a priori argument, but advocating the Platonic form of the a priori argument for God, and even not wanting to discount summarily the other forms of the a priori argument.

Exactly what is the nature of Flint's divergency from Reid here? For a start, he is obviously at odds with Reid on the question of whether it is self-contradictory to deny that our ideas of infinity and perfection have a real, independently existing referent in the Moral and Intelligent First Cause. Of course Reid would not wish to withhold God's attributes of infinity and perfection, but as noted earlier he does not think it is a matter of psychological certitude that prompts man to ascribe these attributes to the First Cause.

The second way Flint deviates from Reid with respect to the theistic inference is in his (Flint's) offering an epistemological justification for what he also describes as self-evident,
as a psychological fact. Evidently harbouring some doubt as to the full reliability of his allegedly self-evident ascription of attributes of infinity to the Moral and Intelligent First Cause, Flint feels the need of adducing the Christianised version of the Platonic theory of ideas. He endeavours to tell us why we can rest assured that error has been avoided when we express our belief in an independently real referent for our ideas of infinity and perfection. Apparently he is not satisfied, as a Common Sense Philosopher theoretically should be satisfied, to ground his belief in the absoluteness, infinity, and perfection of the Creator solely upon the fact that it would be self-contradictory not to so believe. Instead of relying implicitly upon the psychological fact of man's supposedly universal belief in such a God, Flint offers an epistemological justification which, in this case, is metaphysical. Our belief in an absolute and infinite God is not erroneous, says Flint, because the laws of creation, including the laws of the human mind, are expressions of eternal characteristics of God's mind. Indeed, the laws found operative in the realm of the creature are realisations and manifestations in actual events of ideas eternally resident in the Divine mind, of a plan conceived before the foundations of the world. In short, not only does Flint tacitly admit that what he represents as a logically necessary inference might be erroneous by giving another reason for relying on this inference, he goes even further from Reid's position by engaging in metaphysical speculation in order to ascertain the other reason—one could almost say the real reason—for confidently employing a priori notions in the theistic inference.
Aside from the fact that by even contemplating the need of an a priori argument as a component of the theistic inference, and by even considering the need of epistemologically justifying his use of an a priori argument, Flint was tacitly confessing his uncertainty as to the strength of the Common Sense position upon which his whole system was grounded, can it be said that Flint rendered the Scottish Philosophy’s defense of natural theology more impregnable to the onslaughts of Hume and Kant? The answer largely hinges upon the viability of the a priori argument to which Flint appeals. If he wants to appropriate a philosophical starting-point supplementary to that afforded by the beliefs of common sense, then he must be able to vindicate the new element to common sense as well as provide it with a support not wholly dependent upon common sense. How strong, then, is Flint’s a priori argument in itself? Let us scrutinise it, for example, with reference to God’s omniscience. A recent Scottish professor of Moral Philosophy, whose witness is all the more pertinent because of the considerable influence Common Sense Realism has had upon his own thought, may now be consulted.

John Laird describes the a priori argument for God preferred by Flint as being composed of "the Proof from the Sovereign Essences and the Proof from the Eternal Truths." Laird understands Flint to be operating here from "cradle-Platonism, the anima naturaliter Platonica supposed to reside in every human breast."¹

¹John Laird, Mind and Deity. (London: George Allen and Unwin, Ltd.; 1941), p.116. Laird refers to Flint’s Theism as "a work whose considerable merits are still admitted."
Turning to the "Proof from the Sovereign Essences," Laird explains its conception of the knowledge-situation thus:

"A reason, it is held, can always be given why anything is what it is. The solution is that anything is what it is in virtue of the Essence that makes it what it is. Its ratio essendi is identical with its ratio cogniscendi, and there is nothing that is without its adequate and constitutive ratio essendi. Therefore, we are told, nothing can be unknowable, and God's omniscience may be inferred if it can further be shown that anything that is knowable, is 'knowable' only because it is 'known'."

But Laird balks at this conclusion. Moreover he does not think there are many, including "cradle-Platonists," who would seriously contend "that it is wholly absurd to suppose that it is for ever impossible for anyone to come to know anything that nobody knew before, and yet, in the ordinary sense of language, had been true before anyone had thought of it."¹ Plato himself, says Laird, at least once in the Parmenides² specifically agrees with this observation. The passage in the Parmenides to which Laird has reference clearly shows him that Plato did not regard the Essences as thoughts in the mind of man or deity. According to Laird, and to most contemporary commentators on Plato, God was distinguished by Plato from both the Forms and their unity.³

It has been seen that Flint took the opposite view, the Neo-Platonic interpretation established in the Church by Augustine.

¹Laird, Mind and Deity, p.117.

²Plato, Parmenides, 132 C-D, 133 C (these passages can be found in A. E. Taylor's trans. of the Parmenides (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press; 19347, pp.54-55, 59); discussed by Laird, Mind and Deity, p.118.

The "proof from the Eternal Truths" is set up by Laird thus:

"Propositions always involve a relation, covert or express, to some actual mind. Propositions are the sole currency of truth. Therefore all truth implies some actual mind. But (we are told) there is a totality of true propositions and we know (from our logical experience?) that no valid inference can be drawn unless all the relevant premises are apprehended by one and the same mind. The totality of true propositions therefore implies the existence of a single mind that knows the totality, that is to say, it implies an omniscient mind."

After showing that the protagonists of this argument assume that knowledge of everything is mediated by propositions, and that "truth" and "falsity" be restricted to propositions, Laird proceeds to make the following criticisms. First, he points out that on these premises God, being able to know only the knowable, could not know what is non-propositional. God could know apart from the mediation of propositions neither himself, nor human beings, nor other things. "If there is any sort of acquaintance that escapes the propositional net in any respect, such acquaintance, whoever has it, must also escape an 'omniscience' that is confined to propositions." Second, Laird demonstrates that in some cases, for example the truth of an algebraic equation, the "truth" of a proposition, while admittedly not capable of existing if minds were non-existent, "certainly

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1Laird, *Mind and Deity*, p.121. He also gives the Leibnizian version of this argument, but it is not necessary to introduce it into the present discussion since the essential points are covered by the general argument from the eternal truths. Bertrand Russell, *A Critical Exposition of the Philosophy of Leibnitz* (New ed.; London: Allen and Unwin Ltd.; 1937) has a large appendix (pp.205-305) in which extracts from Leibnitz are classified according to subjects. For Leibnitz' assertions on the argument from the eternal truths and the relation of knowledge to truth, assertions upon which Laird is probably dependent even in his formulation of the general (not the new, specifically Leibnitzian) version of the argument now under scrutiny, see Russell, pp.288-290.
does not imply that the proposition in question owes its character and validity to its discovery at any particular time." And so he goes on to deny the contention "that nobody can come to know a 'Truth' of which he was formerly ignorant, unless someone else, or he himself in some pre-existent condition, had already grasped it." To accept this contention, alleges Laird, is to finally maintain that one must always be told a fact if he is ever to learn it. And Laird wonders who would tell God.\(^1\)

The conclusion to which Laird finally comes is the impossibility of holding "that no one can know anything unless someone knows everything." Laird deals a parting blow by drawing attention to the fact that "even if the atheist were wrong in believing that the light of his reason could shine at all unless it were reflected from above, he is surely entitled to say that it does shine in fact, and that he knows that it does."\(^2\)

It appears, therefore, that at least with respect to the inference of God's omniscience the form of the a priori argument for God preferred by Flint is weaker than he had supposed, and certainly not strong enough to stand on its own—and, as a consistent follower of Reid, Flint has already been shown to have had no right to do anything except make the a priori argument stand on its own.

Flint was indubitably correct in recognising that the Cosmological and Teleological arguments are unable to move beyond the realm of the finite and relative unless some provision be made for an a priori factor. Hence he was forced to supplement

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and complement Reid's theistic inference. Not wishing to overreach the bounds of common sense any further than necessary and trying to remain faithful to the scientific method, Flint chose the \textit{a posteriori} use of the \textit{a priori} argument for God, that is, the form employed by Plato and his followers. But doubt has now been cast upon the reliability of the Platonic procedure from necessary ideas upwards, analytically and inductively, to God. Until this doubt be removed, Flint's rationalism, that is to say, his inference of God by \textit{a posteriori} demonstration, must be admitted to be in scarcely a safer position, protected from the criticism of Hume or Kant and their followers, than was Reid's.

Of course, if the attributes of infinity and perfection belonging to the Creator be known from another source, for example, through the witness of Christ and the Holy Scriptures, then the cogency of Flint's argumentation for God increases enormously. Even for the man who does not intentionally disavow the philosophical heritage of a Christian culture Flint's account of the theistic inference was as persuasive as any could be. Purportedly grounded on man's common sense beliefs, conducted according to the scientific method, and with stress laid upon the organic and reciprocal operation of all the arguments for God taken as a whole, the theistic inference presented by Flint was well calculated to enlist as many or more sympathisers among Christians than any rival treatment of this question. Unfortunately, however, Flint fell into the trap which the very factors making his position appealing unavoidably laid. He seems to have forgotten that proving to the Christian why the God he knows must exist is different from demonstrating to the pagan the existence of the
God known solely through natural revelation. Regrettably, but nonetheless true, is the fact that a good many people of the world, people whose minds also function according to the principles marked out by the Common Sense school, are unable to see anything when Flint points out to them the God of natural revelation. They, on the contrary, are equally sure that common sense and the scientific method insure that Flint is pointing to a phantasm of his own imagination or to a superstition.

This criticism of Flint will be developed later, meanwhile the present chapter will conclude with the introduction of an aspect of Flint's thought not met with so far, but which will figure more prominently in the remaining chapters.

If, as Flint maintains, the complex, organic inferential process through which knowledge of God is attained is spontaneous and almost instantaneous, if "the inferences which it involves are in fact, like those which ... /are/ implied in the perceptions of sense, involuntary and unconscious,"¹ then how can he account for the fact that so many people not only fail to discover God through natural revelation but even deny the possibility of such a discovery?

He was fully cognisant of the problem hereby posed. In the final chapter of *Theism*, Flint not only informs his readers of the insufficiency of the content of natural revelation, occasionally he makes such utterances as that before Christianity appeared "it is historically certain ... that the world by its unaided wisdom failed to know God."² Elsewhere, he can be found

maintaining that the "gross darkness" of man's mind "makes Nature a sealed book to thousands. There is not a syllable in all her pages, the spiritual meaning of which they can make out.\(^1\) In short, Flint sometimes evinces uncertainty as to man's ability of apprehending the amount of revelation he believed God had made of Himself in the natural world.

The explanation he provides is that "worldliness and prejudice and sin" keep the abundance of facts exhibiting God from being properly comprehended.\(^2\) He feels that, as with every other kind of knowledge, religious knowledge demands a special aptitude and presupposes special qualifications. Spiritually-blind men are oblivious to the riches of the knowledge of God possible and manifest.\(^3\) Every person has the "germs of natural piety" from birth. But with neglect or improper care or use these will atrophy and eventually die. Such a person finds "Nature" and even "Supernatural Revelation" to be meaningless as far as a God is concerned.\(^4\) The important thing to note is that for Flint everyman is equipped with the capability of discerning God's existence and looses this only intentionally. On the other hand, the prophet Jeremiah's pessimistic pronouncement, "The heart of man is deceitful above all things" does not bar man from acquiring valid knowledge of God, affirms Flint.\(^5\) As he sees it, unless the validity or reliability of the principles governing

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1Flint, *Christ's Kingdom Upon Earth*, p.6.
human thought processes and the reality of the objects of knowledge, both inner and outer, are assumed, then all philosophy and science becomes farcical. Maintaining as he does the rationality of religious knowledge and the reasonableness of belief, Flint will not agree that part of the domain of knowledge is accessible by man and part not. Man either is capable of extending successfully his quest for knowledge in all realms of truth or man is capable of acquiring no knowledge.¹

The difficulty Flint has in harmonising his confidence in man’s rational capabilities with his belief in the Reformed doctrine of the Fall of man will be exhibited in a later chapter. Meanwhile, in the next chapter, an attempt will be made to demonstrate from a close examination of Flint’s philosophy of history the point intimated a few paragraphs ago, namely, that his sanguine and positive contention for natural knowledge of God derives much more than he realises from his prior apprehension of God through special revelation.

¹Flint, Philosophy as Scientia Scientiarum, pp. 59-60.
CHAPTER IV

THE PHILOSOPHY OF HISTORY

Introduction

Reasons for including an analysis of Flint's philosophy of history:

No investigation of Flint's thought would be at all complete if it had neglected Flint's utterances on the philosophy of history. There are several grounds for making this assertion:

First, a discussion of Flint's philosophy of history affords, for reasons that will become apparent, the opportunity of observing even more definitively the inter-relationships of the major influences which have so far been seen molding his thought. The influences referred to are (a) the nineteenth century interest in applying scientific methodology to all areas of thought, (b) a modified Calvinism, (c) Common Sense Realism, and (d) the Christianised version of the Platonic theory of ideas.

Second, a study of Flint's thought must carefully review his philosophy of history at length because of the unusual importance he gave to history as a manifestation of God. Whenever
he lists the sources of natural knowledge of God Flint adds "human history" to the usual enumeration of the physical universe and the minds of men. He even goes further by declaring that God's revelation of Himself in human history "ought to impress us more" than any other natural revelation.

Another reason for including a chapter on Flint's philosophy of history is due to the fact that the world of scholarship as a whole, outside theological circles, remembers Flint most for his work in the philosophy of history. As recently as 1935 a German historian of philosophy could declare that the 2nd edition of Flint's *Philosophy of History* (1893) "has not yet been superseded." Of the 1st edition of Flint's *Philosophy of History* (1874) the German referred to, Rudolf Metz, says that it "is specially noteworthy for having brought the German idealistic movement from Kant to Hegel for the first time to the notice of English readers in a single conspectus that shows a comparatively high degree of understanding." Of Flint's volume on Vico,

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1E. g. Flint, *Theism*, p.63; *Agnosticism*, p.660.

2Flint, *Christ's Kingdom Upon Earth*, p.56. Cf. *Phil. of History*, 2nd ed., p.226. "History is a far wider and fuller revelation of God to man than creation or nature is." (On Theol., Bibl., and Other Subjects, p.12.)

3It is also true that during his life-time Flint's international fame as a scholar lay primarily in his publications on the philosophy of history. The first edition of his *Philosophy of History* earned him an honour possessed by very few of his British contemporaries—election to the office of a "Corresponding Member of the Institute of France." (D. Macmillan, *Life of Robert Flint*, p.203.) Flint's work on Vico gained him an honorary membership in the Royal Society of Palermo. (D. Macmillan, *Life of Robert Flint*, p.424.)

Max Fisch says it "remains the standard exposition in English."¹ Max Fisch claims both of Flint's volumes on the philosophy of history "have not been superseded."² Croce describes Flint's monograph on Vico as one of the two best works on Vico appearing in the latter part of the nineteenth century. Croce says Flint's treatment was accurate in detail, and if not profound at least guided by clear and sound sense."³ A similar indication of the significance of Flint's volumes on the philosophy of history for the British intellectual scene can be found in A. G. Collingwood's posthumously published work, The Idea of History. Complaining that the "naturalistic empiricism" dominant in nineteenth century British thought resulted in "a conspiracy of silence" on the problems of the philosophy of history, Collingwood points out that except for Flint and F. H. Bradley no British philosopher has made any valuable contributions on the topic "until the last few years."⁴

¹ Max Fisch in his Introduction to The Autobiography of Giambattista Vico, p.95.


An interesting verification of Metz's and Collingwood's judgments of the eminence enjoyed by Flint in British philosophy of history is provided by a letter received by Flint from Lord Acton and reproduced by Flint's biographer. The letter, dated November 26th, 1896, at Trinity College, Cambridge, contains a request from Acton on behalf of the Syndics of the University Press to Flint to write the concluding chapter on the philosophy of history in the projected twelve-volumed Cambridge Modern History. In the course of the letter Lord Acton frankly declares his and his colleagues' opinion that it would be "very important" for their enterprise to have "the advantage" of Flint's "name and authority." Acton also revealed to Flint that if the latter "inauspiciously" declined, the History would have to appear without its final chapter. Regrettably, Flint was unable to grant the request, so the History in due course appeared without the chapter in question.¹

Reasons for Flint's pioneering interest in the philosophy of history:

The interest displayed by Flint in the philosophy of history was no doubt first aroused in him by his professor in Ecclesiastical History, a Thomas T. Jackson. Flint seems to have had considerable respect for this man since he attended Jackson's class for four sessions instead of the required two. In fact, his biographer reports that during the first year after leaving the Faculty of Arts at Glasgow Jackson's class was the only one

¹The text of Lord Acton's letter is in D. Macmillan's Life of Robert Flint, p. 212.
in the Faculty of Theology attended by Flint. Flint must have grasped the essence of his professor’s teaching for he won the first prizes all four sessions in both the examinations and essays. It would also appear that Jackson provided Flint with all the formal education he received in the whole subject of history, for Jackson’s Chair was at that time the only one in the University treating the subject.\(^1\) Two more external evidences of Flint’s great respect for Jackson are the facts that Flint dedicated his first book to Jackson\(^2\) and that Jackson is reported as saying that of the half-dozen of all his many students who really understood him there were two who were furthering his teaching, one of whom was Flint.\(^3\) As far as the internal evidence of Jackson’s influence on Flint is concerned, the researcher is limited to an indirect inference since Jackson published nothing. The basis of that indirect inference is the possibly very significant fact that Jackson was Dugald Stewart’s nephew and for a time his secretary.\(^4\) It is more than likely that a man so closely related to the great disciple and successor of Thomas Reid would have also been a fervent adherent of the Scottish Philosophy and would thereby have passed it on to such an eager and receptive student as Flint has proven to have been. Corroboration is forthcoming from the description of Jackson, by a later student,

\(^1\)Macmillan, *Life of Flint*, pp.41-42.
\(^2\)Flint, *Christ’s Kingdom Upon Earth*, dedication page.
\(^3\)Macmillan, *Life of Flint*, p.43.
as a follower of Reid and by the great extent to which Flint has so far in this thesis been shown to have adopted Common Sense Realism.

Another reason for Flint's interest in the philosophy of history derives from the ease with which a Common Sense Realist who was also a Theist could make it strengthen his position on the Teleological and Moral arguments. Reid specifically alludes to the fact that of all the arguments for God's "being and providence" the one which makes the strongest impression and, in addition gets more cogent as time passes, is the argument from the evidences of God's "wisdom, power, and goodness in the constitution and government of the world." It goes without saying that the method of psychological analysis basic to the Scottish Philosophy's fundamental interest in the ascertainment of the laws of human nature can only be properly applied when all the available evidence is scrutinised. It is to Flint's credit that he was the first theologian adopting that Philosophy who fully and effectively realised the fact that in addition to an analysis of the individual consciousness a major source of evidence from which the laws of human nature must be drawn is history. As will be shown in due course, he was quick to see that if a psychological analysis of the successive combinations of human nature down through history could "show that the goal of the evolution of life," at least up to the present

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2 Reid, Works, ed. Hamilton, I,460.
3 Cf. Flint, Philosophy of History, p.579.
stage, is "the perfecting of human nature," then powerful ammuni-
tion would be provided for the argument that "the eternal source of things /is/ a power which makes for truth and righteousness."¹

This brings up a third reason for Flint's interest in the philosophy of history. His early training in, and constant admira-
tion for, Butler's works² would no doubt greatly encourage Flint in his generalizations of facts which they both firmly believed revealed God's providential government of human history.³ As already indicated,⁴ Flint thought Butler's chief merit was that he had showed far better than any before him the moral government of God over men.⁵

Another reason for Flint's interest in the philosophy of his-
tory arises from the nineteenth century pre-occupation with the concept of progress. The nineteenth century concept of progress may be most clearly defined by enumerating the beliefs which had led up to it and from which it was fabricated. John Baillie's The Belief in Progress⁶ will be used as a guide. The earliest direct component belief of the nineteenth century concept of progress was that held by the seventeenth and eighteenth century rationalists, namely, that human reason was capable of devising the solutions

²See above, pp.114-121.
⁴See above, pp.116-120.
⁵Flint, MSS: "73", parag. LCV. (This manuscript is part of Flint's class lecture notes on Butler's Analogy.)
to all men's problems. The next contribution directly made to what eventually became the nineteenth century notion of progress came from the German idealists from Lessing and Herder to Hegel, namely the idea of development. The idea of historical development held by the German idealists was that the process of history was determined by the unfolding of an immanent intelligence (as distinguished from the Christian reading of historical development in terms of the guidance of a transcendent intelligence). The final component of the nineteenth century idea of progress was the extension of the theory of biological evolution into a principle explanatory of the facts of human culture. Special notice should be taken of Baillie's concern to demonstrate that each of these three beliefs as well as the nineteenth century belief in progress to which they gave rise functioned as a priori principles. He goes on to rightly accuse the protagonists of these beliefs of being unscientific by failing to see that "the kind of progress which is certainly observable, and the kind imperatively required for the filling out of any kind of a priori faith in progress, barely overlap each other." A major problem of the present and the following

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2 Cf. W. H. Walsh, Intro. to Phil. of History, pp. 119-121.


4 John Baillie, The Belief in Progress, p. 156.
chapter consists of ascertaining whether, mutatis mutandis, Flint has not committed a similar fallacy. In Flint's case, it will be necessary to find out how closely he has actually followed a truly scientific method in formulating a historical philosophy. He, no less than the naturalistic philosophers of history, may be guilty of commencing his interpretation of history with presuppositions derived elsewhere, namely, from Christianity.

Meanwhile it may be mentioned that the nineteenth century theological world, of which Flint was a part, was wasting no time in making its own bold applications of the ideas of human progress confidently held by practically every leading scholar in the fields of the arts and the sciences. Although vehemently opposed to the humanism and naturalism so often connected with the idea of progress, Flint always approached the philosophy of history with the presupposition that it "deals not exclusively but to a great extent with the laws of progress, with laws of evolution." And he did not hesitate to draw out the significant implications of the contemporary idea of progress for his doctrines of revelation, providence, and the Kingdom of God. It is, of course, difficult to discover how much Flint allowed his view on these particular theological doctrines to be coloured by his intellectual milieu. But one of

1 Flint, Philosophy of History, 1st. ed., p. 28.

2 For example, he felt the most hopeful use recently made of the Teleological argument "is that which rests on the results obtained by a philosophical study of history, and which seeks to show that the goal of the evolution of life, so far as it has yet proceeded, is the perfecting of human nature, and the eternal source of things a power which makes for truth and righteousness." Flint, Agnosticism, p. 653.
the tasks of the present chapter is to determine as far as possible the relationship between the idea of progress so widely held in Flint's life-time and the theological doctrines mentioned.

A further reason for Flint's early interest in the philosophy of history lies in the fact of his appointment at the age of thirty-eight as the Professor of Moral Philosophy at St. Andrews University. In his Inaugural Address, delivered on the 16th of November, 1864, Flint declared his intentions to handle moral philosophy according to "the strictest requirements of a sound scientific method." This meant for him the division of moral philosophy into three parts: dealing with the moral nature of man, the moral relations of man, and the moral history of man. The first heading involved Psychology, the second, metaphysics and theology, the third, the philosophy of history.¹

I. The Philosophy of History as the Science of History

Turning the discussion to Flint's philosophy of history itself,² the first characteristic deserving attention is the result his abid-


²The following study of Flint's philosophy of history is not based on any systematisation of his; for, even though he published upwards of 1600 pages on this subject he never set forth his own historical theory in a systematic fashion. Hence his views must be ferreted out from his criticisms and comments on other men's theories. (Flint's intention had been to write two volumes on the history of the philosophy of history in Germany, France, Italy, and England, and a third volume containing his own philosophy of history. The second and third volumes never appeared.)

John Morley, later Lord Morley, criticised Flint for failing to begin his volumes on the philosophy of history with his own view.
ing desire to be scientific has upon his view of the philosophy of history.

Flint is quite prepared to use the terms "philosophy of history" and "Science of history" interchangeably; for he avers, "science can only prosper when it strives to become philosophic, as philosophy can only prosper when it strives to become scientific." Or, "any professed philosophy of history which is not in accordance with and even demanded by the science of history — which does not receive real confirmation from the facts of history and tend to the elucidation of these facts — must be worthless and delusive."¹ His real preference was to limit the use of the term "philosophy" to the knowledge of knowledge, the science of sciences, universal not particular science. Conceived in this manner no special study


The second edition of Flint's Philosophy of History is a greatly expanded but otherwise practically unaltered treatment of the French philosophy of history which had constituted half of the first edition. The German philosophy of history which had constituted the other half of the first edition is omitted in the second. Unless otherwise stated, no significance should be attached to the particular edition of the Philosophy of History to which any given reference is made in this thesis. Almost always, where applicable, a parallel passage can be found in the other edition even though it will not usually be cited.

(This criticism appeared in "Mr. Flint's Philosophy of History," Fortnightly Review, Sept. 1, 1874, p. 341. Flint's retort, in the second edition of the Philosophy of History, (pp. 2, 23) was essentially that as an historian of other theories of history he did not need to begin by setting his own view out. Rather his task was to simply ascertain and state what their theories were. (Flint takes the same attitude in his Preface to Bernhard Punjer's History of the Christian Philosophy of Religion (Trans. W. Haste, (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1887), ix-xi.) Moreover, he quite typically thinks one theory of history should "not be judged of by another, but by its conformity or nonconformity to the facts of history and the laws of reason."


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could claim to be philosophy. However, out of deference to common usage he agrees to call the philosophy of a subject "the view or theory of the relations of the subject to other subjects and to the known world in general." In this context the science of a subject would be "the view or theory of it as isolated or in itself." On this basis Flint accepts as the science of history "the task of ascertaining the course, plan, and laws of history itself," and, as the philosophy of history "that of tracing the relations of causation and affinity which connect history with other departments of existence and knowledge."

How, then, does Flint ascertain the course, plan, and laws of history itself -- the task he set out for the "science of history"? Since he never set forth his own plan for accomplishing that task, it must be pieced together from comments he made upon other men's views. After Flint's "science of history" has been ascertained and systematically laid out it will be possible to determine how scientific his "science of history" really was.

A. Presuppositions

To begin with, as a good scientist he will allow the philosophy of history only the presupposition "that the reign of law

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1 Flint, Philosophy as Scientia Scientiarum, p.4
2 Flint, Philosophy of History, 2nd ed., p.20.
3 Flint, Philosophy of History, 2nd ed., p.21
somehow extends over human affairs."¹ To say more and demand that historical law and order emulate the law and order discovered by the physical sciences is to ignore the difference between mind and matter, according to him. By the same token, he refuses to say more and represent "the science of history as a department of natural theology." The science of history provides data for the use of natural theology but "the science of history itself neither requires nor admits of any theological presuppositions."² Deciding that the choice is either between starting with the facts of history or with an ontological or religious principle, Flint resolutely claims to choose the former.³ Whether he does so in practice is a question which the present chapter is designed to solve. But that he truly intended to avoid any non-scientific presuppositions is shown again in the goal he sets for the philosophy of history: "The ultimate and greatest triumph of historical philosophy will really be neither more nor less than the full proof of providence, the discovery by the processes of scientific method of the divine plan which unites and harmonises the apparent chaos of human actions contained in history into a cosmos."⁴ And he points out that one does not presuppose what is to be proven.⁵ Nevertheless, he sensibly recognizes that "there can never come a

¹Flint, Philosophy of History, 1st ed., p.2.
²Flint, Philosophy of History, 1st ed., p.324.
⁴Flint, Philosophy of History, 1st ed., p.22.
⁵Flint, Philosophy of History, 1st ed., p.461.
time when a man's convictions as to religion will be without influence on his historical theorising." The man who regards the future of humanity to be "essentially delusive" cannot view history in the same way as a man does who holds the opposite opinion.1

It was manifestly Flint's duty to explain exactly how far he thought a man's religious convictions would colour his "historical theorising," but he did not. This trait of Flint's — claiming to be fully scientific and at the same time keeping presuppositions not needed for a scientific method — will be seen to crop up many times in his philosophy of history.

The exact metaphysical and moral implications of Flint's announced presupposition that "the reign of law somehow extends over human affairs" will be discovered later when the philosophy of history proper is discussed. At present the implications he draws from that presupposition for the method appropriate to a science of history will be noted.

B. Method in the Science of History

1. Comparative psychology as the proper method

If there is order in human history, then "all the component facts of history can be accounted for historically, just as those of the physical world can be accounted for physically," alleges Flint.2 Free agency and causation in history are entirely com-

2Flint, Philosophy of History, 2nd ed., p.16.
patible, for free agency is the "highest type of causation."¹

Assuming, therefore, the possibility of attaining to scientific truth in the study of history, Flint realizes the inadequacy of the historical method in attaining such truth. That method is limited to ascertaining what events took place in what order of occurrence, but it is unable to demonstrate "natural law or scientific truth."² But by employing the "same sort of method, the same rules of method," used, for instance, in the sciences of geology or physiology, to the study of history, "results as certain, as comprehensive, as important," as those gained in these physical sciences are possible in the science of history.³ Flint even goes so far in his campaign to make history scientific as to insist that historical no less than physical science has the right and the privilege of using its generalisations in the "prevision of the future."⁴

Knowing Flint to be an adherent of Common Sense Realism, the reader can already surmise the nature of the method Flint thinks as adequate to a scientific history. The reader's prognostication will be even more certain when he learns the significance Flint attached to Vico's New Science. It was Flint's opinion that history was first treated as "the proper and exclusive subject of

¹Flint, Philosophy of History, 2nd ed., p.16.
²Flint, Philosophy of History, 2nd ed., p.147.
⁴Flint, Philosophy of History, 1st ed., p.131.
a special science" by Vico.¹

Vico, while not repudiating the providence of God in the civil world, was prepared, unlike Augustine and Bossuet, to replace the divine will with the intelligent will of man as the productive force in world history, relates Flint approvingly. As a result of Vico's genius "the powers and motives of men's minds" were to be consulted when drawing up an explanatory chart of human history.²

¹Flint, Vico (Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood and Sons; 1884), p.187. In order to forestall a possible misconception about Flint's interest in Vico, it should be pointed out that his publication Vico was one of the series of "Philosophical Classics for English Readers," edited by William Knight and published by William Blackwood and Sons. Flint had hoped to write the volume in this series on Butler but William Blackwood had already assigned Butler to someone else, so Flint took Vico. (D. Macmillan, The Life of Robert Flint, p.416.)

²Flint, Philosophy of History, 2nd ed., p.123. To the extent that Vico explained history from within history rather than from without, by rational rather than religious concepts, through the direct agency of men rather than God, he may be said to have participated in the tradition of rationalism which in historical theory, reacted against the Augustinian, theological interpretation of history. This tradition of rationalism was to develop in the seventeenth, eighteenth, and early nineteenth centuries into the "enlightened" rationalism of Voltaire and consummately in the speculative rationalism of Hegel. All the widely varying versions of this tradition had two essential characteristics in common: they proffered an explanation for history — history was not irrational or meaningless — and that explanation was predominantly immanent to history rather than transcendent. It should therefore be carefully noticed that in the present chapter on Flint's philosophy of history the term rationalism will carry a special denotation. When it is said that Flint was affected by the rationalist view of history, nothing more is intended than to indicate that he shared, to an extent which will gradually become apparent, in that tradition from Vico onwards of forthrightly interpreting history as more of an immanent, autonomous process than did Augustine or Bossuet, a tradition, moreover, which was certain that history could be given a fully rational explanation.
Bodin was actually the first to competently propound the notion of finding a universal law through the methodical study of history as a whole, an idea profitably used by Vico, explains Flint. Bodin also saw before Vico did the value of ascertaining the origin of nations, the importance of the study of language for historical knowledge, and the doubt evidenced by historians concerning the exact delineation of the subject of their study.¹

Machiavelli, in Flint's estimation, came closer to being the harbinger of the basic principle for which historical science is indebted to Vico.

"In referring the analogies between ancient and modern occurrences to their sources in human nature, Machiavelli touched, as it were, the great truth that historical science must be founded on mental science. But he merely touched it. He entered on no investigation into the psychological principles which must serve as the foundation of all sound historical theory."²

The root principle of Vico's whole system was the essential similarity of human nature wherever and whenever it exists, says Flint. Although such an idea is as old as human history itself, it remained for Vico to grasp the significance that had lain dormant in this piece of almost common knowledge.³ The chapter in

¹Flint, Vico, p.186.
²Flint, Vico, p.182.
³This principle was the backbone of seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth century rationalism. The fact that Flint looked to Vico for this principle is another indication that Flint's thinking on historical theory was operating under the aegis of rationalism. He was thus not directly influenced by the Romantic Revolt, also appealing to Vico but from the romantic standpoint, which the Liberal Anglican historians founded in the second and third decades of the nineteenth century. The philosophical underpinning of these Liberal Anglicans was Coleridgean (Cf. Duncan Forbes, The Liberal Anglican Idea of History /Cambridge: At the University Press; 1952/, p.1), whereas Flint's was the Scottish Philosophy.
this thesis showing Flint's adoption of the epistemology of Common Sense Realism is recalled to mind upon learning that Flint ranks Vico among the great benefactors of science for using this commonly known principle of the universal similarity of human nature to demonstrate "the constant conformity of history to the constitutive laws of the human spirit."¹

Even more clearly are the teachings of the Scottish Philosophy echoed in such a declaration as the following: "A true science of history can only be attained through the investigation of history as a psychological phenomenon, — a product of mind, influenced but not generated by the physical medium in which it appears."²

¹Flint, Vico, p.199.
In fact, it must be admitted that in his plea for a science of history Flint is first and foremost a Common Sense Realist. For Flint, the science of history is essentially a psychological science. A knowledge of the human mind's determinative laws, powers, and affections as well as character must be a pre-requisite for historical science. Historical analysis, although supplementing and correcting psychological analysis, can never be separated from nor substituted for it.¹ He is certain that we

"must grant the analysis of the individual consciousness requires to be both confirmed and supplemented by objective observation of various kinds; that the consciousness of the race and not of the individual is the true subject of mental science in all its branches; and that if it attempts, as it so often does at present, to proceed entirely from within, ignoring the combinations of human nature which are presented in history, literature, and language, and which ought to be employed as the materials of analysis and induction, it must inevitably fail; -- and yet regard as the most fatal of all errors of method the endeavour to discover the laws of human nature by any process which has not psychological analysis as its basis and animating principle."²

In postulating this intimate connection between history and psychology Flint is saying that the true unity of the science of history "can only be found in the principle and laws of mental activity itself," that "the laws which regulate the development of society" are "simply applications of the laws which regulate the development of the individual."³ But he also wishes to stress the advisability of correcting and completing that psychology through the facts of history itself. A psychology based on data

collected from the manifestations of mankind in general down through the ages would be far more reliable than simply an individual psychology for the science of history. Consequently Flint expresses great admiration for the Völkerpsychologie of Lazarus.

While rejecting Lazarus' Herbartian view as to the "causation and connection of mental phenomena,"¹ Flint finds himself in general agreement with Lazarus' approach to a scientific study of history. Flint does not fully concur with Lazarus' attempts in the journal which he co-edited, the Zeitschrift für Völkerpsychologie und Sprachwissenschaft,² to show that just as "the laws of biography — the laws of the growth of the individual minds — must,... be resolvable into the psychology of the individual mind"; so "in like manner the laws of history, which may be called the biography of nations or of humanity," are resolvable "into comparative psychology." But Flint does grant that a psychology "widened and developed" in this way constitutes the only adequate foundation of historical science.³

In addition to the compatibility of such a "comparative psychology" or "Völkerpsychologie" to the tenets and method promulgated by Reid and his followers, there is another reason for its finding favour in Flint's eyes. The rationalism which leavens


²This journal first appeared in 1859. Steinthal was the other co-editor. Ueberwegs Grundriss Der Geschichte Der Philosophie (13. Auflage, herausgegeben von T.K.Österreich /Basel: Benno Schwabe und Co. Verlag; 1951/ IV, 263).

Flint's thought comes to the fore when he approvingly recounts the results Lazarus was reaching in his studies.

According to Flint, Lazarus took over from W. von Humboldt the truth that "ideas, ideal elements, ideal forces" are pervading and shaping history. Distinguishing between "Ideen der Auffassung" which are representative or reflective of reality, and "Ideen der Gestaltung," which, "whether ethical or aesthetical," "anticipate, prefigure, and fashion" reality, Lazarus claims that the latter give the impetus to history. History in the proper sense of the term does not begin in any culture until these "formative ideas," "types or ideals" replace natural desires in men's motivations. These ideas, Flint goes on to explain, are thus not regarded by Lazarus as "transcendental causes or external forces" imposed upon mankind, "but internal and indwelling capacities which have grown up through the action of psychical processes."

Although not subscribing completely to the view propounded by Lazarus, especially with respect to the Herbartian position on the origin of ideas, Flint feels that Lazarus has followed W. von Humboldt's lead into a "path which is safe and good." Flint affirms that "the psychological activities which are called ideas by Humboldt and Lazarus are truly the very tissues of social organisation and historical development." A careful study of them is

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1In Ueberwegs Grundriss Der Geschichte Der Philosophie, (13. Auflage, IV, 72-73). W. von Humboldt is quoted as stating that "'Das Ziel der Geschichte kann nur die Verwirklichung der durch die Menschheit darzustellenden Idee sein, nach allen Seiten und in allen Gestalten. Und die höchste Aufgabe des Geschichtsschreibers ist die Darstellung des Strebens jener Idee, Dasein in der Wirklichkeit zu gewinnen.'"

2Flint, Philosophy of History, 1st ed., p.583.
the best possible preparation for the formulation of a fully-orbed theory of history, concludes Flint.¹

Care must be exercised at this point to avoid surmising that Flint is sliding into some kind of Hegelian doctrine of Objective Spirit. Windelband characterises the "Völkerpsychologie of Lazarus and Steinthal as a form of "the doctrine of Objective Spirit, where it was apprehended purely psychologically and empirically."² Whatever be the validity of Windelband’s analysis, Flint found so much of value in the views of Humboldt and Lazarus precisely because he thought they had properly recognised "what is ideal and general in human development." Humboldt had set Lazarus on the right track for a view which "directly opposed all those one-sided and fatalistic apprehensions according to which the universal is alone real and essential, and individuals are only evanescent and illusory accidents, mere means and instruments of the self-manifestation of an impersonal idea," declares Flint.³

Irrespective of the derivative connection proposed by Windelband between the "ideas" of Völkerpsychologie and the Hegelian "doctrine of the Objective Spirit," Flint’s reason for wanting to expand individual psychology into a comparative psychology is not that the individual’s sole significance and even existence derives from his being a "member of a psychical interconnected whole."⁴ This may or may not have been in the back of Lazarus’

¹Flint, Philosophy of History, 1st ed., p. 584.
²Windelband, History of Philosophy, p. 649.
³Flint, Philosophy of History, 1st ed., p. 582.
⁴Windelband, History of Philosophy, p. 649.
mind, but it decidedly was not in Flint's when he commends Lazarus' method. The "finite volitions, interests, and activities" which Flint concedes to Hegel as being the "instruments" which the "infinite and active reason" uses to "accomplish a great and holy end" are no doubt compatible, in Flint's estimation, with the "formative ideas," "types or ideals" of Völkerpsychologie. But underlying his approval of either kind of terminology is his unmoveable opposition to any view which renders human history insignificant by regarding individuals as "mere means and instruments of the self-manifestation of an impersonal idea." Flint's judgment of Absolute Idealism and its method was determined by his firm belief in the Christian view of man as a created and eternally free moral agent, as well as his adherence to Common Sense Realism. Moreover, Flint wanted a philosophy of history founded on a truly scientific history. This meant for him that the inductive base from which the generalisations for synthesis were to be drawn must be as broad as possible, both with respect to the number of sciences consulted and utilized and the number of facts consulted. He regarded such philosophies of history as Comte's, Buckle's, and Draper's

1 Flint would call these "psychological activities."
3 Cited in the previous paragraph.
4 Flint, Philosophy of History, 2nd ed., p. 600.
to have been necessitated by Hegel's failure to treat the physical factors of history seriously and scientifically. (Of course, Flint deplores their "resolving all the facts and movements of history into physical causes and laws."\(^1\) It has been mentioned in an earlier chapter that the Scottish Philosophy advocated the beginning of philosophical investigations with an analysis of the self and his apprehension of reality. Another oft-mentioned characteristic of the Scottish Philosophy was its assertion of the existence and knowledge of an independently real material world. Both of these tenets can be seen operative in Flint's doctrine that since "man ought to commence his inquiries with himself," and since man is "a compound being -- soul and body, spiritual and material," the historian dare not overlook the physical forces any more than the spiritual forces in history.\(^2\) Hence the speculative rationalism of Hegel, could never have met Flint's requirements.

Attention will next be turned to ascertaining Flint's relation to another form taken by mid-nineteenth century rationalism capable of having a direct bearing on his science of history. It has already been mentioned that Flint looks to Vico from the rationalist viewpoint. He honours Vico for first stating and promulgating


"the truth that the entire movement of society must correspond to that of knowledge, the preponderant factor of historical evolution being the growth of intelligence."¹ Suspicion of a possible influence of the rationalism of Positivism upon Flint arises when he is read declaring that Comte, while not discovering this principle of Vico's, exhibited it so as to "secure the general recognition of its importance."² Positivism's influence upon Flint seems even more likely when it is remembered that the Positivists purported to be at the same time scientific in their approach to history. They claimed to use a method which adequately analysed the facts of history while it at the same time counteracted any over-emphasis of the empirical by stressing the necessity of correlating historical generalisations with those from the science of human nature.³

Lazarus, while showing the essentiality of comparative or social psychology to scientific history in a way more acceptable to Flint than any other, was naturally not the first to argue for this view. Saint-Simon, one of the founders of modern socialism, many years earlier had given comparative psychology a key role in his science of history. According to Flint, the underlying principle of the whole of Saint-Simon's philosophy was an idea mentioned incidentally by Condorcet; namely, that "the progress of society is subject to the same general laws observable in the individual development of our faculties, being the result of that very develop-

¹Flint, Philosophy as Scientia Scientiarum, p.127.
²Flint, Philosophy as Scientia Scientiarum, p.127.
ment considered at once in a great number of individuals.'  

Comte, whom Flint regarded as a sophisticated Saint-Simonian\(^2\) developed the idea so far as to rank the philosophy of history as the second division of the science he called Social Physics or Sociology. But the essence of Flint's lengthy analyses of Saint-Simon and Comte and their respective schools is to the effect that they have linked physical science and the science of history much too closely. Moral and physical phenomena must be explained differently. Flint the Common Sense Realist harbours little hope "that the mind will ever attain to a unity so absolute that it will account at once for all the phenomena of matter and of spirit, which have so little in common and so much in contrast." Those men who claim to have solved this problem are overlooking the nature of analogy, and the role of figurative speech, he explains.\(^3\)


\(^3\)Flint, *Philosophy of History*, 2nd ed., pp.400-401, cf. p.620. Flint speaks of Comte's *Cours de Philosophie Positive* (6 vols., 1830-42) as "the most important work which had appeared up to the time of its publication in one great department of philosophy — philosophy as the theory of the sciences, or, as Comte calls it, positive philosophy." Flint grants that Comte had, "as he thought, elaborated a strictly scientific philosophy, based on the co-ordination and generalisation of all the sciences, and established and evolved in a truly rational manner." (*Philosophy of History*, 2nd ed., p.580). While holding with the Positivists that philosophy was a study of the relations obtaining between the objects of knowledge, Flint specifically takes exception to their ejection from philosophy's orbit of an examination of the "conditions and guarantees of knowledge." ("Classification of the Sciences," Presbyterian Review, VI /July 1885/, 402.) He praised the Positivists for founding a science to investigate the "limits, methods, affinities, and interrelations of the sciences." (Philosophy of History, 2nd ed., p.641). But he felt that all forms of empiricism were inexcessably, because uncritically, trusting that "thought itself is naturally truthful and its laws are valid." (Philosophy of History, 2nd ed., p.642)
Flint is glad that Comte has focused attention on the need for sociological investigations. Nonetheless he accuses even Comte of tragically failing to put a knowledge of the concrete and particular in history before a knowledge of the abstract and general. Comte's survey of historical development illustrating his law of the three states of social evolution is simply not factual, alleges Flint.

In spite of everything Flint finds wrong with Comte there can be little doubt that Flint's assertions on the philosophy of history would have been considerably different had Comte and his school never existed. Vico's assertion of the dominant role intelligence plays in historical evolution, or, following in the wake of Vico, Condorcet's assertion about the laws of human progress, would probably never have been regarded by Flint as of such key importance in the history of the science of history if they had not been linked by Saint-Simon and then more distinctly by Comte to an attempt at making a science of history. It is doubtful whether Flint would ever have made the statement: "Sociology may, and not without reason, attempt to be a Science of History," if Comte had never given currency to the concept. However, this in itself would not have made Comte of special importance for the understanding of

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1 Flint, Philosophy of History, 2nd ed., p. 600.

2 Flint, Philosophy as Scientia Scientiarum, p. 334. Cf. Flint's Vico, p. 196 where he (Flint) refers to the science of history as sociology.

3 Substantiation for the statement that it was Comte who really gave currency to the idea of scientific history as sociology can be had from Hans Meyer's Die Weltanschauung der Gegenwart (Paderborn und Wurzburg Verlag Ferdinand Schoningh; 1949) pp. 6-9. Cf. R.G. Collingwood, Idea of History, pp. 126-128.
Flint's science of history. It is because Comte was the first to attempt the combination of a rationalist doctrine of progress, a purportedly scientific approach, and the theory that social progress is the development of social order, that he to that extent may be said to have provided the model for Flint's similar attempt at a science of history with, of course, some other vastly different presuppositions and results. No one before Comte had tried so deliberately to combine all three elements.\(^1\) Flint realised this, claiming that Comte was the first to "test the character of all social changes by their influence on...the fundamental principles of moral and social existence."\(^2\)

It will now be seen that this third element is most important to Flint, for it provides the means wherewith he can retain a modified rationalist view of human history after stripping that view of the humanistic and fatalistic doctrine of inevitability which the eighteenth and early nineteenth century rationalists, and the Positivists including Comte, took over as an inherent part of the rationalist view of history.\(^3\)

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2. Ethical ideas are the objects of a scientific history's comparative psychology.

The particular problem for which an answer must be sought is the nature and function of the psychological activities or ideas formative of human history which Flint holds the science of history must ascertain through comparative psychology. If these ideas are not, as Hegel would have it, the ideas every man has as a "member of a psychical interconnected whole," nor, as Comte maintains, the ideas man has as a member of a human society the fundamental law of whose history is to be found in the inexorable evolution of the intellect, an evolution whose final state is that of positive science, what account does Flint give of them?

The answer is obvious when it is remembered that Flint maintained man's ability to have an almost immediate and spontaneous, albeit inferential, natural knowledge of God, a knowledge which increased with man's expanding knowledge of nature and providence.1 Simply stated, Flint held to the Vichian doctrine that the "idea of Divinity is the root of civilisation — and its apprehension, the regulative principle of the history of civilisation."2 Hence, the ideas formative of human history are man's fundamental ethical ideas.3 Just as these ethical ideas govern the individual so they govern mankind as a whole, Flint wants a comparative psychology}

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1See above, Chapter III, especially pp.159, 178.


3History, says Flint "is in the main not what any conditions or factors external to men make it, but what men make it; and its character depends in the main on the character of the men who make it."(Socialism /Isbister and Co.Ltd.; 1894/, p.464.)
in order to discover the ethical ideas which have functioned in the various groupings of mankind down through the ages. When scientific history has learned these ideas it has acquired the key to its task of finding "the course, plan, and laws of history itself." Only then can the philosophy of history as such begin its job of "tracing the relations of causation and affinity which connect history with other departments of existence and knowledge."\(^1\)

The science of history Flint is advocating must thus not only presuppose an inquiry into the conditions of experience and the assumption of the sciences. That inquiry must also permit and even necessitate a moral view of the world. In Flint's words, the science of history should demonstrate "the closeness of the connection between history and morality; that neither is intelligible or realisable without the other; that history is an ethical formation and morality an historical production." History, he continues is "the formation of the world of humanity by free individuals' wills, always conscious of moral law, while always working in given conditions of time and space, of heredity and solidarity, and always influenced by interests and passions, by physical and spiritual surroundings."\(^2\) This, then, is the position to which Flint thinks the science of history, using the method of comparative psychology and presupposing only the laws of thought and the principles of

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\(^2\)Flint, *Philosophy of History*, 2nd ed., p.671. In the same place Flint explicitly rejects "those theories which represent history as a mechanically necessitated product, or an inevitable dialectic movement, or a simple organic growth, or the natural consequences of a struggle for existence between individuals and societies, or a fundamentally economic evolution."
morality, should lead.

Flint's attitude toward Socialism as evinced in his published lectures on that topic provides an interesting application of this view of historical formation. His whole case against Socialism in the volume referred to revolves around Socialism's defective historical philosophy. According to Flint, "it is a philosophy which explains history by one class of causes, the physical and industrial, and which assigns no properly causal value to intellectual faculties, to moral energies, to scientific and ethical ideas, and to religious convictions." (He goes on to point out that exactly where Socialism wrongly accounts for history is where it also incurs the opposition of Christianity).¹

Before going further, it will be helpful to again call attention to the major question which this chapter is intending to solve. That question is whether the method Flint uses in the formulation of a philosophy of history is as truly scientific as

¹Flint, Socialism, p.464. This work on Socialism is the published form of public lectures delivered under the auspices of the Edinburgh United Trades Council in 1887. Flint warned his large audiences of working men in the Tron church that what was good in the ethics of Socialism could also be found in Christianity. (p.468) Moreover, he felt there was much that was undesirable in the ethics of Socialism primarily because it was contradictory to the Christian message of changing society through the renovation of the individual. Socialism is anti-Christian, alleges Flint, in so far as it (a) allies itself with atheism or materialism, (b) "assumes that man's chief end is merely a happy social life on earth," (c) gives more heed to a man's condition than to his character, and (d) does not respect the rights of the individual. (pp.460-465) Concludes Flint, "there is no Socialism, properly so called, where the freedom to which individuals are entitled is not unduly sacrificed to the will of society." (p.465). Considering Socialism as a purely economic and political movement, he held that Christianity has no justification for either advocating or repudiating it, since Christianity "has no direct concern with" "any economic or political system as economic or political." (p.452).
he claims. So far Flint has been seen proceeding in a manner which may or may not depend upon some unscientifically derived presuppositions. The ethical ideas which he alleges a comparative psychology will discover to be the key to "the course, plan, and laws of history itself" may, as a matter of fact, be ideas which any student of history would find there so functioning, no matter what presuppositions that student might have. That is, assuming said student was willing to modify his presuppositions as the emergent facts dictated. But, of course, not all students of history find it to be governed by man's fundamental ethical ideas. The possibility then immediately arises that only by approaching history with the presupposition that such ethical ideas do govern history will said ethical ideas be found so functioning there. If this be true and if this be the method Flint is really using, then he can hardly be said to have successfully followed the orthodox nineteenth century method, which was a method patterned after the physical sciences. One thing is certain at this stage: Flint has moved a noticeable distance from the position with which he claims to have begun his "science of history." He allegedly began, it will be remembered, with only one presupposition, namely, "that the reign of law somehow extends over human affairs."¹ In order to definitely decide whether Flint is after all approaching history with more presuppositions than he realises, it is necessary to learn what his philosophy of history as such is. So the discussion will now turn from Flint's "science of history" to that discipline

¹Flint, Philosophy of History, 1st ed., p.2.
for which he alleges his scientific history has laid the foundations, namely, the philosophy of history as the metaphysical interpretation of history.

II. The Philosophy of History as the Metaphysical Interpretation of History

The science of history having ascertained "the course, plan, and laws of history," the next step, according to Flint, is for the philosophy of history to trace "the relations of causation and affinity which connect history with other departments of existence and knowledge." The conclusion to which he will be seen to come in the pursuit of a philosophy of history so defined is a doctrine of providence, for he took such a doctrine to be the "kernel" of a philosophy of history. Or, as he states it, "the ultimate and greatest triumph of historical philosophy may not unreasonably be expected to be the full proof of Providence, the discovery by the process of scientific method of the divine plan which unites and harmonises the apparent chaos of human actions contained in history into a cosmos." The task of the present discussion will be to unfold and criticise the process by which Flint goes from the results of his science of history to his doctrine of providence.

1Flint, Philosophy of History, 2nd ed., p.21.
2Flint, MSS "H.5.,” p.3. (This manuscript contains Flint’s class lecture notes on the doctrine of the providence of God.)
3Flint, Philosophy of History, 2nd ed., p.175.
While engaged in this task the researcher must keep in mind that, as learned in the previous chapter, Flint regards the apprehension of the moral character of the Intelligent First Cause to be within the reach of everyone by virtue of his conscience. The great significance a study of history had for Flint was the "ample and unmistakable" confirmation history provided for the existence and character of the God about which conscience testifies. Just as there are "internal moral laws of an essentially retributive nature" operative in the individual life so there are in society; and, Flint stresses, the operation of these laws in society is observable. "The laws of morality are conditions of the progress, and even of the existence, of society." Since Flint thinks a look at history reveals in the main a process of moral progress, "the only conclusion he sees possible is that these moral laws are in operation and, further, that the Originator of these laws must therefore be governing history "to show forth the glory of His wisdom, love, and justice."¹ This explains why Flint's philosophy of history will now be found to be consummated by a doctrine of providence.

¹Flint, Theism, pp.227-232.
A. Flint’s Philosophy of History Set Forth in Terms of Vico’s Philosophy of History

It has already been mentioned in the previous section that Flint honoured Vico for being the first to adopt the procedure "of demonstrating the constant conformity of history to the constitutive laws of the human spirit."1 The conclusion to which Vico came in his philosophy of history accounts for what might be designated a triple bond of affinity between Flint and Vico. The conclusion meant, which was common to both men, is that history is (i) a moral production, (ii) "gradually made by man, and (iii) under the guidance of Providence."2 It will now be shown that besides attributing to Vico the merit of being the first to realise that explaining history by mind is inseparable from explaining mind by history, Flint regards Vico as the first to have held the three components of the conclusion just mentioned in their proper relationship.

1. Providence in history—wrongly and correctly interpreted

The essence of Flint’s criticism of the Augustinian philosophy of history is that it over-emphasises providence. In the next chapter it will be noted that Flint expresses dissatisfaction with the Augustinian doctrine of predestination.3 There is naturally

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1Flint, Vico, p. 199. Cf. Flint’s statement in his Philosophy of History (2nd ed., p. 123), that Vico was the first to look at history “with clearness, comprehensiveness, and profundity, as a whole, of which all the phases in space and time are explicable by the constitutional activities of the common nature of mankind.”

2Flint, Vico, p. 97.

3See below, p. 304.
a close connection between Flint's finding fault with both Augustine's doctrine of providence and his doctrine of predestination. This connection becomes manifest as Flint is read criticizing Augustine's "philosophy of history" for disrupting the unity of mankind, overly cramping historical progress, and unfairly limiting man's freedom. The Augustinian dualism in which history is divided into two opposing factions, the smaller destined for heaven, the larger for eternal damnation is not the product of a philosophy of history, charges Flint. It is rather "an illustration and verification of a theological system." Augustine's error was in failing to ground his doctrine of the "First Providential Cause" of history in a study of the secondary human causes. In other words, Augustine was unscientific, taking a priori propositions before facts. The same unscientific method is used by Bossuet with even worse results, says Flint. Bossuet "explains by the doctrine of Providence the very conditions from which we conclude the existence of a Providence."2

The proper approach, in Flint's estimation, was first taken by Vico. Vico wisely allowed himself to be "strongly confirmed" by Augustine "in the belief of Providence in history, of order and law in human affairs, of particular passions and interests being rendered by Supreme Reason subservient to general ends, of the analogy of the growth of the individual to that of the race, and of the futility of the Epicurean chance and the Stoic fate as

1Flint, Philosophy of History, 2nd ed., p.156.
principles of historical explanation." But just as wisely Vico refused to follow Augustine in viewing history in terms of "predestination, the fall, redemption, and the end of the world." Instead he correctly looked upon history as "a manifestation of human nature and of fixed laws," explains Flint.

In this succinct statement is contained the essentials of what Flint regarded as his philosophy of history.

2. Several aspects and implications of Flint's position thus stated

a) While honouring Vico for being the first to build a doctrine of providence upon the science of comparative psychology, Flint takes exception to Vico's repudiation of a scientific knowledge of God.

As Croce records, "Vico's first constructively philosophical and historical work" was the "De antiquissima Stalorum sapientia ex linguae Latinae originibus eruenda" which appeared in 1710. In this volume Vico made public his dissatisfaction with Descartes' cogito ergo sum as the certain foundation for science. Instead, says Vico, "'the rule and criterion of truth is to have made it."

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Hence the clear and distinct idea of the mind not only cannot be the criterion of other truths, but it cannot be the criterion of that of the mind itself; for while the mind apprehends itself, it does not make itself, and because it does not make itself it is ignorant of the form or mode by which it apprehends itself."1 Or, in Löwith's words, for Vico "the true or 'verum' is identical with the created or 'factum'."2 Holding firmly to the Aristotelian axiom that scientific knowledge is a knowledge of causes, Vico, especially in his earlier thought, explicitly agreed with Descartes that mathematics are the paragon of scientific or demonstrative knowledge. However, Vico was careful to point out that the reason is not because, as Descartes held, mathematics are self-evident, but rather "'mathematica demonstramus, quia verum facimus,' (we demonstrate mathematics, because we create their truth)."3

This important difference between Descartes and Vico concerning the reason why they regarded mathematics as the one perfect kind of scientific knowledge attainable by man had two major implications for Vico's later thought.

Most important for subsequent European philosophy of history, Vico came to realise and, in 1725, set down in his New Science that, contrary to Descartes, the historical sciences are real sciences because even "in the night of thick darkness enveloping

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2K.Löwith, Meaning in History, p.118.

the earliest antiquity so remote from ourselves, there shines
the eternal and never-failing light of a truth beyond all question:
that the world of civil society has certainly been made by men, and
that its principles are therefore to be found within the modifica
tions of our own human mind." Vico continues in this passage by
pointing out:

"Whoever reflects on this cannot but marvel that the
philosophers should have bent all their energies to the
study of nature, which, since God made it, He alone knows;
and that they should have neglected the study of the world
of nations or civil world, which since men had made it, men
could hope to know."¹

Vico did not thereby intend to imply that only man made history.
Providence is still the ultimate explanation of the movement of
history. The New Science, says Vico, must

"be a history of the forms of order which, without human
discernment or intent, and often against the designs of
men, providence has given to this great city of the human
race. For though this world has been created in time and
particular, the orders established therein by providence
are universal and eternal."²

It is precisely because providence has "omnipotence" that "it
develops its orders by means as easy as the natural customs of
men," argues Vico.³ In Vico's opinion the very fact that human
society can be found to have preserved itself through the estab-
lishment of a code of civil justice indicates the contemporaneous

¹Vico, New Science, trans. from 3rd ed. by T.H. Bergin and
(This number refers to the translators' paragraph number.)


vindication through providence of divine justice.¹ For propounding these views on historical science and providence Flint praises Vico.

The second major implication of Vico's deviation from Descartes mentioned above was one with which Flint took exception. To put the matter bluntly: Vico's making verum and factum convertible meant that since man has not been the cause or maker of God he cannot have a scientific or demonstrative knowledge of God. Vico believed that "those who try to prove God a priori are guilty of impious curiosity; for to do that amounts to making oneself the god of God, and thereby denying the God one seeks."² But such a conclusion is obviously unacceptable to Flint who has been seen as an advocate of an inferential natural knowledge of God by means of a process justified by the combination of the Scottish Philosophy and the Christianised Platonic theory of ideas. Instead of limiting human knowledge, as Vico does, to the finite and relative, Flint asserts that human thought "has what is absolute in it as well as what is relative, and can, while truly remaining thought and obeying the laws of its own nature, reach a knowledge of the Absolute, because the Absolute is Knowledge and Thought, not the Unknowable, not what is extraneous and alien to Thought."³ This rejection of the Vichian relativism by a man already known to hold a Christian Theism built upon the epistemological found-

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ation of the Scottish Philosophy is not surprising. But it is important to remember that Flint is a Christian theist using the Scottish Philosophy when the following assertion, made elsewhere by Flint to mark out the limits of his agreement with Hegel, is read along side of the above statement showing his rejection of the Vichian relativism. This following assertion clearly shows what is in the back of Flint’s mind when he criticises Vico’s epistemological timidity.

"There is a world of verities, accessible in some degree to the mind of man, beyond the created world — there are absolute truths which cannot be thought of as otherwise than certain before a particle of matter or any finite spirit was called into being — truths essential to intelligence as such, and therefore truths which must from all eternity have belonged to the self-existent intelligence."¹

Nevertheless, while rejecting the implications Vico drew as far as knowledge of God is concerned, Flint honours the Vichian criterion of truth for its being "essentially" a demand for "verification."² According to Flint, the Vichian criterion of truth was a great improvement over the Cartesian criterion of truth — clear and distinct perceptions — because it recognised the need for "experimental evidence" for all truth, including moral and spiritual truth. And in particular it enabled Vico to be the first to properly bring human nature, including the history of human nature, within the sphere of science for he came to realise that the world of humanity was most certainly man made and therefore one in which a scientific knowledge, a knowledge of the nature of the causes through an experience of their effects,

¹Flint, Philosophy of History, 1st ed., p.498.
could surely be had.¹

b) The extent to which Flint thought Vico agreed with Augustine's belief of providence in history and the extent to which Flint thought Vico asserted history to be "a manifestation of human nature and of fixed laws" as mentioned in the statement above can be found harmonious with the doctrine of providence taught by Flint.

According to Flint, Vico followed the lead of Plato, Augustine, and Dante in regarding history as conforming to the divine ideal. Vico's New Science was intended to demonstrate from the historical evidence "that the affairs of the world are directed by divine power, wisdom, and goodness, without the assent or advise of men, and often in opposition to their plans."² On the other hand, Vico's genius, in Flint's estimation, was in arriving at this belief in providence only through evidence afforded by the contrasting belief of man's agency in the realisation of God's ordained plan of history. Human actions are never immediately caused by God; man, as a secondary cause, causes his own actions. Holding this tenet firmly, Vico saw, says Flint, that the way to discover the principles by which God was ordering history was to discover the principles by which mankind was ordering history.³

Flint interprets Vico as taking this position one step further. Vico, he says, conceived of God's control of man as being

¹Flint, Vico, pp.110-111.
through the idea of Himself. This means providence is better considered as within mankind than as "outside and above" mankind. Providential working is "in the very persuasion which men have of being under divine guidance." "God is so immanent in man that providence itself is in one respect a human process." The result is God's movement of history from within through human means and not by "external repression and constraint." This, opines Flint, is quite different from Bossuet's theory in the *Discours sur l'Histoire Universelle* and is much to be preferred, for "it rests on a far truer and more profound insight into the nature of the relationship of humanity to God, and, ultimately, on a more consistent and spiritual idea of God as the Absolute Reason."¹

This interpretation of Vico by Flint brings to mind the latter's own assertion that "the idea of Divinity is the root of civilisation — and its gradual apprehension, the regulative principle of the history of civilisation."² Flint can also be found making the comment that it is not unreasonable to think, with Hegel, of the universe both of nature and of mind as a vast process, an evolution, a history...that man, in the exercise of his freewill, follows a direction on the whole conformned to that which nature has followed since its creation under the constraint of undeviating physical law."³ Such statements as these, considered in the context of a doctrine of divine immanency, introduce


the problem of Flint's view on the divine-human relationship in history.

The position approvingly attributed to Vico by Flint contains the key to Flint's own view. Vico's theory is antagonistic to Cartesianism and its eventual development by Malebranche into an idealism in which God is the only real cause of events, or by Spinoza into a pantheism in which all causality is immanent and the one substantial being includes all determinative being. Flint carries on the tradition of Vico in this respect because the former advocates a doctrine of providence entirely consonant with the realism of his Scottish Philosophy and in harmony with the Augustinian doctrine of providence, at least so far as Flint thought Vico stayed with the Augustinian view.

Amongst Flint's manuscript lecture notes can be found those dealing with the doctrine of providence. Rejected therein by


3For a sympathetic account by a philosopher of religion of Malebranche's and Spinoza's attempts to bridge Descartes' theoretical dualism, see William S.Morgan's The Philosophy of Religion (New York: Philosophical Library Inc.; 1950) pp.1-14. A more critical as well as a full analysis is given by Hans Meyer (Geschichte der abendländischen Weltanschauung, (Nurzburg und Paderborn: Verlag Schöningh; 1950/IV, 126-132, 142-173.)

4See above, pp. 216-217.
Flint as deistic is the view explaining providence as completely effected by secondary causes having a permanent existence apart from the First Cause, and the view precluding special Divine intervention and miracles by limiting providence to secondary causes, never apart from them.\(^1\) Neither could Flint accept the Pantheistic view that God is the sole true agent, since that view denies real being to created things and withholds real efficiency from secondary causes.\(^2\)

Flint's Common Sense Realism is unmistakable in his reason for refusing the view that providential preservation is a continuous creation: That view "supposes the properties of matter to be but modes of the Divine Nature and so-called second causes but forms of immediate Divine volition."\(^3\) The view favoured by Flint is one making a distinction between creation and providence: "Preservation is the continuous upholding of created Beings in the possession of the properties and powers bestowed upon them through creation or acquired by exercise, inheritance, or development."\(^4\)

\(^1\)Flint, MSS "H.5," p.6. On God's direct intervention in history see also Philosophy of History, 2nd ed., p.223. To bring to the study of either biblical or general history the assumption that miracles are impossible by virtue of the principle of causality and the connection of events in space and time is wholly unscientific, alleges Flint, for it amounts to pre-judging the historical evidence. Explaining further, he points out that miracles are not causeless events, and may be regarded as entirely possible as long as the simultaneous existence of order and freedom in history be admitted. (On Theol., Bibl., and Other Subjects, pp.119-120).

\(^2\)Flint, MSS "H.5," pp.6-7.

\(^3\)Flint, MSS "H.5," p.9.

Turning to Flint's view of the providential government, it is interesting to discover him espousing the theory accepted by most Augustinian theologians, first formulated by the seventeenth century Lutheran Quenstedt, and called the Concursus theory.¹ Flint carries this doctrine of the Divine cooperation or concursus as far as do the Augustinians by not limiting God's action to a general concursus but rather extending it to "a simultaneous and immediate concausa in production of the act of the creature." The major difficulty with this doctrine is recognised by Flint. That difficulty arises over the logical need of including man's sinful acts among those in which God has so "cooperated." Flint invokes the standard Augustinian qualification that God's concursus extends to sin not as sin but simply as action.²

It may be concluded, therefore, that despite Flint's dissatisfaction with the Calvinistic doctrines of election and predestination³ his doctrine of providence is still compatible with that of the Westminster Confession.⁴ This conclusion, taken together with the Common Sense Realist criticisms he was seen to make against a pantheistic view of providence, means that Flint is perpetuating the Vichian opposition to Cartesianism. Hence the very important conclusion is reached that when Flint approv-

¹Charles Hodge, Systematic Theology (London and Edinburgh: Thomas Nelson and Sons; 1853), I, 598-599.


³See above, p. 215.

ingly discerns in Vico the view that "God is so immanent in man that providence itself is in one respect a human process,"¹ or when Flint is read giving credit to Hegel for demonstrating as much as any other thinker the truth that the world's history is the "product of an infinite and active reason, which has made use of all finite volitions, interests, and activities, as its instruments to accomplish a great and holy end,"² Flint must always be interpreted in the light of his doctrine of providence as explained above.³ In Flint's view, for man to be a spirit means that man is "not merely what he is made to be, but mainly what he makes himself to be"; hence, "a spiritual humanity is not merely the passive subject of change and variation, but mainly self-formed and self-developed." Rational freedom, then, becomes "the exertion by which man makes himself to be — the self-determination and self-realisation of humanity."⁴

c) Flint's account of Vico's view of progress in history indicates the solution Flint prefers on the problem of the relation of sin and moral progress in history.

There is no doubt that Vico taught the theory of historical

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¹Flint, Vico, p.197.
cycles — of "corsi and ricorsi." But it was Flint's contention that, although Vico could not have believed in continuous progress, he did hold to a general advance, "a gradually ascending spiral movement" of history, so that no cycle simply repeated its predecessor.

According to Flint, Vico held this position for the following reasons. Vico accepted Augustine's belief in a providence accomplishing holy and good ends in history. Secondly, in accepting Augustine's belief in providence Vico ignored the former's dualistic view of history. This fact permits Flint to ascribe to Vico a healthy grasp of "the freedom of the human will both in relation to divine grace and to divine law." Thirdly, Vico is represented

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1 E.g. Vico concludes Book Five of the New Science (Book Five is entitled: "The Recurrence of Human Things in the Resurgence of the Nations") with the following statement: "Now, in the light of the recurrence of human civil things to which we have given particular attention in this book, let us reflect on the comparisons we have made throughout this work in a great many respects between the first and last times of the ancient and modern nations. There will then be fully unfolded, not the particular history in time of the laws and deeds of the Romans or the Greeks, but (in virtue of the substantial identity of meaning in the diversity of modes of expression) the ideal of the eternal laws in accordance with which the affairs of all nations proceed in their rise, progress, mature state, decline and fall, and would do so even if (as is certainly not the case) there were infinite worlds being born from time to time throughout eternity." New Science, trans. Bergin and Fisch, 1096.


4 Flint, Vico, p.181.

5 Flint, Vico, p.227.
by Flint as seeing "in history the grandest of all vindications of the ways of God."¹ Finally, Vico maintained that the revealed religion Christianity, unlike all ethnic religions, was advancing, rather than succumbing to an eventual decay.²

It will now be shown that with the possible exception of the theory of cycles — a theory upon whose worth Flint never commits himself — Flint takes a similar stand on historical progress and for the same reasons.

First, it has been observed that Flint subscribes to the view of providence traditionally taught by most Augustinians.³

Secondly, while congratulating Augustine on being the first to carry out a "sustained and comprehensive" attempt at tracing the divine plan in history and thereby affirming historical unity and progress, Flint accuses Augustine of unnecessarily disrupting the unity of mankind by holding that most people are destined to eternal damnation.⁴ It was the same demand for a fully-orbed view of human freedom that led Flint to repudiate the notion of a continuous progress in history and "all theories of physical and mechanical, fatalistic and predestinarian, necessitarianism" giving rise to such a notion.⁵ Instead, Flint chose to believe in the possibility of progress — a possibility dependent upon

¹Flint, Vico, p.227.
²Flint, Vico, p.228.
³See above, pp. 226.
⁴Flint, Philosophy of History, 2nd ed., pp.156-175.
⁵Flint, Philosophy of History, 2nd ed., p.666.
mankind's willingness to work for progress, and a possibility which, despite many setbacks and "retrogressions," is gradually being fulfilled in the progressive civilisations.¹ It must be added at this juncture that by so modifying what he regarded to be Calvin's overstrict predestinationism, Flint still adheres, along with the Roman Catholic Vico, to the doctrine of man's inherent sinfulness. There is no uncertainty about Flint's aversion to any theory which considers moral progress to be a natural concomitant of intellectual progress. The truth, he contends, is that man is evil by nature and not by ignorance and bad education. Vice constitutes the major opposition to progress.²

Thirdly, Flint taught that "all the evidences of...God's power and wisdom" observable in the material universe "ought to impress us much less... than the sight of how He brings order and His own holy purpose out of the confusion and conflict of millions of human wills" in history.³ In other words, like Vico, Flint sees God's greatest vindication of Himself in history.

Finally, Flint believes, as he construes Vico to believe, in Christianity's eventual triumph. The substantiation of this assertion lies in Flint's doctrine of the Kingdom of God. Since

¹Flint, Philosophy of History, 1st ed., p.234; 2nd ed., p.514. He is adamant that a true view of progress "is not dependent on any exaggerated view of progress as the continuous, ubiquitous, inevitable manifestation of an inherent faculty or force, but on the simple fact of progress in directions which can be traced." (Philosophy of History, 1st ed., p.132.)

²Flint, Philosophy of History, 2nd ed., p.335.

³Flint, Christ's Kingdom Upon Earth, p.56. See above, p.182.
Flint's doctrine of the Kingdom of God and its relation to history will be discussed below,¹ the following statement will suffice here: The Kingdom of Christ which Flint equates with the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Heaven, is among other things, "a progress which is brought about not merely by the direct action of the Gospel but also by the general movement of history concurring with, preparing for, and furthering the success of that action. Those who work to advance Christ’s kingdom not only work for but with God, inasmuch as He in His providence works to secure their success and towards the same end at which they aim."²

d) A clarification is perhaps warranted as to the relation between Vico and Flint which this section of the thesis is intending to portray.

It is not intended that Vico be considered the direct source of Flint's philosophy of history. It should be obvious by now that the basis for a Vichian-like philosophy of history was constituted in Flint's mind by virtue of his adherence to the Westminster Confession, his Scottish Philosophy, his conception of the scientific method, his teachings on man's natural knowledge of God, his view of providence, and his doctrine of the Kingdom of God—all of which seem to have belonged in an unchanging form to his Weltanschauung from his university days, or at least from his first publishing days, onwards. The fact that Flint felt Butler "had conclusively shown" the "one great governing principle" of human nature to be "the power which distinguishes truth from error,

¹See below, pp. 236-241.

²Flint, MSS "H.9," p.7. Italics are Flint's (This manuscript contains a portion of Flint's class lecture notes on the doctrine of the Kingdom of God.)
right from wrong,' makes Butler a more likely candidate — if one writer is sought — than Vico as the formative source of the key concept of Flint's philosophy of history, for there can be no doubt that Flint, in his years of training, would have met with Butler long before Vico.2 There is no demonstrable reason for saying more than that Flint's unusual respect for Vico arises out of the fact that he saw in Vico, despite their important differences,3 the earliest philosopher whose theory of history he felt happened to be essentially compatible with his own. It is this alleged compatibility which makes the explanation of Flint's philosophy of history in terms of Vico's desirable, since Flint never published his own view.

There is some evidence for believing that Flint's real interest in Vico did not develop until after the first edition of the Philosophy of History. The evidence meant is the instances in the second edition where Flint adds comments about Vico's significance for the particular problem under discussion to the otherwise unchanged material from the first edition.4 The reason for this later interest in Vico may be Flint's assignment to write the work on Vico in "Blackwood's Philosophical Classics,"5 for

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1Flint, Agnosticism, p.506.
3These differences will be reviewed below, pp.233-235.
4Cf. Flint, Philosophy of History, 2nd ed., pp.122-123;157;etc. Flint refers to Vico over twice as many times (21) in the second edition as in the first.
5For further explanation, see above, p.196.
some of the new comments on Vico in the second edition of Flint's Philosophy of History can also be found in his volume on Vico. 1

The extent to which Flint actually was directly in debt to Vico is impossible to tell for it is not possible to ascertain the date or circumstances of his introduction to Vico. At least by 1874 he had respectfully read Michelet's Principe de la Philosophy de l'Histoire, Traduites de la Scienza Nuova de Vico (1827), the book which was very instrumental in giving Vico the great popularity he enjoyed in the mid-nineteenth century, especially in intellectual France. 2 But according to Max Fisch, Vichian ideas are "scattered through the writings of Ferguson, Hume,...Brown,... and Burke." 3 These are authors with whom an arts and theology student at Glasgow University in the 1850's with Flint's interests would most certainly have been acquainted. The evidence adduced earlier 4 coupled with the fact of Flint's approaching Vico from the rationalist's viewpoint render it improbable although not impossible that Flint was influenced by the interest in Vico produced in Britain in the middle two quarters of the nineteenth century by the romanticist S.T. Coleridge, and then the Broad Church movement. 5 So although


4 See above, p.198.

Flint was "the first British philosopher to make a thorough first-hand study of the whole range of Vico's writings," as Fisch has it.\(^1\) Flint could hardly be called a discoverer of Vico for English readers, nor would Flint have had to learn French, Italian, or German to be able to be familiar with and influenced by, directly or indirectly, the ideas of Vico. Of course it is admitted that directly Flint owed much to Vico because of the originality of Vico's *New Science* and the influence it had on later eighteenth century French philosophy of history and nineteenth century European philosophy of history.\(^2\)

Before leaving this section, a brief account must be given of the notable differences between the views of Vico and Flint to which reference was made a few paragraphs ago. Considering first those differences with Vico's position of which Flint was aware, there are, in addition to the exception Flint was earlier shown to have taken to Vico's epistemology,\(^3\) the rejection of Vico's cosmology (which cosmology was based upon the hypothesis of indivisible metaphysical points),\(^4\) the refusal to support Vico's analysis

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of humanity as an aggregate rather than an "organism of nations" mutually influencing each other's development, and thus the rejection of Vico's theory that each nation independently goes through three stages or epochs,¹ and, from the standpoint of Christianity, Flint's repudiation of Vico's restriction of the New Science to the development of heathen humanity. This last item heralds an important difference between the positions of Flint and Vico of which the former was not aware. In objecting to Vico's refusal to consider special revelation as able to "become subject to the laws of historical development, which are grounded on the general system of the world,"² Flint was indirectly anticipating one of the contemporary criticisms of Vico. Löwith, citing statements by Vico that the providential ordering of history which the New Science claims to demonstrate means that history "'had to be, must now be, and will have to be'" as the New Science shows it to be, thinks Vico's providence has become "as natural, secular, and historical as if it did not exist at all."³ Starting with different presuppositions Croce comes to what amounts to a similar opinion of Vico's doctrine of providence.⁴ Indeed, Flint can once be

¹F. Flint, Vico, pp.214-225.
²F. Flint, Vico, p.204.
³K. Löwith, Meaning in History, p.123. Italics are Löwith's. Löwith has reference to such passages in Vico's New Science as paragraph 348 where, in speaking of mankind's ordering of itself in civil history, Vico asserts: "once these orders were established by divine providence, the course of the affairs of the nations had to be, must now be and will have to be as our science demonstrates." (Trans. Bergin and Fisch.) Löwith refers his readers to R. Peters, Der Aufbau der Weltgeschichte bei Vico (Berlin, 1929) for verification that this is the "modern" critical view of Vico's doctrine of providence.
⁴B. Croce, The Philosophy of G. Vico, pp.112-121.
found admitting the fact of "Vico's complete extrusion of his supernaturalistic beliefs from the sphere of his philosophy of history."¹ If, then, Löwith is correct when he maintains modern critics agree that "in Vico's 'demonstration' of providence nothing remains of the transcendent and miraculous operation which characterises the faith in providence from Augustine to Bossuet,² the scientific demonstration of providence which Flint postulates as the goal of the philosophy of history³ may be expected to be a demonstration starting with assumptions significantly different from Vico's. For Flint, like Augustine and Bossuet, definitely did not extrude "his supernaturalistic beliefs from the sphere of his philosophy of history." This problem will be attended to in the next section. It will there be asked whether Flint's additional presuppositions do not radically change his method in the philosophy of history, so much so that without realising it he is after all further on the side of Augustine and Bossuet than Vico.

¹Flint, Vico, p. 204.
B. The Kingdom of God and History

A study of Flint's philosophy of history would be incomplete unless it culminated with a discussion of his doctrine of the Kingdom of God, simply because he believed the Kingdom of God was the culmination of history and the goal of providence.

By the time of his first publication, seven years after leaving the Divinity Hall, Flint's essential position on this matter, as well as his theological and philosophical method, had become firmly established in his own mind. In a sermon published in his first book Flint deals with the "Nature of God's Kingdom On Earth" in a manner and with results which are typical of all his writings on this theme or the philosophy of history in general.1 Taking his usual stand on the necessity of a doctrine of providence being founded on "observation of the facts" of history,2 on "fullest research" which he equates with "science,"3 and thereupon deciding that history clearly reveals God to be working out His purposes in history, Flint points out the stark existence of unexplainable evil in history.4 In the discussion of Flint's conception of the moral argument the magnitude of the problem of evil for Flint was noticed. Now it is possible to see why, while

1 Notice the similarity of view now to be delineated which is based on a sermon entitled "The Nature of God's Kingdom On Earth," appearing in Christ's Kingdom Upon Earth (1865), pp.53-82 with the lecture "Christ's Teaching as to the Kingdom of God," On Theol., Bibl., and Other Subjects (1905), pp.243-274.

2 Flint, Christ's Kingdom Upon Earth, p.54.

3 Flint, Christ's Kingdom Upon Earth, p.77 footnote.

4 Flint, Christ's Kingdom Upon Earth, pp.53-58.
talking all around it, he never offered a forthright explanation of evil.¹ Flint takes a radical exception to the trait — a trait he diagnosed as standard amongst philosophies of history — of passing off evil as "but good in the making," of evil necessary to God's providence. Evil, he counters, must never be explained away; it is always a fathomless mystery. Observation of the historical evidence confirms this — "evil is never transferred or transformed into good." Logic also demands the rejection of the argument that, the Creator being omniscient, the world would be worse without evil.

All that may be affirmed, argues Flint, is that it is better for evil to exist than for God to miraculously exterminate it, thereby ceasing to control the world by "general laws," or to abolish creatures having free wills. The conclusion Flint is aiming at is that evil is contrary to God's will and wherever it exists God's Kingdom does not exist.²

In order to reach this conclusion Flint claims to need only a scientific study of the historical evidence. He has discovered through God's general revelation of Himself that God has a providential interest in history and that the goal of this interest is a conquest of evil which involves keeping free moral agents in existence. In other words, the Kingdom of God is the reign of righteousness in men's hearts, the absence of human willing contrary to God's willing.³

¹See above, pp. 109-112.  
²Flint, Christ's Kingdom Upon Earth, pp. 59-60.  
It is easy to understand how Flint, with this line of reasoning in the back of his mind, could state that "whenever God has been in righteousness, and mercy, and love, present to men, and men have in any measure felt His presence; ... then the Kingdom of God has been
But there are other passages in Flint's writings where, as has been noticed before, he finds it necessary to supplement and complement the knowledge from God's general revelation with the knowledge derived from God's supernatural revelation. Just as Flint postulated a knowledge of Christ to be a prerequisite for anything more than a meagre and partially valid discernment of God in nature, so he takes the same approach with respect to the discovery of the existence of God's plan in history. Flint teaches that Christianity introduced the concept of history as the working out of a divine plan. Christianity thus made possible and necessary a doctrine of providence and a kind of philosophy of history unknown before. In the case of the sovereignty of God disclosed in history, Flint automatically connects that inference with the Biblical accounts of the Kingdom of God. "It is as victory over sin in the soul, as order, righteousness, peace in the soul — an order, righteousness, and peace founded on Christ's sacrifice and produced by the Holy Spirit — that the kingdom of God arises."

Flint believed that the establishment of the Kingdom upon in like measure in existence. Therefore, it has always existed in some measure among men." (MSS "9," p.l. Cf. On Theol., Bibl., and Other Subjects, p.240).

1 See above, p.

2 See above, pp. 178-179.

3 Flint, Philosophy of History, 1st ed., pp.16-17.

4 It bears repeating that Flint regarded Christ, as reported in the Synoptics, to have used the two expressions and synonymously or practically so. (On Theol., Bibl., and Other Subjects, pp. 245-246).

and by Christ's life, sacrificial death, and resurrection afforded the only grounds for the assurance of its ultimate triumph. However, he did not limit the Kingdom to the visible Church. For instance, Church History, when correctly conducted "from the New Testament point of view of the Kingdom of God," he felt should be "as wide as history itself, because as wide as the whole providential and redemptive work of God as traceable in the history of mankind." He specifically accuses the theologians after Schleiermacher, especially the Ritschlians, who confounded the Kingdom of God with the "Christliche Gemeinschaft" of being in error here.

Flint's belief is that

"the ecclesia in its distinctively Scriptural sense is not a visible corporation at all, although it manifests itself in all spheres of human activity wherever there is the working of spiritual life. The kingdom of God which is so prominent in the New Testament is certainly not one in which Churchmen are described as having any exclusive or prominent place, but certainly one which from the New Testament point of view is as wide as history itself, because as wide as the whole providential and redemptive work of God traceable in the history of mankind."

The Church exists solely for the Kingdom; it accomplishes its end only to the extent that it fosters the Kingdom. Here lies the reason for his opposition to Augustine's dualistic reading of history, mentioned earlier, in which the Church is identified with the


3 Flint, On Theol., Bibl., and Other Subjects, p.245.

4 Flint, Philosophy as Scientia Scientiarum, p.145. Cf. On Theol., Bibl., and Other Subjects, p.14. where he makes an identical argument on behalf of regarding "Church History" "as wide as history itself."

5 Flint, MSS "9," p.4.
Kingdom of God and the remainder of humanity regarded as of the kingdom of evil or Satan. Flint is adamant and vehement in his proclamation of a distinction between the visible Church and the Kingdom. According to him, the realm of Satan can and does wield influence in the visible Church just as much as in the secular world.¹ He is equally concerned to counteract the tendency of Christians to withdraw the Kingdom from the present world. "The Kingdom of God is not meant to separate, but to unite heaven and earth, to embrace both in one, to sanctify the lower through the higher, and to admit into the higher through the lower.²" The task of the Church is "the sanctification of society in all its elements, agencies, and relations by "'the word of truth.'" And, Flint declares, this is not to be done by the Church's usurping the direct and immediate control of all these aspects of society but by the Church's calling attention to the right these agencies have to be members of God's Kingdom and urging them to act accordingly.³

The origination and growth of the Christian Church, therefore, is the proof of the fact, but not the sole agency for the accomplishment of the fact, that human history will eventually be rid of evil and completely subject to God in love. Flint connects this future event with "the consummation of the Messianic kingdom, the heavenly inheritance... to be bestowed at the second advent, the parousia."⁴

¹Flint, Sermons and Addresses, p.153.
²Flint, Christ's Kingdom Upon Earth, p.63.
³Flint, Christ's Kingdom Upon Earth, pp.80-81.
Thus it is only through God's fulfilment of His promises with respect to Christ that the religious life of mankind will be brought to perfection.¹ This, then, is the apex of history and the key to the philosophy of history, in Flint's system. Flint puts it thus: "Christianity came to proclaim and found 'the Kingdom of God,' as the realisation of the purpose which had been running through the ages, as the fulfilment of the law and the prophets, and as destined to overspread and transform the whole earth."²

Conclusions

It is now time to take an overall look at the superstructure Flint builds as a philosophy of history upon the foundational concepts which his science of history had laid down for this purpose.

A view of history characterised by the ideas of rational freedom, human unity, and progress, it will be recalled, was affirmed by Flint to be the results of scientific inductions from the widest possible collection of historical facts, facts simply assumed, with the nineteenth century scientific historicists, to be independently existent and ascertainable in the same way as physical facts are.³ Of course his conclusion that history is an ethical formation and morality an historical production is a conclusion which in order to be reached must also presuppose the existence and moral character of the Intelligent First Cause. Assuming

¹Flint, MSS "H.11," p.1. (This manuscript contains a portion of Flint's class lecture notes on the doctrine of the Kingdom of God.)


³A discussion of Flint's conception of historical fact can be found in the chapter appendix.
that moral consciousness both presupposes and postulates God, Flint regards the idea of God as the basis of civilisation and man's "gradual apprehension of that idea the regulative principle" of civilisation's history. Hence, the philosophy of history, at this stage, is simply an extension of the Teleological and Moral arguments which at the same time assumes and confirms those arguments.

This reciprocal relationship between Teleological and Moral arguments and the philosophy of history, in Flint's case, leads to a doctrine of providence. It is in the light of his doctrine of providence that the ideas of freedom, unity, and progress must be interpreted. But it also means that, while retaining a modified but essentially Augustinian doctrine of providence, the Augustinian "philosophy of history" — which Flint says is really a "theology of history" — and its methodology have ostensibly been rejected as required by the scientific method in favour of the rationalist approach to history he regarded as stemming from Vico. However, this rejection of the Augustinian in favour of the rationalist theory of history extends only so far as is consistent with Flint's adherence to the Scottish Philosophy, his use of the Christianised Platonic theory of ideas, and his general agreement with Reformed Theology. History is man's product — man considered as a free moral agent, universally possessed of the common rational, volitional, and emotional characteristics of humanity and gradually progressing as he himself wills it to the state of religious perfection. History is likewise God's product — God considered as the Moral and Intelligent First Cause whose plan
and purpose for history is being effected through the immediate agency of man, the secondary cause, but a secondary cause who is preserved, governed, and receives the cooperation of the First Cause.

But just as the inference of God from the Moral and other arguments based on natural revelation was seen to be regarded as very much in need of supplementation and complementation by the supernatural manifestation of God in Christ, so Flint's doctrine of providence has been seen to depend upon and culminate in his doctrine of the Kingdom of God.

The goal which must finally define the nature of progress, in the case of man's moral progress in history, is only hereby discernable. Man's moral progress is towards a state of religious perfection in which God's will is entirely obeyed out of love. The assurance for the actual attainment of that state is God's action in Christ and the resultant influence of the Holy Spirit by which man is able to progressively conform to the image of God in Christ and thereby bring in the Kingdom of God.

The unity towards which mankind is thus progressing is a unity in which all members of the Kingdom of God are no longer regarded by God as partially or wholly tainted by the kingdom of evil by virtue of their membership in the disobedient and sinful human race. Instead, all members of the Kingdom of God, viewed either individually or collectively, will be considered by God as united in Christ: "The man,* the second Adam, the spiritual head of a new humanity."¹ Those members of sinful humanity who are

¹Flint, Sermons and Addresses, p.208. Italics are his.
united with Christ are able to die unto sin and "rise into newness of life." Apart from the possibility of this new unity in Christ the individual's natural unity with the rest of humanity is ultimately meaningless because it is a unity with a race destined to total deprivation of truth, beauty, and goodness, that is, eternal separation from God.

Flint's concept of man's rational freedom in history also takes on its true perspective only when interpreted in the light of his doctrine of the Kingdom of God. The doctrine of providence propounded by Flint, when considered apart from his doctrine of the Kingdom, would leave man as the secondary but immediate free agent and cause of a history in which moral progress would have no certainty of continuance or culmination. It is true that Flint admits the Kingdom of God has always been existent wherever, whenever, and to the extent that man has befriended truth and righteousness. But he also taught that Christ could proclaim the Kingdom as "at hand" or "near" simply because

"Christ's work originated a new epoch in the world's history. With Him there came into the world a previously unknown power and life. His death laid the foundation, and His spirit built up, a kingdom of spiritual reality which had been in the past only predicted and prepared for."
Hence, the following two assertions by Flint must be read together:

"Those who work to advance Christ’s kingdom not only work for God but with God, inasmuch as He in His providence works to secure their success and towards the same end at which they aim."¹ The motivating power of the Kingdom of God "reaches to the thoughts and intents of the heart, which subdues sinfulness, which implants new and higher principles of action, and which so operates on the soul that its freedom is not injured but enlarged: the power of the Holy Spirit."²

The crucial question for which the present chapter has been seeking an answer must now be put: Has Flint, in his ardent desire to be scientific, been able to avoid what he calls the unscientific method used by Augustine and Bossuet in the formulation of their "philosophies" of history? They have, he alleges, taken the opposite of the scientific procedure by founding the philosophy of history upon a doctrine of providence.³ He accuses them of forgetting that "religious truths are inferences from scientific laws, not these laws themselves, nor the rationale of them."⁴ Flint has certainly intended and endeavoured to proceed according to this dictum. His declared intention was to construct a science of history using only historical facts and leaving out all a priori propositions. From the laws and relations inductively discovered in the facts of history he considers himself to have

further inferred a philosophy of history whose "kernel"1 is a doctrine of providence. He declares, "the ultimate and greatest triumph of historical philosophy may not unreasonably be expected to be the full proof of Providence, the discovery by the processes of scientific method of the divine plan which unites and harmonises the apparent chaos of human actions contained in history into a cosmos."2 He accordingly purposes to avoid the unscientific procedure of making an inference from the science of history its fundamental premise.3

But when one recalls the way in which Flint finally concedes the almost total inability of man to make the general theistic inference apart from a prior knowledge of God's special revelation in Jesus Christ, one begins to wonder how far Flint's extension of the Teleological and Moral arguments in a philosophy of history is going to get him apart from an interpretation of history in terms of Jesus Christ. And those suspicions have turned out to be well-founded. Just as with the theistic inference in general, Flint begins and goes through the motions of scientific induction from what he regards as facts, this time historical facts. These inductions lead to the conclusion that "history is an ethical form-

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1 See above, p.213.


3 In Flint's words, "the mind may pass from the perception of adaptations to a belief in intentions, from observing relations of means to ends to inferring designs; but in doing so a distinct process is involved, another kind of act — a process or act which transfers the intellect from the sphere of science into that of religion, so that through it we may attain a theology of history, but by no possibility a science of history." (Philosophy of History, 1st ed., pp.602-603).
ation and morality an historical production."¹ But it was decided earlier, at the conclusion of the discussion of Flint’s philosophy of history as science, that he would have an extremely difficult time in proving that he, no less than Augustine and Bossuet, did not come to history presupposing the conclusion he claims to have arrived at by assuming only that "the reign of law somehow extends over human affairs."² Now, after looking at his philosophy of history as the metaphysical interpretation of history, there remains not a shadow of a doubt that Flint has approached history with propositions in a presuppositional form which he claims instead to have inferred scientifically. Flint has now been seen unwilling to simply call the conclusion that history is governed by ethical ideas — the conclusion he claimed a scientific study of history would reach — his doctrine of providence. As indicated earlier, it is remotely possible that he could have scientifically discovered history to be an "ethical formation," but now it is clear that not even a remote possibility of this remains. It is obvious that Flint presupposes history to be an "ethical formation", for he is not content to call the proposition "history is an ethical formation" his doctrine of providence and then to let it go at that. For not only does Flint subscribe to Quenstedt’s Concursus doctrine of Providence, he also holds to a doctrine of the Kingdom of God upon which his doctrine of providence is dependent. The doctrine of the Kingdom of God, in turn, is no less dependent on God’s revel-

¹Flint, Philosophy of History, 2nd ed., p.671.
²See above, p. 212.
ation in Jesus Christ. Flint admits as much in the following statement which summarises the framework on which he has actually built a philosophy of history: "History gradually evolves the significance of nature, mind, and Scripture, yet it cannot be understood if dissembled from the creation in which it is placed, from the mind of man in the principles and faculties of which it is rooted, and from Scripture as the record of the development of a plan of redemption which gives unity and meaning to the whole historical movement."

In the final analysis, therefore, Flint's philosophy of history stands or falls on his faith in Jesus Christ and the promises God has made in connection with Him. This faith, in Flint's case, is no more inferred from the "broadest and latest scientific generalisations" than it was by Augustine or Bossuet. It is a faith that is presupposed by all three men as they turn to history in order to find God's providence there. Unlike Augustine and Bossuet, Flint does intend to make an independent application of induction to the facts of history, but no more can be said of

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3Etienne Gilson comes to the conclusion, in his recent work on The Christian Philosophy of Saint Augustine (Trans. L.E.M. Lynch; London: Victor Gollancz Ltd.; 1961) that "there is no Augustinianism without the fundamental postulate that true philosophy implies an act of adherence to the supernatural order which frees the will from the flesh through grace and the mind from scepticism through revelation." (p. 235. Italics are his). R.H. Barrow demonstrates the same conclusion in his commentary on de civitate Dei, V, 11 (Introduction to St. Augustine The City of God [London: Faber and Faber Limited; 1950], pp. 46-47, 158-162).
it in relation to his actual philosophy of history than could be said of his general theistic inference in relation to his actual knowledge of God — it simply confirms a prior conviction.
APPENDIX

Historiography

A definite and interesting confirmation of the complete thoroughness with which Flint intended to adopt the orthodox nineteenth century scientific method is provided by his occasional side-comment on historiography or what W.H. Walsh designates "the critical philosophy of history." Walsh groups under this heading the problems of the very nature of historical thinking, truth and fact in history, objectivity in history, and, explanation in history. These problems are not directly discussed by Flint, who regarded "the correct ascertainment" of historical facts as "merely the first and simplest function of method." In Flint's estimation, "historical knowledge is knowledge on the road to scientific knowledge." He was primarily concerned with the "more difficult" "inductive use of the facts." It is only when the inductive method is applied to the facts of history that a true science of history is possible. It is only then that attention is turned from the "individual actions and actors" to the "remote causes of events," to "general social tendencies," to "principles of intellectual and political development which circumscribe and dominate individual wills." The previous discussion was con-

1W.H. Walsh, Introduction to Philosophy of History, pp.16-22.
3Flint, Philosophy as Scientia Scientiarum, p.112.
cerned to show the why and how of such an inductive method as Flint propounded it. Now it may be said that in his views on the ascertainment of the facts of history from which his inductions were to be taken Flint stood within what Hans Meyerhoff calls the earlier or "predominately scientific and positivistic" stage of the nineteenth century historicism.¹

The historians whom Flint regarded as conducting an "essentially scientific" investigation for the facts of history were those whose investigations were guided by "the knowledge of laws and causes discoverable neither by the mere observation of events nor insights into the motives of individuals, but only by an elaborate use of the processes and resources of the inductive method." He felt such men were Grote, Curtius, Niebuhr, and Mommsen.² Droysen, Flint thought, had the best definition of history: "Das Nacheinander des Gewordenen."³ As a form of literature history is best described, with W. von Humboldt as "die Darstellung des Geschehenen."⁴ The single British author Flint quotes with approval on the "critical philosophy of history" is Hallam.⁵ Flint praises Vico's work on Roman history as "a prophecy and prefiguration of the achievements alike of a Wolf and

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³Droysen, Grundriss der Historik, p.7 (Quoted by Flint, Philosophy of History, 2nd ed., p.7.)
⁴Flint, Philosophy of History, 2nd ed., p.6.
Niebuhr, and of a Walter Scott and Augustin Thierry.¹ Seignobos, who a few years later was to co-author the well-known methodological compendia of nineteenth century scientific historicism, *Introduction aux Études Historiques* (1897) is said by Flint, on the basis of the former's articles on "Les conditions psychologiques de la connaissance en histoire" in the *Revue Philosophique*² to have "clearly recognised the importance of the study of the historical method."³ Of Fustel de Coulanges, another of the most eminent scientific historicists, Flint says that his works are "among the most brilliant exemplifications of a strictly critical and historical method" and are "eminently worthy of study even from the merely methodological point of view."⁴ Finally, it is unlikely that Lord Acton would have extended Flint the invitation noted earlier⁵ unless he thought the latter was in general agreement with his own views.

Most of the men mentioned in the above paragraph are listed by Hans Meyerhoff as leaders of nineteenth century scientific historicism.⁶ It is especially noteworthy that Meyerhoff claims W. von Humboldt's essay "Ueber die Aufgabe des Geschichtsschreibers" "marks the transition to an empirical historiography and influenced Ranke."⁷ Flint's comment on Humboldt's essay is that it "initiated

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¹Flint, *Vico*, p.223.
²Douzieme Année, Nos. 7 and 8.
⁵See above, p.184.
a more thorough and fruitful investigation" into the problems of historiography. It will be recalled that Flint regarded Lazarus, the founder of "Völkerpsychologie" — what Flint considered as the true foundation of historical science — to have been greatly influenced by Humboldt.

Kierkegaard and Dilthey are never mentioned by Flint. Burckhardt's Reflections On History were still unpublished when the second edition of Flint's Philosophy of History appeared.

Flint, then, follows the line taken by the nineteenth century scientific historicism in so far as they assumed historically objective truth possible. He, as they, regarded the facts of history as waiting to be discovered and used for inductions in the same way physical or organic facts were for their respective sciences. But it should not be forgotten that Flint's conception of historiography has some different presuppositions from those of the typical nineteenth century scientific historicist. Taine, whom Meyerhoff counts as another leader of that group, will be used as an illustration. For Taine's actual historiographical procedures and results Flint has nothing but admiration. But for Taine's assumptions that historical events are necessitated, that history is analogous to mechanics, that history is devoid

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1 Flint, Philosophy of History, 2nd ed., p.15.
2 See above, p.201.
5 Flint, Philosophy of History, 2nd ed., p.638.
of free will, Flint has nothing but scorn.¹ Metaphysically, Flint prefers the view of providence which has been discussed above. Epistemologically, Flint, as would be expected from a Common Sense Realist, rejects Taine's sensationalism because it overlooks "the presence, laws, and conditions of the mental activity which makes of sensational elements conscious states and works them up into intellectual edifices."²

CHAPTER V

THEOLOGY AS SCIENCE

Introduction

The previous two chapters have endeavoured to show Flint's mind at work in formulating a natural theology. The confidence he exhibits in the resultant claim for a natural knowledge of God will have far-reaching implications for his delineation and systematisation of the various departments of a theology which avails itself of all sources of knowledge of God. The principles determining his deliberations will now be seen to carry over into his attempts at relating the Christian religion to the philosophy of religion. It has been necessary to deal rather fully with Flint's claim for a natural knowledge of God in order to show why and how he presumes to subsume the Christian religion under the philosophy of religion.¹ It has been seen that Flint firmly believes in the possibility of a valid natural apprehension of God. The task now is to examine his endeavour at relating an admittedly sui generis religion with that natural

¹By the philosophy of religion Flint meant "The one general theological science." (Flint, "Theology," Encyclopaedia Britannica, 9th ed., XXIII, 272.)
knowledge of God.

In the previous chapters on Flint's epistemology and natural theology certain principles underlying his cogitations have appeared. It is now proposed to show how these foundational characteristics of Flint's thought work themselves out as he endeavours to formulate "a theological science" in the widest sense of the term. From what has already been learned about his thought it may legitimately be expected that the same struggle between reason and faith which has been observed in Flint's natural theology and philosophy of history will be found perpetuated in his endeavour to formulate a scientific theological method. On the one hand there will be the high confidence in man's rational ability so far evidenced in the form determined by his Common Sense Realism, by his pre-occupation with applying the orthodox nineteenth century scientific method to all fields of thought, and by his use of the Platonic proof for God. On the other hand, there will be his strong conviction of the uniqueness of God's special revelation and the inherent sinfulness of man. Judging from what has already been learned of Flint's thought, it would also not be surprising if he be found in the following examination of his scientific theology to be purposing a traditionally Scottish middle course—the course of "common sense"—between the positions which he regarded as extreme. In his case this will be seen to mean charting a mediating position between the Kitchilians and the ultra-conservatives, the Universalists and the Calvinistic predestinarians, the Hegelianising theologians and the deists, the Comparative Religionists and the over-exclusive Christians, the destructive Higher Critics
and the Biblicists.

The best way to begin our investigation is by ascertaining Flint's definition of theology. Then the discussion can proceed to the task of ascertaining what Flint's attempt to make theology scientific presupposes and involves.

I. The definition of theology

Flint defines theology as the "science of religion."¹ The data he intends to take into account in the science of religion are religion's "objective grounds" revealed in "nature and Scripture" as well as the "subjective contents" of religion in the "religious consciousness and its states."² The primary reason Flint gives for rejecting the definition of theology as "the science concerned with the facts and principles of the Bible"³ is that the existence of the God spoken of in the Bible must logically be first shown to be existent from extra-biblical sources.⁴ Obviously believing in the possibility and validity of such a demonstration of God from natural revelation, Flint feels theology must not limit itself to special revelation.

¹Flint, "Theology," Encyclopaedia Britannica, 9th ed. XXIII, 262. Subsequent references to this article will be designated "Theology."

²Flint, "Theology," p.262

³The definition Flint refers to is advanced by Charles Hodge, Systematic Theology (London and Edinburgh: Thomas Nelson and Sons; 1885), 1, 20-21; quoted in "Theology" p.262.

⁴Flint, "Theology," p.262.
II. Scientific method in theology

To a nineteenth century theologian, especially when he was a Common Sense Realist, the application of the scientific method to theology seemed the natural thing to do. The reason was that his definition of science, its matter, and its method was practically a foregone conclusion. To Flint science meant "simply truth exhibited in the most exact and appropriate form—simply knowledge at its best." The problem of the proper matter of science was just as easily answered by him: "All things, whether particular facts or general laws, which can be known to be true, be it empirically and historically or by generalisation and inference." So in Flint's estimation, to deny that theology may be a science is virtually to affirm that the objects of which it treats cannot be known to be "real and true." ¹

Continuing this pattern of simplicity, Flint contents himself with the definition of the scientific method as "such a use of reason on appropriate facts as will best attain truth." ²

It is understandable, therefore, that when Flint calls theology the science of religion he means theology is "the exhibition of religious facts and principles in their most general and precise form, in their internal relationships to one another, in their organic unity and systematic interdependence." ³

The rationalism lurking in this definition of the science

¹ Flint, MSS, "Ch. D.-Sc-1." (This manuscript is part of Flint's class lecture notes on the scientific method in Christian Dogmatics.)

² Flint, "Theology," p. 263.

³ Flint, MSS, "27," p. 3. (This manuscript contains Flint's class lecture notes on "Theological Introduction and the Philoso¬phy of religion.")
of religion will make itself obvious as the present chapter proceeds. But the extent to which Flint slants even his definitions of science towards rationalism may be now further revealed. In a discussion of the insufficiency of the empiricist theory of knowledge, Flint declares that "science is not experience, but the explanation of experience, and must always, in order to explain experience, to some extent transcend experience." Flint explicates his view thus: "Speculation" is necessary "in theology, in philosophy, and indeed in all science" because "no science can function without hypotheses."  

It should be apparent already that preliminary to an examination of Flint's views about the successive steps of a scientific theological method must come an analysis of the respective spheres he assigns to reason and faith in the appropriation of religious knowledge.

A. The four principles determinative of the relation of reason to religious truth and its evidence

He traces out the proper relation of reason to religious facts and their evidence on the basis of principles which have already been discerned operative in his epistemology and natural theology.

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1 Flint, On Theol., Bibl., and Other Subjects, p.97.
2 Flint, On Theol., Bibl., and Other Subjects, p.106.
A discussion of what Flint means by "speculation" here can be found below, pp.318-322.
1. "Religious truth, like all other truth, is 'above reason' in the sense of being not created by but manifested to reason, but is not 'above reason' in any special sense which withdraws it from the cognisance of reason."¹

Flint regards all truth as discovered, not manufactured. Only when and where truth is manifested can it be apprehended. This has been noticed in his claims for knowledge of a real self, a real world, and the real God of natural revelation. In the field of theology where all sources of man's knowledge of God must be considered, Flint can be found strongly contending that the manifestation of God in Christ must itself be apprehended before the full truth available to man about God can be known. It goes without saying that Christ had to appear in history if the truth he revealed was to be presented. But Flint also maintained that the truth about God revealed in Christ was no longer above reason even though not fully apprehensible by reason.

Flint has in mind here those theologians who were attempting the transformation of Christianity into some type of Hegelian formula.² Christianity, retorts Flint, must not be presented as anything but what it is, namely, "the religion of redemption and of the kingdom of God founded by Christ."³ But Flint also has in mind such theologians as the Ritschlians whom he felt had gone too far in the other direction by claiming to ground Christianity on a faith in Christ "so self-sufficing and self-

¹Flint, "Theology", p. 263.
³Flint, Sermons and Addresses, p. 311-312.
certifying as to be independent of all objections to it which
natural reason, ordinary knowledge, science, or philosophy
can suggest."

More should perhaps be said about the nature of what
Flint regarded as the menace of Ritschlianism, and about his
attitude toward it. Even the briefest of references to Ritsch-
lianism, of course, must begin by mentioning Schleiermacher.
Prompted by Kant's sceptical epistemological dualism, Schleier-
macher developed a religious epistemology subjective enough to
render it primarily anthropocentric and thus far agnostic as
to God. By Flint's time as a professor, Albrecht Ritschl's
modification of Schleiermacher had gained the ascendancy in
Germany and was beginning to make itself felt in Great Britain.
In 1895, William Hastie, Professor of Divinity in Glasgow,
could see Ritschlianism "which now dominates almost all the
German Universities" as the greatest threat to the traditional
"Theology of the Reformed Church." John Dickie reports that
although "there never was a

1Flint, Sermons and Addresses, p. 312.

2Schleiermacher's underlying subjectivism is plain even
in his definition of God. The term God, he explains, is used
only to designate "the Whence of our receptive and active ex-
istence" of which we become aware in our "feeling of absolute
dependence." (Fredrich Schleiermacher, The Christian Faith,
16-17). Further on, Schleiermacher informs his readers: "The
direct inward expression of the feeling of absolute dependence
is the consciousness of God." (p. 25.) Again, this epochal
German theologian proclaims: "Any proclamation of God which
is to be operative upon and within us can only express God in
his relation to us" and not "as He is in and for Himself."(p.52.)

3William Hastie, Theology as Science (Glasgow: James Mac-
lehose and Sons; 1899), pp. 67-68. (The quotation is from
an address delivered in 1895).
Ritschlian school in British Theology,... both in Scotland and in the English Free Churches most of those who dealt with Christian doctrine, whether in books or from a Chair, during the first quarter of this century, were appreciably influenced by Ritschl, especially in their method of approach to the problems of theology.¹ For those who read no German this Ritschlian influence began back in 1872 when William Robertson Smith and J. S. Black translated the first volume of Ritschl's Rechtfertigung und Versöhnung².

Ritschl insisted on the necessity of the objective knowledge of God given in Christ if anthropocentrism is to be avoided in religion.³ But in Flint's eyes, Ritschl's plea for the objective Christian revelation is hopelessly crippled by his acceptance of Schleiermacher's Kantian epistemological and metaphysical agnosticism. Ritschl's "value-judgments" and "existential judgments" offer no impediment to the Kantian reduction of "religion to a mode of representing the moral ideal."⁴ His attempt at combining the epistemologies of Kant and Lotze was to no avail, concludes Flint, because the metaphysics of both

¹John Dickie, Fifty Years of British Theology, p.95.
²Before Flint had passed from the scene important works by British theologians bearing the stamp of Ritschlian influence were beginning to appear; eg., John Oman's Vision and Authority, (1902) D. W. Forrest's The Christ of History and Experience (1897), and A. E. Garvie's The Ritschlian Theology (1899).
⁴Flint, Agnosticism, p.594.
philosophers are inextricably bound to their epistemologies. In other words, Flint does not think Ritschl's use of Lotze served effectively to extricate him from his Kantian scepticism.

Flint correctly discerns the cause of the Ritschlian rejection of metaphysical speculation to be a theological standpoint created prior to the philosophical. The reverse procedure practiced by Flint comes out in his specific criticisms of Ritschlianism. Philosophy searches for truth, declares Flint, but theology as the Ritschlians define it is interested not in truth but in value judgments. These theologians are not at all adverse to admitting that a theological truth may be "a real, a philosophical, a historical, a scientific falsehood." But to have faith in Christ as God and yet have no certainty of even his manhood much less his deity or to teach the resurrection of Jesus and yet regard such an event as unthinkable is utter folly in Flint's estimation.

Such a "book-keeping by double entry" flies in the face of man's intellectual make-up. Practical or value judgments and theoretical judgments cannot be opposed in the mind. False

1Flint, Agnosticism, pp.593-595.

2Pfleiderer points out that Ritschl, in his Metaphysik und Theologie, strongly denounced the "bad epistemology and metaphysics" of earlier theology, and announced his own as a far better underpinning for theology. But, contends Pfleiderer, Ritschi's epistemology amounted to "only a dilettante confusion of the irreconcilable views of subjective idealism...and commonsense realism." Pfleiderer concludes, "We may, moreover, conjecture that Ritschi did not make this theory of cognition the basis of his theology from the first, but rather propounded it subsequently, in its defence." (Otto Pfleiderer, The Development of Theology in Germany Since Kant and Its Progress in Great Britain Since 1825, p.183.

3Flint, Agnosticism, p.595.
judgments are not valuable. Truth's unity precludes opposition within itself, comments Flint.

The Ritschlians claim Luther as their inspiration, says Flint. But he remonstrates that even though "Luther, in some of his rashest moments, expressed himself as if he had adopted the most immoral and irrational tenet of medieval sophistry,-- the tenet of a twofold truth, or that what is true in philosophy may be false in theology, and 'vice versa'" yet it is unfair to him to regard this the key to his thought.¹

A clearer indication of the intellectual foundation of Flint's theology could hardly be sought than that given in his opposition to Ritschlianism. Flint was not a nervous heresy-hunter.² In fact, he seemed to go out of his way to avoid any appearance of insular pre-judgment with respect to German Theology.³

¹Flint, Agnosticism, p. 596.

²Many examples could be cited of his pacifistic predisposition when some of his professorial colleagues or fellow-churchmen smelled heresy. One example will suffice. His biographer, Dr. Macmillan, reports that when Flint's close friend Dr. Charteris, the Professor of Old Testament in Edinburgh University during Flint's time there, and others gave a series of lectures in rebuttal to Otto Pfleiderer's Gifford Lectures Flint refused to support them. (Donald Macmillan, The Life of Robert Flint, p. 450).

³He even went so far as to write a preface for the English translation of J. Kaftan's two-volumed work, The Truth of the Christian Religion. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1894.) Flint no doubt approved of Kaftan's rejection of the anthropocentric or subjective source of religious knowledge as taught by Schleiermacher and Lipsius. (II, 414, 420-421.) But he could hardly have felt kindly toward Kaftan's other doctrine to the effect that the objects of faith can never be the subjects of theological science, which science is a discipline only of the phenomena of faith itself. (II, 409-410, 421.)
But any form of subjectivism was not a viable theological method for Flint because he felt that it eventually reduced to agnosticism as to knowledge of God. A theological method founded on the epistemology of Scottish Common Sense Realism remained Flint's hope to the end. So his opposition to Ritschlianism was implacable even though it cost him the loss of a certain amount of influence during his later years.¹

2. "Reason in its investigation of religion must be completely free, i. e., subject to no other laws than those which are inherent in its own constitution."²

There are several challengers of the freedom of reason in pursuit of religious truth against which Flint complains. Grounding belief in religion upon the authority of an inherited doctrinal system or upon common consent is unduly limiting reason, alleges Flint.³ The traditional in religion takes on great

¹John Dickie, who studied theology under Flint, reports that there were two Professors in Edinburgh at the turn of the century whom all theological students revered and respected so much that "no one ever ventured to criticise" them. These Professors were Flint and A.B. Davidson, the former being in the University, the latter in New College. Yet, relates Dickie, at the turn of the last century "there was quite as much confident enthusiasm for Ritschl and Herrmann and Harnack and, in certain quarters, for Pfleiderer as there is in our day for Barth and Brunner and Karl Heim," (John Dickie, Fifty Years of British Theology, pp. 9-5.) The following story illustrates the same point: Dickie tells of a conversation he had with Flint in which the latter, after expressing his disinclination towards Ritschlianism because of its superficiality, exclaimed, "But I must admit that it does preach." When Dickie related this conversation to H. R. Mackintosh, the latter is said by Dickie to have replied, "A Ritschlian could forgive Dr. Flint all the hard things he has said about it, if he would only make that admission in public." (John Dickie, Fifty Years of British Theology, p. 70)

²Flint, "Theology," p. 263.

³Flint, Agnosticism, pp. 526-527.
importance only when the individual gains an insight into it and personally verifies its truth.\textsuperscript{1} If faith can give no other reason for its existence besides its prevalence then Flint feels it should not continue. Religion by "common consent" assumes that the truth itself cannot be "directly, personally, truly known."\textsuperscript{2}

The over-emphasis of the historical origin and development of a religious belief, such as Christianity, is an improper limitation of reason, Flint points out. Among others, he censures the Kitzchlians for their frequent curtailment of Christian Apologetics to the historical argument and thereby creating a hiatus between the mind and the spiritual truth itself.\textsuperscript{3}

Other forms of an improper limitation of one's rational powers in establishing religious faith are those relying too strongly on the principle of authority, whether personal, ecclesiastical, or Scriptural. The essence of Flint's discussion on these points is that although authority has its proper place it cannot serve as a substitute for the direct apprehension and experience of Christian truth. He is primarily aiming at the Roman Catholic Church in the strictures on human, personal, and ecclesiastical authority. But in claiming ultimate spiritual authority for Scripture, the Reformers, says Flint, have overstepped the bounds of reason as well as the Roman Church. According to Flint, a blind uncritical acceptance of Scripture as the norm for faith and practice amounts to agnostic unbelief.

\textsuperscript{1}Flint, \textit{Agnosticism}, p. 531.
\textsuperscript{2}Flint, \textit{Agnosticism}, p. 536.
\textsuperscript{3}Flint, \textit{Agnosticism}, pp. 528-539.
in man's ability at ascertaining religious truth. ¹

It is self-understood that he would oppose the position which limits man's knowledge of God to that obtainable through special revelation. Since such a position is agnostic with respect to nature, mind, and history as sources for a knowledge of God, it is diametrically opposed to Flint's own view. Although this position is hoary with age in the Church, it does not therewith earn Flint's respect. The Church was in error when, in settling supposed conflicts arising during doctrinal formulations, it chose the Scriptures over natural revelation. He complains, "The words written in human speech were preferred to the very Divine realities to which the words referred." The outcome, he thinks, was the deplorable war that should more properly have been called the war between "superstition and reason."²

Flint does not mean that there are times when natural revelation should displace special revelation. Rather he feels strongly that the Church should never formulate doctrines which make a choice between the two levels of revelation necessary. Those who make such a choice necessary and choose Scripture are as sceptical as David Hume, alleges Flint. Their kind of faith in an oral or written revelation is "inconsistent and unreasonable" because it relegates reason to the realms of sense and nature while keeping a spiritual revelation in a separate realm inaccessible to reason. To idolize the revelation God has given us in a "Book" which is the record of His historical revelation

¹Flint, Agnosticism, pp. 539-548.
²Flint, Agnosticism, p. 586.
of Himself and to ignore other instances of God's revelation of Himself is wrong, contends Flint, especially when we are instructed in the Bible itself to observe "God's disclosures of Himself in nature and history, in the control of human life, and in the direction of the movements of the human heart."¹

Flint's own attitude to the inspiration and authority of Scripture may be conveniently sketched here. He counselled a healthy albeit discerning respect for the assured results of both Lower and Higher Criticism. But the confusion and destruction of the laity's faith in the divine inspiration of Scripture by ill-digested or mis-understood clerical uses of the latest theories of the experts he branded as inexcusable. Moreover, he felt the theories of the experts were usually conjectural, Biblical Criticism being as yet far from truly scientific. But Flint thinks it far better to have an over-jealous critical study of the Bible than no criticism whatsoever. The latter is in the end much more dangerous to the proper doctrine of Scripture than the former, with its extra-historical and uncritical biases and presuppositions.²

As far as his doctrine of the nature of the inspiration of Scripture is concerned, he declares, "we are not to fancy that the inspiration of the apostles rendered them infallible in details, or prevented them from enlarging and correcting their views."³ He did not think it advisable to teach the "entire

¹Flint, Agnosticism, p. 590.
²Flint, On Theol., Bibl., and Other Subjects, pp. 113-119.
³Flint, On Theol., Bibl., and Other Subjects, p. 211.
inerrancy" and the "plenary inspiration" of the Bible because he did not think it possible or necessary to maintain the "absolute inerrancy and infallibility" of Scripture with respect to matters of "criticism, historical research, and positive science." However, he was convinced that a truly scientific study of the relevant evidence had failed and would continue to fail to uncover insurmountable objections to the "forms of inspiration, prophecy, and miracle" contained in the Bible.2

The Bible was not the sole source for Christian doctrine3 but it was "the chief source, and to a large extent the one source," in Flint's estimation. Hence, when scientifically studied and rationally interpreted so as to ascertain the "revelation of the glory and grace of God and of the mind and spirit of Christ therein"4 Flint regarded the Bible to be of "supreme normative authority and unique spiritual value."5

3. The only acceptable limitations of reason in its search for religious truth are constitutional; moreover, reason should range as far as its constitutional limitations will allow.6

This principle of Flint's is well-known by now to the reader of the present thesis. The Common Sense Realist Flint was disdainful of the Kantian or Hamiltonian curtailment of the scope of reason's veridical powers, especially as given a re-

2Flint, Sermons and Addresses, p.323.
4Flint, Sermons and Addresses, pp.309-311.
5Flint, Sermons and Addresses, p.323.
6Flint, "Theology," p.263.
ligious dress by Schleiermacher or Mansel and their successors. The standard counter-thrust to Kant, namely, the absurdity of reason's attempting to pre-set its external limits, is confidently affirmed by Flint.

While accepting Hamilton's relativity principle to mean the relativity of knowledge to the cognitive faculties, Flint strangely takes this principle to irrevocably permit, not prevent, man's knowledge of God. The phenomenal element must always remain a part of human thought, admits Flint. But it is this very fact which affords a veracious knowledge of the noumenal.

The following statement epitomises the rationale of Flint's bold attempt, reviewed in Chapter Three, at basing theistic argument upon the principle Hamilton used in its dissolution:

"Quality cannot be thought of apart from a subject. Quantity in space or time cannot be conceived without the implication of immensity and eternity. An event carries the mind to a cause; the derivative supposes the self-subsistent; the finite offered to perception introduces to an infinite supplied by thought, etc. Those correlatives are not mutually exclusive but mutually implicative. They are on a perfect equality of intellectual validity. Hence the relativity of human knowledge, instead of disabling the mind from transcending mere phenomena, enables, and even compels—nay, constantly compels—it to do so."

With respect to the Christian doctrinal system, Flint readily concedes that it is not "wholly comprehensible." But at the same time, he firmly contends that there is no "genuinely

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1 Flint, Agnosticism, pp. 585-629.
2 Flint, Agnosticism, pp. 176-177.
3 Flint, Agnosticism, p. 610. It will be remembered, of course, that Flint was shown in Chapter Two to have construed Hamilton's relativity principle as being in harmony with Reid's epistemology.
Christian doctrine which is merely a mystery or enigma, an assertion or utterance which we are enjoined to believe, yet which we are incapable of intelligently apprehending, accepting, or defending.  

4. The final principle governing the relation of reason to religious truth adopted by Flint with a view towards a scientific method in theology is that sufficient evidence is the sole basis of assent, even though dissent is not warranted in the face of "imperfectly understood" evidence, insufficient evidence "of another kind," or "unsolved difficulties."  

It was Flint's persuasion that "with the exception of immediate sensuous perception and mathematical demonstration, Christianity is supported by every conceivable form and variety of evidence, so that the proof of it, taken in its entirety, is vast and varied, comprehensive and conclusive, in the highest degree."  

An example of Flint's explicit use of this principle is to be found in his discussion of the difficulties arising out of the adoption of Quenstedt's doctrine of the Providential Concurus. Says Flint: "The relation of the Will of the Creator to the power of the creature and especially to the human will in action cannot be distinctly traced, and still less can the mode of the Divine Cooperation be defined, but we must be careful not

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1Flint, *Sermons and Addresses*, p.325. Italics are his.
to deny anything sufficiently authenticated as true in itself because we fail to perceive how it clearly harmonises with other facts."

In order to illustrate the use Flint actually made of the principle of sufficient evidence in the field of religious knowledge it is now necessary to enter into a fairly lengthy discussion of his conception of the nature of belief, religious belief, and especially Christian faith.

B. The nature of belief, religious belief, and Christian faith

A theory of knowledge is impossible apart from a theory of belief, declares the Common Sense Realist Flint. Hence he feels that a theory of belief is a foundation-stone of "religious science" or theology. If a Christian theologian intends any kind of defense of his faith, he must formulate a theory of belief, of religious belief in particular, and especially of Christian faith. It is not possible to discuss the last properly until the previous two have been prepared, alleges Flint.

During Flint's life-time the problems of belief, religious belief, and Christian faith were being widely aired. The problem of belief had been pushed into its modern position of prominence by Hume who rightly claimed to be the first to embark

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1 Flint, MSS., "H. 5.," p.10. (The "H. 5." manuscript comprises Flint's class lecture notes on the providence of God.)

2 Flint, Agnosticism, p.458.

3 Flint, Agnosticism, p.459.
upon a specific analysis of the character and status of belief. His resultant theory of "natural belief" held that we by nature believe the objects of immediate consciousness to be independently existent even though we know, after philosophical investigation, that the objects do not exactly so exist. And so, says N. Kemp Smith, it was Hume's contention that in ordinary consciousness "as in the sphere of ethics and aesthetics, the function of philosophical enquiry . . . is not to justify our ultimate beliefs, but only to trace them to their sources in the constitution of our human nature, and to show how, aided by reason, though themselves directive of it, they condition and make possible the de facto experience which is at once the subject-matter of philosophy and that by which its judgments can alone be tested." Reid's retort to Hume was the claim that in the process of mental conception we must believe this act of mind has a real object which will not turn out to be an idea in the mind. Since Flint took Reid's position, he was fully aware that some of his own contemporaries, especially J. S. Mill and Bain, were propounding theories of belief even more threatening than Hume's, for they purported to be the latest findings of psychological science. Any one defending the authenticity of the commonly supposed genesis of belief could ill-afford to ignore

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3 N. Kemp Smith, The Philosophy of David Hume, p. 458.

4 Reid, Works, ed. Hamilton, I, 368.
these new theories. The writers referred to were those adopting to some extent at least the associationist view of mental phenomena formulated by James Mill under the influence of Hartley and Hume.¹ Flint took an equally unenthusiastic view of the fresh approach adopted by William James towards the specific problem of religious belief in his The Will to Believe (1897). Flint could not bring himself to agree that "a 'will' virtually identified with our 'non-intellectual' or 'passional nature'" is a real will; consequently he considered James' relation of such a will to belief as insufficient.² While concurring with James on the "'forced option'" religious belief presents, Flint withdraws when James goes on to infer the extra-intellectual grounds of such belief. James, it seems, has confounded "'options of belief'" with "'options of action.'"³ Again revealing his bent toward intellectualism, Flint decides that the role played by the will in belief is not one of forcing the mind to believe, in the absence of evidence. Rather, "the mind can either will" to be guided by truth or not.⁴

Flint defines belief as "a peculiar state of mind, a kind of conscious experience," which he distinguishes from knowledge, imagination, feeling, desire, and volition. "It is a simple, ultimate, and consequently unanalyzable mental state."⁵

¹For Flint's argumentation against them, see his article "Associationism and the Origin of Moral Ideas," in Mind I, 321–334; and Agnosticism, pp. 466–477, and above, pp. 106–107.
²Flint, Agnosticism, p. 452.
³Flint, Agnosticism, p. 453.
⁴Flint, Agnosticism, p. 454.
⁵Flint, Agnosticism, pp. 461–462.
In order to determine the proper sphere of belief, Flint reasons as follows: The postulate is made that all kinds of belief intend to concern itself with truth and knowledge. This postulate indicates the relationship of belief to the other "mental phenomena." The indicated relationship is that belief "properly belongs to the intellect as distinguished from feeling or sentiment and from will or conation; and in the intellect to judgment as distinguished from conception and imagination."
"Belief has always judgment for its antecedent and foundation. Judgment is just the intellect exercised about knowledge and truth; and belief is just acquiescence in the results of its activity."¹ The conclusion is that "beliefs should be co-extensive with knowledge, coincident with truth."²

Put into practice, this definition of the proper sphere of belief means, to Flint, that assent should be proportional to the amount and weight of evidence. Obedience to the principle of intellectual honesty is hereby effected, avers Flint. Furthermore, he contends, such a regulation of belief has always been integral to Christianity, as well as "the fundamental condition of true scientific method."³

Aware that the charge of advocating an "evidentialist or intellectualist" theory of belief might be brought against him, Flint is careful to point out the width of his view of the origin

¹Flint, Agnosticism, p.478.
²Flint, Agnosticism, p.480. Italics are his. Cf. Theism, p.36.
³Flint, Agnosticism, p.482.
and nature of belief: "It is so conjoined, not only with perception, judgment, and reasoning, but also with imagination, feeling, desire, and will, in their multifarious phases and expressions, as to be influenced by all and operative in and through all."¹

Before moving on to Flint's analysis of the relation of Christian faith to belief in general and religious belief in particular, the opportunity afforded by the statement just quoted to call attention to the philosophical position underlying Flint's theory of belief will be taken. The statement that belief is inherent in "perception, judgment, and reasoning" reveals Flint's adherence to Common Sense Realism; this is especially the case since that statement is made in a context in which the assertions have already been made that "belief has always judgment for its antecedent and foundation"² and that through or in the form of judgment the mind apprehends "reality" and "relationship"³. With Flint's assertion that belief has "intimate affinities with all that is constitutive" of human nature⁴ Reid would fully agree. The same agreement applies to Flint's plea for evidence as the measure of belief.⁵

According to Flint, Christian faith is a form of religious

¹Flint, Agnosticism, p.485. Cf. the summary of Flint's class lectures on "the psychological nature of religion," Theism, pp.343-348.

²Flint, Agnosticism, p.478.

³Flint, Agnosticism, p.479.

⁴Flint, Agnosticism, p.485.

⁵This agreement can quickly be discerned by comparing Flint's account of belief in Agnosticism, pp.478-479 with Reid's account of belief in general in his Works, (ed. Hamilton) I, 327-330.
belief which in turn is a kind of belief, so the criterion that belief should be in accordance with reason and rest on evidence applies to all forms of belief. But he will not allow the converse. Religious belief, being spiritual in nature, requires spiritual evidence, not "mathematical, physical, or historical" evidence. Even more does Christian faith require special evidence. Much of what would pass as grounds for religious belief must be rejected by Christian faith. "It is not mere belief, nor mere belief in religious truth, nor even mere belief in Christian truth." ¹

Christian faith, Flint claims, "is a self-surrendering acceptance of Christ as of God made wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption unto us; a supreme trust in Christ based on a distinctive conviction as to His character and His relationship alike to God and man." ² Such a self-surrendering acceptance of Christ involves the whole man ³ and satisfies the needs of every part of his nature. ⁴ Flint does therefore not

¹Flint, Agnosticism, p.487.
²Flint, Agnosticism, p.487; cf. 491: Christian faith is "a supreme trust or reliance based on the self-revelation of God which centers in Christ."
³Flint, Sermons and Addresses, p.234-235.
⁴Flint, Sermons and Addresses, p.217.

In passing, it may be noted that Flint takes the tenet that Christianity meets all the needs of the whole man seriously enough to regard it as constituting one of the corroborative arguments for the truth of the doctrines and facts of Christianity. He felt that the recent growth of the study of the "History of Religions" had catapulted this argument into the position of high favour it enjoyed during his life time because that study had brought to light the superiority of Christianity to all other religions in its "adaptedness" to "human nature." But, never missing an opportunity to take a shot at the Hutschians, Flint points out the one-sidedness of their giving the History of Religions the dominant role in Christian Apologetics. (Flint, Sermons and Addresses pp.331. Italics are his.)
regard himself as over-emphasizing the intellectual element when demanding evidence for assent. In fact, he seems to have resented this charge, for in an extremely raw outburst of semi-invective language he announces that if by requiring evidence for belief he be branded a "rationalist" then he is indeed "an unblushing and impenitent rationalist--who considers all those who do not thus far agree with him to be irrationalists." Nevertheless, the fact that for Flint this "self-surrendering" acceptance or faith in Christ is "based on a distinctive conviction as to His character and relationship" to God and man, in Flint's case at least, means he has not relinquished his essentially rationalistic definition of Christian faith. "Flint does not think such a "conviction" about Christ could arise apart from "the self-evidence or intrinsic reasonableness of Divine oracles." Flint's making the intellectual element or factor dominant in Christian faith can again be seen when, in a discussion of Christian Apologetics, he withholds the "Experimental Argument" from "those arguments which tend directly to prove the truth of the doctrines and the facts constitutive of Christianity" and relegates it to the status of "Corroborative Proofs."

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1 Flint, Aagnosticism, p.513. Italics are his.
2 Italics are ours.
4 Flint, Sermons and Addresses, pp.328-329. By "Experimental Argument" he is referring to that confirmation of the truth of Christianity which is to be derived from an experience of its "practical power" in one's own life. Attention should again be called, however, to the fact that although Flint considers such experiential knowledge of Christian truth to be absolutely necessary for "an assured Christian faith, an entire, an active Christian certitude," he nonetheless stipulates that such appropriation of Christian truth is fully dependent upon that truth's having prior "evidences by which it may be recognised and by which experience is enlightened and sustained." (Sermons and Addresses, p.332.)
In a Manuscript lecture on belief he defines rational belief as "verified" belief. This definition must be interpreted in the light of his claim that faith in Christianity rests immediately upon the knowledge of Christianity. He is definitely not intending to continue the evidentialist apologetics which grew so important in the eighteenth century during the deistic controversy. Accepting Scriptural statements as true on the basis that the miracles and prophecies therein recorded verified its Divine origin is not the same as "faith in the Gospel as truth," he avers. For faith in Christianity to demand the verification of a knowledge of such "external incidents and testimonies, is in the main a blind faith, and every attempt to vindicate it as the true faith must base itself on the agnostic hypothesis that God's revelation of Himself and of the spiritual truth contained in it cannot be in themselves the proper objects of knowledge and experience."  

"Revelation," Flint explains, "is the manifestation of spiritual light, and spiritual light is what can be seen and felt by the spirit." Although not wishing to deny the existence of mysteries in all forms of revelation, Flint claims that the "revelation given us in the Bible and through Christ" is "gloriously self-evidencing." To a Common Sense Realist this means revelation is full of reason, and in essentials free from all unreasonableness." It is these intrinsic, not any extrinsic reasons which afford the "real insight" into revelation necessary for

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1 M S S, "H. 12. a," p. 4. (This manuscript contains a public lecture "On Belief.")

2 Flint, Agnosticism, p. 550.
rational belief. 1

It is interesting, in passing, to see this principle at work in Flint's discussions of certain crucial Christian doctrines. For instance, Flint finds the doctrines of election and predestination formulated by Augustine and Calvin lacking in "the intrinsic truth and self-evidencing reasonableness" so characteristic of Jesus' doctrine of "vocation or calling" and Paul's doctrines of "fore-knowledge and fore-ordination." 2 Flint regards as morally repugnant and without a true understanding of God's love the view that "his love is very limited, being real only to a favoured class, and that he has foreordained, for His mere good pleasure, millions of the human race to eternal misery." 3 Indeed, he frankly states that he "does not believe in the metaphysical predestinarianism of Augustine, Calvin, or the Synod of Dort." 4

The essentially rational character of Flint's "experientially" "verified" belief in Christianity, as well as the particular underlying epistemological presuppositions of Common Sense Realism, become even clearer in the following assertions by Flint on the problem of the verification of belief. Contending that only a directly "verifiable" revelation actually reveals, Flint feels that the adequate verification of religious

1 Flint, Sermons and Addresses, p. 306.
2 Flint, Sermons and Addresses, p. 326.
3 Flint, Agnosticism, p. 562.
truths is a "living insight into their nature and significance, and a veritable spiritual experience of their influence on our hearts and lives."\(^1\) The tests to be used in the experiential verification of spiritual truths are "their power to sustain piety, to promote virtue, to purify the heart, to ennoble the nature;" and, Flint continues, they "are not known as what they are unless so tested."\(^2\) It may be debatable whether there is an incipient rationalism in such a demand. But such rationalism becomes clear for all to see when Flint goes further and claims that it is the existence of revealed religious truths thus verified which makes scientific theology possible, because faith in such truths is "essentially inclusive of reason, in the form of an immediate apprehension of primary truth or self-evident fact"—faith theology shares with all other sciences.\(^3\)

Before leaving the problem of the external and internal evidences for Christian faith, it should be pointed out that Flint is equally wary of the "error of the Deists" against which the "evidentialists" fought. He defines it as "the illusion that Christian faith is quite independent of historical facts and probable evidence." He finds that error regaining popularity, and so warns that the "real" in Christianity can no more be jettisoned than the "ideal". Christianity is spiritual truth, but "it centres in the God-man, in a unique person, in a history of real redemptive acts." Christianity more than all other re-

\(^3\) Flint, "Theology," p.264.
ligions is "in its antecedents, essence, and realisation, historical." Hence historical evidence is of paramount importance to Christianity.¹

Because the evidences of Christianity center in Christ, the "very heart" of Christian Apologetics, according to Flint, is the vindication of the Church's claims about Christ. Flint was well aware that much of the New Testament scholarship of his lifetime had largely written off the traditional estimate of the claims made by and about Christ in the early church and its writings, the New Testament.² Hence Flint considered the critical study of the New Testament, especially the Gospels, to be of crucial importance apologetically. As far as the results of that study are concerned, Flint remained certain that in the New Testament "mankind has the means of attaining to a knowledge of Jesus Christ far more intimate, profound, and reliable than it has of any other person in ancient history, and good grounds for believing that He was what the catholic faith of the Church holds Him to have been."³

This strong persuasion of the authenticity and integrity as well as of the authority of the Scriptures in spite of the rather devastating Biblical Criticism which was coming into Scot-

land from Germany especially after 1873 is also evidenced in his estimate of the role the Scriptures should play in Dogmatic Theology. He taught that, "the whole of genuine Christian theology lay in germ in the Christian Scriptures, and no doctrine --no dogmatic affirmation--is to be received which cannot be traced back to the Scriptures." Flint was not disconcerted by those experts in Biblical Criticism whom he felt were the chief contemporary assailants of, for example, the doctrines of the incarnation and the atonement. He realised that Christ was held not to have taught these doctrines because John's Gospel was discredited and because the few allusions to these doctrines which were admitted to be in the Synoptics were explained away. Flint also knew that "a view is given of the growth of the ideas of the early Church, and of the formation of the New Testament, which deprives the Apostolic writings of any title to be re-

1 W. Hastie records that German theological scholarship was practically unknown in Scotland until the publishers T. & T. Clark in 1832 began their "Biblical Cabinet" series through which the works of Tholuck, Neander, Rosenmüller, Lisco, and Köhr were reproduced. This effort was greatly augmented by the "Foreign Theological Library" which began in 1846 to reproduce the standard works of such men as Hengstenberg, Keil, Delitzsch, Bleck, Julius Müller, Gieseler, and Dorner. Then in 1873 the "Theological Translation Fund Library" began translating the works of "the more advanced schools," as represented by Baur, Ewald, Keim, and Lassarath. (W. Hastie, "Translator's Preface," P. Lichtenberger, History of German Theology in the Nineteenth Century, trans. and ed. W. Hastie (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark; 1889), ciii.) As a result of the attack upon the reliability of the New Testament lead by the Tübingen school of Criticism, at least one Scottish theologian, A. B. Bruce, thought it wise to teach both Apologetics and New Testament Exegesis together. At his instigation a Chair was established in Glasgow for this purpose. "The University Chairs of Biblical Criticism were also established to refute Baur," and thus they were "always primarily New Testament Chairs," explains J. Dickie. (Fifty Years of British Theology, p. 82.)
guarded as authoritative." Nevertheless, he firmly believed in
the doctrines of the incarnation and the atonement because he
was certain that the destructive Criticism of the Bible could
be thwarted by a properly conducted Criticism.1

With these comments by Flint on the state of the Biblical
Criticism of his day the discussion of the strong rational
element in his conception of proper Christian faith must come to
a close. His opposition to the destructiveness of much of the
Biblical Criticism of his day was adduced in order to illustrate
his firm conviction that the external and internal evidences for
Christian faith can be, as well as must be, reliable and in-
trinsically rational. This conviction of Flint's was in turn
brought out in order to show the extent to which Flint carried
his dogma that theology, to be scientific, must have the same
kind of faith any other science exercises. It is a faith guided
by the principle of sufficient evidence. This principle, one
of the four laid down by Flint as determinative of the relation
of reason to religious truth and its evidence, has now been ex-
hibited as demanding first and foremost for Flint the rational
nature of said sufficient evidence. It is now time to leave this

1Flint, On Theol., Bibl., and Other Subjects, pp.55-57.
The destructive nature of much of the leading Biblical Criticism
of his day would be remedied, averts Flint, if biblical critics
were less conjectural and more scientifically self-critical with
respect to their investigations. Critics such as Kuenen or
Wellhausen must remember that they have "very few documents to
compare; very scanty means of correcting and controlling their
assumptions, processes, and conclusions; have been free to make,
and strongly tempted to make... [a large and bold...] use of
hypotheses; and have actually been much... influenced by subjec-
tive considerations, by individual preconceptions, tastes, and
preliminary discussion of Flint's conception of the proper relation of reason to religious facts and their evidence in the method of a truly scientific theology. The stage is set for a systematic investigation of Flint's views on each step which a scientific theology must take. To begin with, he will be observed contemplating the sources of religious truth and the conditions for its appropriation.

III. Sources of religious truth and conditions for its appropriation

Flint earnestly contended that a truly scientific theology must avail itself of all the sources of "Divine Knowledge," which, for him, were "the physical creation, the human mind, human history, and Scripture." However, he can be found, at various places in his writings, establishing three conditions for the appropriation of the information from all these sources.

A. Rationality the primary condition for the appropriation of religious truth from all sources

One condition laid down by Flint for the appropriation of all religious truth is "experimental verification." While cautioning that "Christian experience" is not a substitute for "other evidence," he maintains the need for a practical appropriation of Christian truth, using as confirmation Jesus' dictum: "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine."

1 Flint, On Theol., Bibl. and Other Subjects, p.79.
whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself."¹

A broader condition, more insisted upon by Flint, is that "there must be a certain illumination, a certain opening of the spiritual eye, which can only come from God Himself, before we can have any true view of God."² Three more statements out of many in Flint's writings indicating his position will suffice. The first one comes from his earliest publication, the second from his last, the third from one of his major works:

"The outward revelation of the truth and grace of God does not render unnecessary the presence and working of the Spirit of God; for an outward revelation, where God does not grant the inward illumination of the Spirit, is given, and yet not given—open, and yet sealed."³

"The Spirit has been given to lead us into the experimental knowledge of all truth, yea, even, of the deepest things of God revealed in His Word."⁴

"A personal and progressive experience in which the human soul meets and feels itself in contact and communion with the Divine Spirit is an indispensable condition of a real and satisfying comprehension of the highest and most needed truth," that is, religious truth.⁵

In order to ascertain the real meaning of these statements, the reader must know the structure of the knowledge-situation in Flint's "spiritually illuminated" and "experimental" knowledge of God from all sources. An understanding of Flint's position on this problem is crucial for the understanding and criticism of his whole thought.

¹Flint, Sermons and Addresses, p.332; cf. p.134; Vico,p.110; On Theol., Bibl., and Other Subjects, pp.81-83; Agnosticism, pp.598-599.
²Flint, Sermons and Addresses, p.138.
³Flint, Christ's Kingdom Upon Earth, p.208.
⁵Flint, Agnosticism, p.441; Cf. p.410.
The last statement quoted above points up the uniquely
direct relationship he held to be existent between the human
spirit and the Divine Spirit in true religious belief. Little
time need be spent demonstrating that Flint does not intend a
mysticism here. He flatly repudiates mysticism—"ecstacy, ab-
sorption, direct vision, etc."—as being a position postulated by
those denying any ordinary knowledge of God, a position the
opposite of his own.1 God never presents "His absolute essence"
to man, rather God always "manifests Himself to the faculties of
man through certain media" in both general and special revelation,
affirms Flint,2 Appearing to judge spiritual truths on the same
standards as Common Sense first principles of thought, Flint
asks whether anyone would consider the pronouncements of the
mystics, all made "on the authority of immediate intuition or
direct feeling, to be self-evident, necessary, and universal."3
The mystics have taught us "the need of intimate communion with
the Eternal Spirit,"4 but none of them have ever been given an
intuition of God yielding a knowledge of God not acquirable
through "education or by reflection, and from Nature, History,
and Scripture."5

1Flint, Agnosticism, p.424.
2Flint, Sermons and Addresses, p.291. He rebukes "all dog-
matism and all rationalism in theology, and almost all popular
religious opinion" for overlooking God's "necessary transcen-
dence of all human thought" in absoluteness and infinity of His
Being and perfections." (On Theol., Bibl., and Other Subjects,
p.91; Cf. Agnosticism, p.664.)
4Flint, On Theol., Bibl., and Other Subjects, p.123.
This last quotation gives a hint that Flint regards the structure of the knowledge-situation in knowledge of God to be the same with respect to all sources of said knowledge. Such will now be shown to be the case. The inferential knowledge of God through natural or general revelation described in the previous chapters is not complemented by Flint, when he turns to special revelation, with a non-inferential knowledge. As God reveals Himself in Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit there is no knowledge by acquaintance, that is, a knowledge of God in which He stands, figuratively speaking, in the direct presence of the knower. The possibility of man's reception of any of God's self-manifestations is the image of God in man.\(^1\) God's existence and nature is known and knowable, explains Flint, because all of God's communicable attributes, including His righteousness and love, are "akin" to ours and thereby inferable.\(^2\)

That Flint actually applied this doctrine to special revelation can be established in two ways: (a) by exhibiting Flint's correlation of being "in Christ" and being in "communion with the Divine presence" with knowing truth about Christ or God; and, (b) by pointing out the extent to which Flint circumscribes the witness of the Holy Spirit.

(a) Flint's correlation of being "in Christ" and "being in communion with the Divine presence" with knowing truth about Christ or God: In a sermon on "Beholding the Wonders of God's Law" Flint explicitly equates being "in contact with truth it-

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\(^1\)Flint, \textit{Agnosticism}, p. 599.

\(^2\)Flint, \textit{Agnosticism}, pp. 602-603.
self with being "in communion with the Divine presence," and these two with feeling that "the Divine Law was within and around" one. When God's laws, natural or spiritual, are really and experientially apprehended, one is in communion with God, explains Flint, because these "laws" or "truths," including those about Christ, are "not truly separable from God Himself." They are "the whole of the modes in which He manifests His power, and wisdom, and goodness in the universe,—the whole of the ways in which He operates through matter and spirit, in creation, providence, and redemption, as Father and King and Judge." For our "souls" to come "into communion with a living God through a living Saviour" is to grasp the significance of the law that "the wages of sin is death" but "the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ."1

Elsewhere Flint speaks of being "truly conscious of union with God in knowledge."2 The need is portrayed of humbly confessing our own foolishness before God and accepting Christ, for then we are made "in a true and strict sense partakers of an infinite wisdom. Christ is henceforth within us, and unto us wisdom."3 Flint states that Christianity "comes to us with the claim to be the truth guaranteed by adequate evidence, and only he who is in the truth can be in Christ, and whoever is in the truth is to the extent in which he is so in Christ."4 Sabatier

1Flint, Sermons and Addresses, pp.134-145.
2Flint, Agnosticism, p.410.
3Flint, Sermons and Addresses, p.220.
4Flint, On Theol., Bibl., and Other Subjects, p.90.
is criticised for making all "rational and moral communion between God and man" and thus "all" knowledge of God impossible by denying an "actual apprehensive knowledge of God;" that is, Sabatier is charged with eliminating "intelligence and objective reality," "reason and well-grounded experience" from religion. And Sabatier is said to have committed this error by denying that God was known through the manifestation of attributes not "wholly different in kind" from man's.¹

(b) The extent to which Flint circumscribes the witness of the Holy Spirit.

It will be recalled that Flint seemed to recognise the vital function of the Holy Spirit in the process of God's "objective" manifestations—general and special revelation—becoming "subjective."² However, Flint stressed heavily that the revelation of God in Christ is the consummation of Divine revelation, which meant, for him that God's revelation presupposes and rests upon all previous revelation.³ General revelation⁴ is an integral part of the whole process of revelation. Special revelation "is willing to conform to it, and to be judged by it, so far as general revelation extends." The only man who is in

¹Flint, Agnosticism, pp.502-503.
³Flint, Sermons and Addresses, p.296.
⁴General revelation is defined by Flint as "all objects which present themselves to the eyes, ears, and other senses; all minds, and those faculties of volition, intelligence, moral discernment, and affection, which make them images of God and enable them to reflect the features of God wherever displayed; and all the events of history, which is the manifestation of God in time, as the material creation is His manifestation in space." (Sermons and Addresses, p.292)
"the proper frame of mind to judge of the evidence which can be adduced for the reality" of special revelation is the one who has understood both the significance and limitation of general revelation, exclaims Flint.¹

Turning to special revelation—the revelation "in the Bible and through Christ"—Flint plants an even larger hurdle to be crossed by the Holy Spirit in His work of illumination. Because Christ's Gospel centers in "facts, transactions, and experiences" all of which are historic events;² and because Flint refused to accept special revelation solely on the strength of any external supernatural authentication; it was that revelation's "self-evidence," its being "full of reason" and "in essentials free from all unreasonableness,"³ that made it acceptable to him. In the passage just cited he continues on the same topic by asserting that in order for Christian faith to arise "the human spirit" must be brought into a "direct and immediate contact with the Divine truth necessary to the maintenance of its religious life."⁴

The believer, then, apprehends "Divine truth" immediately or directly only in the sense that an insight is gained into the various component propositions of a system of thought. The structure of the knowledge-situation in the knowledge of God through special revelation is simply inferential, and for the same reason,

¹Flint, Sermons and Addresses, p.295; cf. pp.322-323; 5-6.
²Flint, Sermons and Addresses, pp.307-308.
³Flint, Sermons and Addresses, p.306.
⁴Flint, Sermons and Addresses, p.306.
as that through general revelation.

In discussing the second condition Flint sets up with respect to the sources of "Divine Knowledge," namely, the criterion of Spiritual illumination, an even broader condition has now emerged, namely, that of rationality. Flint will not believe in Jesus Christ as God's supreme revelation until "that revelation given us in the Bible and through Christ" pass the test of "reasonableness"—a test which, the present author would submit, logically presupposes a system of thought. Neither will Flint accept God's special revelation until that revelation proves itself able to sustain piety—a demand which the present author would submit, logically presupposes a religious system. The criteria of "experimental verification" and "spiritual illumination" have been subordinated to the criterion of rationality. This, of course, is to be expected when the believer is held to know only truth about Christ. All sources of knowledge of God must then naturally be considered the same with respect to the illumination of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is shut up to making the content of each source to seem more rational than all competing views. If, for any reason, the prospective believer's rational demands are not met, the Holy Spirit is powerless. It is significant, in this regard, that Flint defines the Christian apologist's "main work" to be the demonstration of "the inherent reasonableness of Christian doctrines," the most important part of such a task, being, to show the reliability of the documents pertaining to Jesus.

\footnote{Flint, \textit{Sermons and Addresses}, p.325.}
B. The relation between general and special revelation as sources of religious truth

The idea of God from natural revelation attained in the manner described in the previous two chapters does not constitute all that man needs to know about God, avers Flint. The natural knowledge of God's "goodness, wisdom, and power" must be supplemented by a supernatural knowledge of His "fatherly love," which knowledge is necessary for man's salvation. A study of history and human nature will demonstrate to the unprejudiced man's inability to break the bonds of sin and to adequately develop his moral and spiritual life by means of non-Christian theism. Of course anti-theistic systems afford even less means for truly satisfying man's spiritual needs. The non-Christian religions without exception exhibit the same failure. Man's sinful condition extends to his rational faculties. It is thereby not possible for man through natural reason to learn enough of God's character to make faith in God dominant in human life. Only God's revelation of Himself in Christ will suffice, says Flint.

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1 Flint, Theism, pp. 302-303.
2 Flint, Anti-Theistic Theories, pp. 33-36; 173-174; 209; 249; 205; 386-387; 436, et. al.
3 Flint, Sermons and Addresses, pp. 218; 275-298; On Theol., Bibl., and Other Subjects, pp. 312-363.
4 Flint, Theism, p. 305. The same point is made many times by Flint, a few instances are Theism, pp. 5-6; 326-328; et. al. On Theol., Bibl., and Other Subjects, pp. 390-391; et. al. Christ's Kingdom Upon Earth, pp. 8-9; 121; 49-51; 227; et. al.
The great respect Flint had for the theistic inference must always be considered in the light of his conviction that "Christ did not come till it was manifest that reason was wandering farther and farther away from God."¹ Modern philosophy and science apart from the effects of Christianity are no nearer the discovery of an adequate religion than their ancient predecessors. Comte's "humanity," Spencer's "Unknowable," Schopenhauer's "Buddhism" are inestimably poor substitutes for Christianity and its God revealing Himself in Christ, declares Flint. No man ever has or could have discovered in creation and ordinary providence the truth that God is a "Father" who expresses a fatherly love to sinful man by the Cross,² a love that "cost" God "humiliation, suffering, sacrifice."³ Real human wisdom according to Flint is for man to forsake his own wisdom and "be guided by the wisdom of God—or, in other words, to accept Christ, who is the wisdom of God to us for salvation."⁴

The maximum possible content in general revelation, then, is not regarded by Flint as sufficient for man's needs. But on a slightly different problem Flint does not seem so certain. That is the problem of man's ability to discern the amount of content which is in general revelation. Even if an non-Christian Theism is not sufficient, is it ever attainable apart from special revelation? Flint seems to give conflicting answers to this

¹Flint, Theism, p.310.
²Flint, Theism, pp.311-316.
³Flint, Theism, p.317.
question.

After spending the bulk of Theism in confidently demonstrating the theistic knowledge of God manifested in Creation and Providence, Flint proceeds in the final chapter to convince the reader that history proves the inability of non-Christian theism to "cope successfully" with its "stronger" enemies, atheism, polytheism, and pantheism.¹ Why, then, the confidence exuded in the first nine chapters (with a few exceptions) if non-Christian theism can neither answer man's greatest problems nor hold its own against the rival systems?

Before seeking the answer to this question, a related problem should be cleared away. Flint can be found making such statements as the following: referring to the heathen religions, Flint claims that of their adherents "only a few minds of rare penetration and power have been able to rise by their own exertions to a consistent theistic belief."² "To all but one in a thousand" the book of nature is closed.³ In a lecture extolling the depth of Socrates' moral wisdom "Flint concludes that Socrates' hope of immortality was not "disappointed."⁴ Again, Flint announces that Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle "came so near to the truth" regarding the Christian answer to the age-old question of the supreme good, and "thereby so near the kingdom

¹Flint, Theism, p.303.
²Flint, Theism, p.19.
of God, that one may hopefully believe that they are now within it."\(^1\) It appears, then, that Flint does not hold that all thinkers living before Christ or beyond the sphere of Christ's influence failed to formulate a consistent theism. But how does this comport with his view that "reason was wandering farther and farther from God" before Christ came?\(^2\) In all of Flint's published works and manuscripts the author of this thesis has been able to find only one statement indicating the reconciliation Flint proposes between these two positions. In accounting for the amount of truth possessed by heathen religions he declares that although they were not the recipients of special revelation "special spiritual influence may have opened the eyes of many wise and good men among the heathen to behold the wonders of God's law in creation and providence."\(^3\)

Nevertheless, the prior problem remains as to Flint's confidence in human reason in the face of his confessions of the vast majority of mankind's deepening superstition before the appearance of Christ.\(^4\)

Part of the answer to this problem of the conflict in his view of man's ability to discern religious truth apart from special revelation lies in Flint's use of one of the popular pseudo-scientific doctrines prevalent in the optimistic Victorian era. Maintaining that all God's incommunicable and some of His communicable attributes are manifested in nature,

\(^1\) Flint, *Sermons and Addresses*, p. 92.


\(^3\) Flint, *Sermons and Addresses*, p. 292.

\(^4\) E.g., Flint, *Sermons and Addresses*, p. 218.
Flint seems to have had no hesitation in combining the logical inference that the longer mankind observed God's natural revelation the more knowledge of God it would accumulate, with the spirit, at least, of the contemporary nineteenth century doctrine of human progress. Starting with the tenet that the subjective act of belief has its proper cause in rational grounds, and borrowing the then current concept of the "survival of the fittest," Flint feels that over the ages those religious beliefs resting on appropriate rational evidence have gradually triumphed and are triumphing in "the struggle of religions for existence."¹ A "necessary or inevitable law" does not account for this religious progress, Flint explains, for it is dependent upon men's decisions freely and wisely made. But a study of history unquestionably discovers the fact of such a progress.² In the

¹Flint, Agnosticism, p.504. Here is a good example of Flint's willingness to adopt as much as possible from the "scientific" critics of his day. The same argumentation of the "survival of the fittest" of rival beliefs is met with again in Flint's writings, but that time Leslie Stephen's use of it against J. H. Newman's Theory of Development is being discussed. Flint criticises Stephen's application of the argument but not the argument itself. (Flint, Agnosticism, pp.528-530. Cf. pp.504-505.)

²Flint, Agnosticism, pp.504-505. Flint discusses the following reasons as responsible for "the progressive and expanding rationality and truthfulness of religious belief:" Belief "of its very nature refers to knowledge and truth;" "the one great governing principle" of human nature," as "Bishop Butler has conclusively shown," is "the power which distinguishes truth from error, right from wrong;" "the world and history are what they are,—the one a system rationally planned, and the other a process rationally directed;" "the extension of knowledge and science; the growth of reason and of the general ideas which rule it, the growth of conscience, enlargement of moral vision, the growth of the affections, refinement of the feelings; the teaching and action of great religious personalities;" and most important of all, "God is and is what He is—the source of all dependent existence, the supreme and infinite Reason to whose all comprehensive and ever-operative will the essential rationality of human nature, the wonderful order of the physical universe,
passage now under scrutiny Flint expresses the conviction that there is no reason for the theist to not to expect the God who has so educated His created human beings in the past to continue ever more towards His goal. How then does Flint reconcile this conviction of the unlimited possibilities of human rational, moral, and religious progress with his even more firmly held conviction in the sinfulness of mankind and his claims that history demonstrates the inability of theism apart from special revelation to repel its enemies atheism, polytheism, and pantheism?

In Flint's own mind there was probably no problem on this issue. When he speaks of the unlimited moral progress of man and the progressive truthfulness of religion but makes no mention of sin or Christ he nevertheless is assuming them. There is no doubt that Flint believed Christianity to be a part of God's eternal plan for the history of mankind. For instance, Flint and the intellectual and moral progress in history, are alone consistently traceable.

In a statement which goes far to summarize his whole philosophy, Flint states: "If the idea of God be the most comprehensive of ideas, inclusive of all the categories of thought and implicative of their harmonious synthesis and perfect realisation, all thought and experience must of its very nature tend to lead onwards to a fuller knowledge of God." (Flint, Agnosticism, p.509)

1 Notice that Flint does not say the "Christian" theist.

2 Flint, Agnosticism, p.509.

3 Flint leaves no doubt as to his conviction of mankind's sinful state and need for a Redeemer. It can be found in all his works. One reference from his first work, one from his most important work, and one from a work published near the end of his publishing activity will suffice. Christ's Kingdom Upon Earth, p.34; Theism, pp.318-319; Sermons and Addresses, p.190.

4 Flint, Theism, p.303.
saying, "Christianity came to proclaim and found "the Kingdom of
God," as the realisation of the purpose which had been running
through the ages.... It identified the goal which it set before
itself with the chief end of man and the final cause of history."¹

His belief in the progress of human knowledge, morals, and re-
ligion and his tenet that the more knowledge of any kind man
attained the more man knew of God² must therefore be interpreted
in terms of God's special revelation culminating in Christ.

Statements to the effect that "all stages of religion testify
that man has been seeking and finding God, and God making himself
known unto man"³ must be read in the light of such statements as
the following:

"We must know God, and love Him, before we can see Him in
natural things with any clearness or to any profit."
"Awaken, through Christ's death, the love of God within me,
and then all Nature will speak to me of God; otherwise she
will hardly speak to me one intelligible word. The Gospel
must give me the requisite intelligence and the requisite
interest."⁴

In concluding the present discussion of the sources of re-

¹Flint, Sermons and Addresses, p. 294. For the discussion
of Flint's views on the "Kingdom of God" and the philosophy of
history, see above pp. 236-241.

²"Every real advance...of knowledge regarding any one of
the three ultimate objects of knowledge of tends to the advance-
ment of knowledge of the others. Especially true is it that
all progress in knowledge tends upwards and Godwards." (Flint,
Agnosticism, p. 575.)

³Flint, Agnosticism, p. 653.

⁴Flint, Christ's Kingdom Upon Earth, p. 7. Cf. Sermons and
Addresses, pp. 58-59; 105; 232-233; et. al. Or with reference to
Flint's special interest history as a source of knowledge of God:
"Christianity introduced the great idea that the course of history
is the unfolding of a divine plan." "It thus not only made a
kind of philosophy of history possible, which it had never been
before, but necessary." (Flint, Phil. of History, 1st ed.,
p. 16. Italics are ours.)
igious truth, consider the following statement by Flint: "He cannot be a Christian who is not a Theist. The Christian faith... could have been built on no other foundation than on that knowledge of God as the Creator and Lord of the Universe into which ancient Israel was divinely guided and educated...." But here again it is to be noticed that the knowledge of God as the "Creator and Lord of the Universe" prerequisite to Christianity is the knowledge given to Israel in what Flint calls the "lower form" of special revelation,—that contained in the Old Testament. So it appears that in spite of statements made under the influence of the currently popular "progress" theory seemingly pointing another direction, Flint's real, intended position is that although all the sources of religious truth are inter-dependent God's special revelation culminating in Christ gives the key that unlocks the other sources. Only the man who knows Christ can confidently and accurately discern God's self-manifestations in creation and providence. Occasionally a man who neither

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1. Sermons and Addresses, p. 59. Cf. Christ's Kingdom Upon Earth, pp. 4-5. It might be thought that a movement in Flint's thought would be likely on the problem of the sources of religious truth, especially with regard to the relation between general and special revelation. Such movement can not be found, however. The references cited in this footnote refer to the same passage in the same lecture first delivered in 1859 and published in 1865, then, "at the request of Members of Committee of the British Association," republished in 1899. (Sermons and Addresses, p. 58, Footnote 1.) Although the lecture is somewhat rewritten in the later publication, its content is not altered. It appears, then, that Flint's views were substantially the same on this issue during the forty year interval, an interval roughly corresponding to the beginning and end of his public life.


3. "Nature" will do little for us before we come to Christ; but there is no overrating what it will do for us after we have come to Christ." (Flint, Christ's Kingdom Upon Earth, p. 10.)
knows Christ nor is affected by Christian thought may by virtue of a "special spiritual influence" be able to formulate a partially, but only a partially, valid natural theology.

To conclude this whole section on the sources of religious knowledge it is sufficient simply to state the obvious fact that Flint's extremely severe limitation of the efficacy of general revelation apart from special revelation just described is logically incompatible with the earlier discovered emphasis he places on rationalism in Christian faith and on rationality as a condition for the appropriation of religious truth from all sources.¹

The discussion must now hasten on to a scrutiny of the procedure Flint advises for tapping and using the information from the sources of knowledge of God delineated above.

IV. The procedure of a scientific theological method

A. Collection of the data

The first step in pursuing a scientific method in theology is to collect the data from each and every source. For Flint, holding the view of the sources of religious truth reviewed above, this first step means that each source will have a science or group of sciences dealing with it specifically in order to ascertain the pertinent facts for contribution to the science of theology as a whole.² In Flint's words, theology is "founded"

¹This criticism will be developed in the final chapter; see below, pp.332-335.
²Flint, Sermons and Addresses, pp.308-309.
on "a revelation inclusive of all Divine facts and utterances as ascertained and interpreted in accordance with the requirements of physical, mental, historical, and Biblical science."¹

Enough has been said about Flint's abiding interest in and respect for the various natural and mental sciences. It will suffice here to record Flint's assertion that the Christian theologian, whether apologist or dogmatist, "is no more free to reject the conclusions of the physical and mental sciences regarding the physical and mental worlds, in any case where these conclusions have been properly reached, than to reject the legitimately attained conclusions of Biblical Criticism, Biblical Hermeneutics, etc., as to the Bible." Any conflict between the natural and the Scriptural sciences is "simply inconceivable" to Flint since the same God is discovered revealing Himself in the objects of either science.² Flint's position on the science of Biblical Criticism has been reviewed earlier.³

A result of the application of the scientific method to the study of Scripture which Flint gratefully saw "created" and growing during his century was "Biblical Theology." It is this "new" science of ascertaining without assumptions the actual content of Scripture which for the first time in history lays the proper groundwork for the Dogmatician ⁴ and Apologist. With "scientific thoroughness and impartiality" those engaged in Biblical Theology are now using the "method common to all care-

¹Flint, Sermons and Addresses, p.322.
²Flint, Sermons and Addresses, p.315.
³See above, pp. 267-269, 282-284.
⁴Flint, Sermons and Addresses, pp.309-310.
ful study of the contents of works of literature," explains Flint. Hence, Biblical Theology "does not set forth the ideas which it presents as true in themselves, but only as truly in the Bible; it aims at doing no more than giving a true account of what are the religious ideas in the Bible, of how they are related as set forth in the Bible, and of what their history has been, so far as that can be ascertained." He wants it clearly understood that Biblical Theology is not "a theology founded on the Bible—Christian dogmatics under another name." Biblical Theology, says Flint, is "the ultimate direct result and the most comprehensive and perfect product of Biblical exegesis, and related to the history of religious ideas as a part to the whole in which it is included, comparative theology preceding and the history of Christian doctrine following it."  

Giving a scientifically studied Scripture supreme authority in theology extracts the theologian from the embarrassing position of trying to expound or defend doctrines not wholly consonant

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1 Flint, Sermons and Addresses, pp.309-310.

2 "Theology," p.275. Writers in Biblical Theology to whom Flint refers his readers are the following: Oehler, Schultz, Kayser, Piepenbring; Ewald, Baudissen, Kuenen, Duhm, W. Robertson Smith, Driver, Schmid, Reuss, Oosterzee, Weiss, and Wittichen. ("Theism," Encyc. Brit. 9th ed. XXIII, 239.) As a matter of historical interest, Flint was far from being the only Scottish Presbyterian to recognise the significance of the new discipline of Biblical Theology opened up by the Germans. By the time of Flint's death the following worthwhile contribution had been made by Scottish Presbyterians to Biblical Theology: A. B. Bruce, The Galilean Gospel, (1882); Salmond, Christian Doctrine of Immortality, (1895); Denney, The Death of Christ, (1902), and Jesus and the Gospel, (1908); W. Robertson Smith, The Prophets of Israel, (1882), Religion of the Semites, (1889); and A. B. Davidson, Old Testament Prophecy, (1903), Theology of the Old Testament, (1904).
with Scripture, he asserts. It is noteworthy that Flint, a minister of the Church of Scotland, singles out for mention as examples, the doctrines of election and predestination elaborated by Augustine and Calvin. Flint feels able to stand up in defense of Jesus' "doctrines of fore-knowledge and fore-ordination." But it is the Reverend Dr. Flint the Scottish Common Sense Realist who announces that he is not "bound" to those doctrines of Augustine and Calvin in the way he is "bound" to the doctrines of Jesus and Paul, because the former lack "the intrinsic truth and self-evidencing reasonableness" of the latter.\(^1\)

Besides the expected sciences of nature, mind, history, and Scripture, Flint wants to give the science of comparative religions its proper role. The Comparative Study of Religion with its theory of "progressive revelation" took shape as a specific discipline about the time Flint began publishing\(^2\) and rapidly grew so as to see its heyday before the end of Flint's life.\(^3\) And, while rejecting the naturalistic presuppositions of

\(^{1}\) Flint, Sermons and Addresses, p. 326.
In passing, it may be noted that Flint's dissatisfaction with the Augustinian doctrines of election and predestination represents one of the few instances where a movement in his thought might be discernable. Even then, only one piece of evidence can be found. In the second edition of his Philosophy of History, Flint adds to the discussion of the negative aspects of Augustine's philosophy of history the comment that "it so emphasizes the distinction between elect and non-elect as virtually to deny the unity of humanity. It represents the kingdom of the devil as not less enduring and more populous than that of God, so that the ultimate goal of history is for the majority of human souls one of eternal sin and suffering." (Philosophy of History, 2nd ed., p. 156, Contrast with 1st ed. p. 22.)

\(^{2}\) W. Montgomery Watt reports that Max Müller in China From a German Workshop (1867) was the first to use the term "the comparative study of religion." (W. Montgomery Watt, "The Study of Religion in the Immediate Future" (Edinburgh: Mimeoographed Lecture Notes; 1962).
many of its protagonists, Flint found its method and rationale useful.

Referring to it as "the science of comparative theology," Flint diagnoses its backbone to be the time-honoured argument a consensus gentium.¹ He agrees with J. S. Mill's judgment that the argument affords no substantiation of the validity of religious belief. The argument a consensus gentium should never be accorded the rank of the formal proofs of God. Rather, it is "an evidence that there are direct evidences."² This attitude is not surprising in a theologian who claims to be able to infer the existence and nature of God. The rational principles used in the theistic inference give it universality and necessity. The appeal to what men everywhere have and do in fact believe in is consequently superfluous. Progress in the ability to reason will eventually take care of all sub-rational religious beliefs.³ This is no doubt the reasoning behind Flint's relegation of the argument a consensus gentium to a secondary role. By referring to it as "evidence that there are direct evidences" he does show his awareness of its use as a corroboration of the theistic inference's faithfulness to the principles of reason postulated by Common Sense philosophy. In fact he can be found using the argument in this role: "The history of religion shows

³Flint, Theism, p.348.
⁴Flint, Theism, p.349.
⁵Cf. above, p.297.
us the same kind of progress in knowledge of God as the history of nature and the history of man show us in knowledge of their respective objects."¹ And that progress has been from a universal groping after something greater than mankind upon whom it felt dependent, in the infancy of the human race, to the present state in which all the "chief religions of the world are monothestic."²

Another form of the corroborative or confirmatory role of the argument *a consensu gentium* to be found in Flint's writings is the one, especially important to an inferentialist using Common Sense Realism, in which the data upon which the theistic inference is based are shown to be universal. This latter form of corroboration would make the rationalism of the theistic inference more palatable to an empiricist. Hence Flint adduces much evidence for the universality of religion and combats those, primarily Sir John Lubbock, who denied it.³

Besides using the argument *a consensu gentium* as corroborative of the theistic inference in the two forms just mentioned, a different use can also be found in Flint's works, a use un-heralded in his discussion of the merits of the argument itself. This different use is that of presenting the argument as a fact or phenomenon of experience which demands an explanation. In a discussion of the universality of religious belief he concludes that the only possible explanation is that such belief corresponds to reality. To suppose that men everywhere

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¹Flint, *Agnosticism*, p.574.


have been and are being deluded is to suppose something without parallel in "nature or history" and inconsistent with "a reasonable or moral government of the world."¹

Flint's interest in the argument a consensu gentium was more specifically in the science of comparative theology, in the form of the argument into which it had developed during his lifetime. There is one piece of evidence which may indicate that he did not acquire this interest until after his professorial life had begun. In a lecture on Christian apologetics delivered in 1899 he states that "within the last twenty years" a flood of books by anthropologists, sociologists, and historians of religion have come out submitting various naturalistic explanations of all religion. The appearance of these books presents the Christian apologist with a grave and urgent new challenge, exclaims Flint.² One thing is certain, Flint earnestly endeavoured to answer this challenge himself. He wrote a surprising amount of strictly "comparative theological" material, only some of which was published.³ Moreover, he intended in the last volume of his Philosophy of History to examine the opinions held by Max Müller,

¹Flint, Agnosticism, p.547.
²Flint, Sermons and Addresses, pp.321-322.
³In addition to the essays from which references have already been taken there exist in published form an essay on "The Idea of God in the Religion of Ancient Egypt" and an essay on the "Idea of the Divine in Chinese Thought." (On Theol., Bibl., and Other Subjects, pp.312-363.) The first eleven pages, or approximately half, of Flint's article on "Theism" in the Encyclopaedia Britannica (9th ed., XXIII, 234-245) is devoted to comparative theology. In manuscript form there are essays on similar topics. Among Flint's manuscripts is also to be found an address in which he advocates the establishment of a Chair of Comparative Theology in Edinburgh University. (Flint, MSS "A", part B)
Spencer, Tylor, Sir John Lubbock, and others on the primitive religions to see if these opinions were "psychologically well founded and historically justified"—criteria well-known by now to the reader of this thesis on Flint's thought. Unfortunately, that volume never appeared.

Assuming the data of the theologian to have been ascertained and collected by the various subsidiary sciences grouped around the three central sciences of natural theology, Biblical theology, and comparative theology, as described above, by what methods can the theologian scientifically conduct and construct theology? To this problem the discussion now turns.

B. The proper methods for handling the ascertained data of theology

According to Flint, a scientific method in theology must imply the methods of induction, deduction, and systematisation which includes speculation.

1. The inductive method

With the data before him, the theologian, like any other scientist, must induce the "principles which they imply." By analogy with the laws of evolution and the law of gravitation, Flint finds two kinds of theological law or principles

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1Flint, Anti-Theistic Theories, p. 533.

2The ensuing discussion on methods is directly based on Flint's rather full discussion of it in "Theology," pp. 265-271.

3"Theology," p. 265.
each requiring a different inductive method. Some theological laws are laws of "evolution" or "becoming," hence the method to be used for their induction must be "chronological and genetic," i. e., "the inductive process must be of the kind appropriate in historical investigation." Examples of disciplines built upon this type of theological laws are Biblical theology and comparative theology. The other type of theological laws are laws of "existence" or "being," hence their appropriate inductive method is "analytic and synthetic" i. e., the inductive process "must be of the kind appropriate in systematic investigations into which considerations of time, place, and circumstance do not enter." Examples of disciplines built upon the second type of theological laws are natural theology and Christian dogmatics.

Flint emphasizes the need of distinguishing while not separating these two inductive methods. No doubt with the Htschlians in mind, Flint complains about the failure of some theologians to keep in mind the fact that the historical method yields history, not science. Science requires the scientific method, not simply the historical method. The science even of history needs "the processes of positive science" as well as the historical method. Thus, he says, the historical method is not sufficient in natural theology or Christian dogmatics; in fact, that method does not really apply in these fields, for it does not "directly or immediately yield theory, doctrine, science." Nevertheless, he points out that in the science of religion, more than in any other science, properly attained historical knowledge is a prerequisite for scientific advance.¹

¹Flint, "Theology," p. 266.
2. The deductive method

Theological inductions, as those of all other sciences, are never merely or purely inductions, according to Flint. All reasoning which extends knowledge must make use of deduction. He cites, as examples, the doctrines of the Trinity and the atonement. The former depends heavily on definitions which, once introduced, become deductive principles. The doctrine of the atonement assumes Scriptural authority of some kind, an assumption itself which, while mainly the result of inductive procedures, is also the result of a certain amount of deduction. In fact, once a doctrine of Scripture is formulated, deduction therewith supports all subsequent inductions from Scripture. The dogmatic theologian dare not assume in a doctrine of Scripture more than the apologetic theologian and Bible critic can justify. For Flint this means, for example, that a doctrine of the atonement which presupposes "a doctrine like plenary inspiration" jeopardises itself by depending upon assumptions few would accept.¹

3. Systematisation

Because "science is system" for Flint, he thinks the next function of theological scientific method is "to distribute and co-ordinate its contents." As the science of religion, theology must "exhibit the truths of religion in their proper relationship to one another, in their organic unity and essential inter-

dependence.\textsuperscript{1}

He sets up four criteria of an appropriate scientific theological system.

a) It will be "natural and not artificial"

In a discussion strongly characteristic of his Common Sense Realism, Flint asserts that no proper intellectual system is a "mere subjective creation interposed between the mind and things;" rather, it is "a representation of the real natures and relations of things." A system of thought must be built upon the discovery "in and among facts" of "the connexions and harmonies which are actually there."

Of the several examples of artificial theological systematisation cited by Flint some are illustrative of certain influences, both positive and negative, affecting Flint's thought. Hegelianising theologians, of whom it has been seen earlier Flint's professional counterpart in Glasgow, John Caird, was a prime example, have put their beliefs and doctrines into a "wonderworking machine" only to receive them back "ground up into Hegelian notions," Flint asserts. Federal theology, the standard view of Reformed scholasticism,\textsuperscript{2} which sets forth a whole religious system according to the analogy of a covenant, Flint accuses of thereby imposing upon Scripture a view "essentially juristic and political" rather than "intrinsically and properly

\textsuperscript{1}Flint, "Theology," p.267. The references in the following discussion of the four criteria Flint sets out for an appropriate scientific theological system, unless otherwise designated, are from "Theology," p.267.

religious." A similar charge of over-emphasising a metaphor is brought against Chalmers. Flint has in mind here Chalmer's systematisation of theology around the similitudes of sin as disease and salvation as the remedy.\(^1\) The unfortunate result, comments Flint, was Chalmers's relegation of the doctrine of the Trinity to the status of an "appendix."\(^2\)

b) An adequate theological system will properly integrate both the "material and formal constituents of knowledge."

It will be recalled that the accomplishment of such an integration was a major claim made by Common Sense Realism. While maintaining the necessity for thought of self-evident principles or truths, that philosophy maintains just as firmly that experience of an independently existing reality calls forth these common-sense principles and is always involved in the use of these principles. Flint takes this tenet over into the theological arena by rejecting the validity of a system built exclusively on either \textit{a priori} or \textit{a posteriori} reasoning. An adequate theoretical system must be "the product of all the activities and forms of thought which give to the contents of religious experience the order and organisation which theology, as science, demands."


\(^2\) Cf. Flint, MSS, "H.10." (This manuscript appears to be part of Flint's class lecture notes on theological system.)
c) A true theological system unifies and harmonises all relevant principles, including those seeming to be "antagonistic."

Again evincing his dissatisfaction with the confessional Calvinistic doctrines of election and predestination, Flint illustrates the above principle by declaring the need for a system that will harmonise the two truths of the sovereignty of God and the freedom of man.

d) A true theological system must be organically united around a common center.

In addition to arranging the various doctrines of a system in their natural order, an order which will thereby increase in complexity as it progresses, the unification of the system around one central principle is necessary, says Flint. He preferred a "Christocentric" system of Christian Dogmatics which was "organic, with Christ's work as the central, constitutive, and regulative idea of the whole system."¹ Flint explicates as follows:

"The doctrines respecting God, respecting the triune constitution of the Godhead, respecting predestination, creation, and providence, and the doctrines respecting man, the fall, sin, the consequences of sin, and the need of salvation, lead up, by so many stages, to the center, the One Person, who unites Humanity and Divinity in Himself, acts as Prophet, Priest, and King, and reconciles man to God and God to man; while there follows from it, in proper logical and historical order, the doctrines respecting the application of the redemption that is in Christ to the individual, to the Church, and to the history and final supremacy of the kingdom of God both in time and in eternity."²

¹Flint, MSS "l-c", p.8. (This manuscript is part of Flint's class lecture notes on Theological Encyclopaedia.)
²Flint, MSS "l-c", p.7
This plea of Flint's for a "Christocentric" system of Christian Dogmatics calls for a few comments. First of all there is the question of Flint's benefactor(s) in this matter. He gives an interesting clue in the following note appended on the back of the manuscript from which the above quotation was made.

"The first theologian, perhaps,—at least of those who have written in the English language—adequately to show, and adequately to insist, that the distribution of the matter of Christian Dogmatics should not be merely classificatory but organic, with Christ's work as the central, constitutive, and regulative idea of the whole system was Professor Henry Boynton Smith of America. His 'Inaugural Address on the Idea of Christian Theology as a System' delivered in 1855, and contained with other "Discourses and Essays" in the volume entitled 'Faith and Philosophy', has in this connection an historical interest. The view which he set forth and expounded has become generally adopted."

It is impossible to determine whether Flint adopted this scheme as a result of somehow reading Smith's address back in 1855 or soon after, or if Flint was directly indebted to Smith's sources. Smith lists Schleiermacher, Neander, Müller, Tholuck, Dorner, Twesten, Ebrard, Thomasius, Martensen, Liebner, and Hoffmann as the theologians who, as of 1855, had made or were making "Christ and his redemption the centre" of their Christian theological system.¹

¹Flint, MSS, "1-0," p.8.

²Henry B. Smith, Faith and Philosophy: Discourses and Essays, ed. G. L. Prentiss (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark; 1878), p. 161. Because of the strong formative influence Tholuck had upon Smith during the latter's two years of theological study in Germany, it is probable that Tholuck more than anyone else is responsible for Smith's adoption of a Christocentric theology. (Cf. Lewis F. Stearns, Henry Boynton Smith (Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Company; 1892.), pp.61-71.)
In view of the enormous impact the Barthian view of Christology has made upon contemporary theology it may not be amiss to call attention to the difference between what Barth and Flint intend by centering their respective Christian theological systems in Christ. Barth's Christocentric principle is radically all-pervading; Flint, on the other hand, requires special revelation to justify itself before the bar of general revelation, since he regards the former as presupposing the latter.\(^1\)

For Barth, Article II of the Apostle's Creed renders Article I intelligible.\(^2\) According to Barth, in the "Namens Jesu Christi" we are not dealing with "mit dem Produkt eines menschlichen Bedürfnisses, der Figur eines Erlösers und Heilandes, die aus der menschlichen Schuld zu erklären und abzuleiten wäre. Auch das kann der Mensch ja nicht aus sich selber erkennen, dass er ein Sünder ist. Das ist vielmehr eine Folge der Erkenntnis Jesu Christi: In seinem Lichte sehen wir das Licht und in diesem Licht unsere eigene Finsternis. Von der Erkenntnis Jesu Christi lebt Alles, was im christlichen Sinne Erkenntnis zu heissen verdient."\(^3\)

A system of Christian dogmatics should begin with the doctrine of the Trinity, which doctrine is primarily interested in God the Son, teaches Barth. He thinks it is the reverse of the obviously correct procedure,\(^4\)

\(^1\)See above, pp. 257, 290-292.


\(^3\)Barth, *Dogmatik im Grundriß*, p. 78.

\(^4\)Barth, *Die Kirchliche Dogmatik*, I, 1 Die Lehre vom Wort Gottes, 317.
Flint, on the other hand, being certain of a valid pre-Christian apprehension of God, is not so radical in his use of the Christological principle in Christian theology. For instance, as quoted above, Flint thinks the doctrines of God, creation, providence, man, sin, etc. "lead up, by so many stages, to the center" or Christ. Even although Flint allows his beliefs about Christ to intrude a long way into his natural theology, he never permits it to go all the way. Hence, as expected, his natural theology will be found making a reciprocal intrusion into his system of Christian theology. One of the major points which the present thesis on Flint's thought intends to establish is that he was very much a believer in God through Jesus Christ, more so than he realised when he came to natural theology. But it is equally important to establish that Flint allowed Christology such a dominant role in his thought as a whole because he was convinced of the inherent reasonableness of God's revelation in Christ.

The final comment to be made upon Flint's plea for a "Christocentric" system of Christian Dogmatics is that such a plea signifies an element in Flint's intellectual outlook to which special attention has not heretofore been drawn. Flint's general mental cast was that of conservatism. In the main he endeavoured to preserve the Scottish culture of which he had fallen heir. His wide reading and use of foreign works were for the purpose of bolstering up or modernising his Scottish Philosophy, his Scottish Calvinism, and their interrelationships and rami-

\[1\] Italics are ours.
fications. In a way this applies to his plea for a "Christocentric" system of Christian Dogmatics as well. Scottish Calvinism lends itself to a "Christocentric" Dogmatics in Flint's sense quite readily. What is unique here is that for an important element of his thought there was no Scottish precedent. ¹ A colleague of Flint's who later became Professor of Divinity in Glasgow University, William Hastie, testifies to this fact when he cites Flint's article "Theology" in the Encyclopaedia Britannica as evidence for his assertion that "the Germans not only contribute the theological matter of our universal Encyclopaedias, but write our special theological Encyclopaedias and text-books, or train the students who write them for us."²

Returning the discussion back to the theme of Flint's contention that a true theological system must be organically centered around a common center, it is next to be noticed that as far as general theology is concerned, Flint defines its unifying idea to be the true idea of religion itself. His reasoning is that the essential nature of a science's object should determine that science's "central and constitutive principle."³ In order to demonstrate that the unifying principle of general theology may be found in the true idea of re-

¹Hill's Lectures in Divinity and Hodge's Systematic Theology were still being used in 1875 as manuals of Dogmatic Theology, reports J. R. Fleming in his History of the Church in Scotland (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark; 1933), p. 230.


ligion itself Flint undertakes to present the possibility and necessity of including the speculative method in a scientific theological method.

4. The speculative method in a scientific theology

Under this heading two themes fall for discussion. First comes Flint's case for the need of speculation in an adequate systematisation. Second comes a brief statement of the intellectual and religious influences determining Flint's position on the speculative method.

a) Flint's case for the need of speculation in an adequate systematisation

Flint traces the necessity of speculation in theology, philosophy, and all science to the essential role hypotheses must play in the advance of any science. And he claims that every scientific hypothesis is speculation as long as it remains an hypothesis.¹ A further clue as to the nature of the speculation he desiderates in a scientific theological method manifests itself when he declares that "induction, in so far as it effects a transition from the particular to the general, already involves the activity of speculative reason; it makes discoveries only when guided by theory; it can never of itself reach ultimate truth; and it is manifestly not its function to raise coherent comprehensive systems on their proper constructive principles." It is most appropriate at this juncture to learn that

Flint does not advocate a speculative theology which is "part of a philosophy of which the whole system is deduced in a purely and strictly logical manner from an a priori principle, idea, or datum." Neither is he in favour of a speculative theology claiming to be independent of philosophy. He devotes a considerable amount of space in the article on "Theology" to repudiating the kind of theological speculation he understood to be proposed by Rothe, namely, that based on a speculative method using as its primary datum an immediately certain "religious self-consciousness or God-consciousness." In like manner he rejects the method he says was taught by Von Hofmann, namely, one which deduced a complete system of theology by "'thinking within'" the primary fact or experience of man's personal relationship to God through Jesus Christ, such deduction proceeding independently of the facts of religion to be had from "history, experience, or Scripture."¹

Flint pleads for the good name of a "speculation which will fully recognise reality and directly endeavour to elucidate it." Compare his notion of the role such speculation should play in philosophy. According to him, a true philosophy should be formulated by means of and not in spite of the sciences if it ever plans to attain "the ultimate universal and real principle of knowledge and being." But having done this the task of philosophy is not finished: "Having ascended by an analytic and inductive course to the unity of an all-comprehensive ultimate principle, philosophy must endeavour to descend from it in a

synthetic and deductive manner, so as to exhibit the whole organism, or to determine how the many laws of science and the many facts of experience are connected with the absolute in being and causation, and through it with one another.\(^1\)

Two arguments are submitted by Flint in support of his contention that speculation thus defined is a vital part of a true philosophical system. First, he claims that induction and analysis are incapable of effecting a system since their conclusions are precisely what speculation is designed to explain by interpreting them in terms of an ultimate truth or fact. Second, any philosophical system must come to terms with theology. The ultimate of philosophy must relate itself to the God of theology. In the act of so doing, philosophy has taken on a "theologico-speculative use of reason." If theism be true, then the ultimate of philosophy and the God of theology are one and the same, which means philosophy's goal is the demonstration of God as the "essence of all existence, the light of all knowledge."\(^2\) And so, after all is said and done, philosophy, for Flint, is a "speculative theology."\(^3\)

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\(^2\)In spite of their erroneous tendencies towards pantheism and their overemphasis of the necessary and formal in thought, Flint feels that the Absolute Idealists have irrefutably shown that "a God who is not the Absolute as they understood the term, not the unconditioned revealed in all that is conditioned, and the essential content of all knowledge at its highest, cannot be the God either of a profound philosophy or a fully developed religion." (*Agnosticism*, p.548)

Turning to theology as positive (as distinguished from speculative), Flint uses the same two arguments to establish the existence of a similar need for the assistance of the speculative method. He, of course, does not intend to downgrade the importance of first ascertaining the religious facts by "observation and induction." But he argues, first, that induction cannot even get from the particular to the general without the use of speculation. Moreover, induction can not and never does claim to systematise. Flint argues that the idea of God and all subsidiary ideas and theories constitutive of theology cannot be dealt with properly apart from the speculative method. Observation and induction alone cannot take the inquirer beyond "the contingent and conditional."\(^1\)

To those who counter that the idea of God contained in "revelation" obviates the need of speculation in theology Flint retorts that "a complex of the attributes predicated of God in the Bible" does not permit a comprehension of Christianity in term of its ultimate principle and the organic unification of the various subsidiary concepts around that center principle; in other words, without the use of the speculative method God cannot be conceived "as He is, Absolute Being, Harmonious Life, Infinite Personality, Perfect Spirit, Ultimate and only Complete Explanation of the Universe." So Flint concludes that speculation is just as necessary in Christian theology as in general theology. The proper procedure in both should be one "essentially synthetic and speculative" while at the same time con-

stantly referring to "facts and inductive results."  

b) A brief statement of the intellectual and religious influences determining Flint's position on the speculative method.

The qualification that theological speculation must never go further than the "facts and inductive results" allow is important to Flint. Hence it should serve as a warning against over-hastily accusing Flint of slipping perilously close to adopting the method developed by the pure speculative idealisms of the 19th century in the wake of Kant--what is herein being called the Transcendental method.  

Two conclusions from the preceding discussions should not be forgotten: First, he is a Common Sense Realist who has complemented that philosophy with a Christianised Platonic theory of Ideas. This has been seen to mean for Flint's system that the objective validity of the "categories, conditions, or forms of thought" results in the relation of the mind of man and the mind of God in or through the discovery of necessary and universal truths which are reflections in the laws of the universe of the eternal thoughts and attributes of the Creator God--a personal Being who freely and intelligently created the universe, who is above and independent of it, yet "everywhere present and active in it."  

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2 For instance, the rapid reader might understandably wonder if any post-Kantian theologian not a votary of Transcendentalism could urge as the goal of scientific theology a "speculative knowledge of God as He is, Absolute Being...."

Flint was not of the opinion that any speculative method used in system building could be one of "mere formal logic, of pure deduction, or strict demonstration." Instead, it had to be characterised by a "constant reference to facts and inductive results."¹ Second, Flint's religion was a Christianity the distinctive and central principle of which was the person and work of Christ. Since knowledge of Christ is to be had solely from the special revelation culminating Him, and since Flint held general revelation to be almost a "closed book" to the man who had not met Christ, the Transcendental method could hardly have been considered a feasible theological method by Flint. Instead, he ties all projected theological speculation down to the "facts and inductive results" of the scientific study of Scripture as interpreted by the Holy Spirit, and, in the light of that knowledge, the scientific study of nature, mind, and history. Proclaims Flint:

"That which is deepest in the universe...is the truth, the eternal truth, to which Christ came to bear witness, and which He could declare Himself to be. He who is on the throne of the universe is He who, in infinite compassion, gave Himself to death for us, but who has risen again and now reigneth for evermore: the principles manifested in His character, and proclaimed in His Gospel, are the true laws of the universe. The absolute beginning, controlling power, and final purpose of...the government of the universe...are only to be found in the truth which comprehends perfect wisdom, perfect righteousness, and perfect love— the truth embodied and exhibited in Christ."²

¹Flint, "Theology," p.271.
²Flint, Sermons and Addresses, pp.53-54.
Summary and Conclusion of Chapter

In the process of ascertaining and delineating Flint's conception of scientific theology the existence of, and compromise between, the two major and potentially antagonistic components of Flint's system of thought have been described. Earlier chapters had shown Flint as an adherent of the Scottish Philosophy, and as one whose confidence in that philosophy's inherent rationalism was both metaphysically extended and justified by a Christianised Platonic theory of ideas. The present chapter has observed the entry of a mainly Calvinistic form of Christianity upon the scene. Flint has been seen earnestly seeking to effect a workable compromise between these two systems with the assistance of the method and certain theories of 19th century science. His hope has been to find a mediating position between the Ritschlians and the ultra-conservatives, the Universalists and the Calvinistic predestinarians, the Hegelian theologians and the deists, the Comparative Religionists and overexclusive Christians, the destructive Higher Critics and the Biblicists.

The fundamental pre-suppositions brought by Flint to the task of formulating a theology, or as he prefers to call it, "the science of religion," are, on the one hand, those deriving from the conviction that Christianity is *sui generis* and, on the other hand, those originating in his Scottish Philosophy. The latter have been found to produce a marked tendency toward giving man's rational and moral abilities and demands as posited by Common Sense an unusually strong or even a dominant role
in his theological method: rational evidence is made the ultimate ground of Christian faith; self-evidencing reasonableness is made the primary criterion for the acceptance of any Christian doctrine; non-inferential knowledge of another person being excluded by definition, all knowledge of God in Christ through the Holy Spirit is restricted to the inference of God's nature from those characteristics manifested by Christ—characteristics whose apprehension depends upon the reasonableness of the form in which they are revealed, their own reasonableness, and their ability to sustain piety; a restricted form of rational speculation is prescribed as necessary if "God as He is, Absolute Being..." is to be known. Such a confident emphasis on man's rational abilities and demands is evidently not regarded by Flint as incompatible with his conviction of the truth of the Calvinist doctrine of the Fall of man. In earlier chapters Flint was seen maintaining that by virtue of the common sense principles of thought, man spontaneously and almost instantaneously infers the existence and nature of God as manifested in nature. Yet he also was found complaining that "worldliness and prejudice and sin" keep man practically oblivious to the facts exhibiting God. The examination of Flint's philosophy of history revealed that the real and ultimate foundation for his historical theory was not the professed inductions from the facts of history but his conception of Providence which centered in the doctrine of the Kingdom of God, a doctrine dependent upon the revelations of God in Jesus Christ. A similar pattern of apparent contrariety has

\[1\text{See above, p.179.}\]
been observed in Flint's views on scientific theology in the present chapter. Flint defines theology as "the science of religion," and the philosophy of religion as "the one general theological science."¹ He leaves no doubt about his assurance that man's common sense principles of thought fit him for the conducting of this science and this philosophy no less than for any other science and philosophy, and in the same manner. Yet, Flint also holds that only the Christian in whom love for God has been awakened through the knowledge of Christ's death (apart from a very few individuals who have received special spiritual illumination) can engage in the science of religion or its philosophy "with any profit." Or stating Flint's two positions another way, on the one hand there is his belief that human reason was drifting farther and farther from God before Christ came. On the other hand, there is his view that special revelation must conform to general revelation as far as the latter goes.

The following conclusions may thus be drawn:

1) These two positions enunciated by Flint hold the logical relationship to each other of contrariety unless two major assumptions be granted:

a) That all men possessing the common sense principles of thought are aware of, and believe in, God's revelation in Jesus Christ;

b) that only those men believing in Jesus Christ are in possession of the common sense principles of thought.

This latter assumption logically leads on to the next

¹See above, p. 256.
conclusion.

2) Flint must logically be accused of holding the view that only those Common Sense Realists who are Christians can be properly designated philosophers who truly understand the import of the common sense principles of thought, and thus genuine Common Sense Realists. The same must be said of Flint's view of all scientists and, indeed, of all philosophers. It will be shown later that such a view strikes at the very root of the great underlying principle of Common Sense Philosophy.

3) If Flint's system is to be made consistent with itself, then in addition to the obvious assumption that all his cogitations were from the viewpoint of the man who already knows Christ it must be assumed that Flint intended his writings, including those on his major topic of interest, natural theology, to be understandable only to the Christian.

Since it is the research-student's duty to place the most reasonable interpretation the facts will allow upon a man's thought, the present assumption has been deemed fair, but only as explained and qualified as follows: According to Flint, "theism has come to us mainly through Christianity" even although "Christianity itself rests on theism" in the sense of "presupposing the truth of theism."¹ Flint's Natural Theology was not designed to discover a God whose existence is simply and naively presupposed by all un-philosophical Christians, but rather to discover the reasons why the Christian's God must exist. Having ascertained the real, metaphysical grounds for

¹Flint, Theism, p.23.
his faith, the Christian is provided with a framework on which the various attributes of God revealed in Scripture may be systematised, the result being a more profound comprehension of what God really is "as He is Absolute Being, Harmonious Life, Infinite Personality, perfect Spirit, Ultimate and only Complete Explanation of the Universe." As far as those people who have never come into contact with special revelation are concerned, Flint thought a scientifically historical study of cultures and religions showed that, apart from very few cases explained by "special spiritual influence," man's depravity had prevented him from developing his natural knowledge of God even enough to make faith in God a dominant factor in his life. But out of fairness to Flint it should be, and can be, maintained that the conviction of man's inability to formulate a cogent, philosophically respectable theistic argument apart from special revelation was not confused in Flint's mind with his equally salient tenet that everyman looking out on the world and within himself implicitly and in an unanalysed pattern of thought is convinced of God's existence.

Unfortunately, however, Flint is not thereby completely exonerated from the charge of inconsistency of thought. He has given the rational element in Christian faith such predominance that his doctrines of the uniqueness of special revelation, the need for all revelation's illumination by the Holy Spirit, and the depravity of mankind are not allowed to exert their rightful influence upon his thinking and writing.

1 Flint, On Theol., Bibl., and Other Subjects, p.110.
It appears that in his oral utterances he also gave the impression of over-emphasising the rational element in Christian faith. A student of his, who confessed learning more from Flint than from anyone else (and who knew whereof he spoke, since he later became the Principal and Professor of Systematic Theology in a Theological Hall), came away from Flint's lectures thinking the latter taught that "we arrive at our knowledge of God by way of the "'theistic proofs.'" This student, John Dickie, confesses that Flint never succeeded in persuading him that "a rationally demonstrable 'Natural Theology'" is the sure foundation on which we erect a superstructure of Christian conviction...equally impregnable in a purely logical point of view." According to Dickie, "Dr. Flint regarded all his writing and thinking as part of one great comprehensive argument establishing a logically convincing proof of the existence of God and at the same time furnishing sure and certain knowledge of His Nature."1

1John Dickie, Fifty Years of British Theology, p.63.
CHAPTER VI

A SUMMARY OF THE MAJOR CRITICISMS OF FLINT'S THOUGHT MADE IN THESIS

AND

A FINAL EVALUATION

I. A Summary of the Major Criticisms of Flint's Thought Made in Thesis

The philosophy of religion, according to Flint, is "special in relation to philosophy, of which it is only a department." On the other hand, he explicitly equates the "all-comprehensive science of religion," "the philosophy of religion," and "theology." The philosophy of religion "alone completely answers to the idea and definition of theology." The philosophy of religion is "the one general theological science," it "comprehends and dominates the special theological sciences, so as to be the science of these sciences, and hence, in accordance with the true distinction between philosophy and science, is properly called philosophy rather than science—the philosophy of religion." Its main work is the discovery and exhibition of the "nature of religion." How, then, can a sui generis religion be fitted into this scheme? This has proved to be the crucial question for Flint's thought, for in addition to the above, Flint also main-
tains, "Christianity is not only a religion, but a religion which claims to be the perfect or absolute religion; and clearly, if the claim be well founded, the complete nature of religion can only be understood through that full knowledge of Christianity which Christian science may be expected to give." ¹

In the foregoing investigation of Flint's thought he has been found to evince no hesitation about the harmony of his view of the philosophy of religion with his convictions concerning Christianity. The reason for his confidence has been shown to lie in the difference between the philosophical method he apparently thought he used and the one he actually used. He regarded himself as fully scientific, which, for him, meant making facts rather than authority the ground of religion and the standard of theology; it meant constructing a philosophy of religion while assuming nothing but the reign of law and order in the universe, and the reliability of man's rational faculties. But the truth of the matter has been learned to be that Flint is first and foremost a modified Scottish Calvinist desirous of placing his religion in the best light and defending it from the encroachments and opposition of extreme views of all kinds. In other words, he articulates a Christian philosophy cast in the shape of an apologetic. A Christian Weltanschauung is portrayed as the best explanation of human experience.

In the pursuit of this goal Flint leaned heavily upon the Scottish Philosophy. In fact, he leaned more heavily on the Scottish Philosophy than he realised. His great trust in the

Theidian analysis of man's epistemological pretensions prompted him to give man's rational and moral abilities and demands a more dominant role in his Christian faith and in his theologising and philosophising then was strictly appropriate to a theologian who also held, for example, that reason was wandering farther and farther from God before Christ came. Or, looked at from the standpoint of his Scottish Philosophy, Flint's unawareness of the full extent of his Christian presuppositions resulted in his building a metaphysical superstructure allegedly upon the foundations laid solely by the common sense principles of thought which, in fact, extended further than Reid felt justifiable into the realm of rational speculation.

The conclusion that Flint has allowed rationalism to play a larger role in his system than that for which he was really prepared to give an adequate account or to accommodate has been based upon the following criticisms brought against Flint's thought in the foregoing chapters.

1) The first criticism, alluded to at the end of the previous chapter, concerns the price which must be paid to make Flint's thought consistent within itself.

The point was made that Flint's conception of the philosophy of religion, especially the great confidence in his natural theology, can be integrated with his historically attested conviction that "worldliness and prejudice and sin" make people "overlook" God's evidences and deny His existence, if it be assumed that Flint writes only from the viewpoint and for the

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1Flint, *Theism*, p.78.
viewpoint of the man who already knows Christ. But if this assumption be granted, then Flint must logically be charged with having no right to appeal to the Common Sense philosophy of Reid. The common sense principles of thought which Flint uses in the construction of his philosophy of religion were not held by Reid to be descriptive of the natural functioning of only Christians' minds but of all men's minds. In particular does Flint logically run foul of the very common sense principle upon which he (as well as Reid) most directly founded their natural theology, namely, "that from certain signs or indications in the effect, we may infer that there must have been intelligence, wisdom, or other intellectual or moral qualities in the cause." (From this "first principle" Reid went on to assert the inconsistency of a man's inferring the existence of "any intelligent being but himself," if that man was not persuaded of the "existence and perfections of the Deity" by the "argument from final causes.")

Flint finds "incredible" but true the fact that men can look at nature, within themselves, and upon society without affirming God. However, Flint thinks "it is a fact which involves nothing inconsistent with the truth that the process by which the mind attains to a belief in God is of the same natural and direct, yet inferential, character as the process by which it attains to belief in the existence of finite minds closely akin to itself." But, Flint must be asked, how can this be so when "we must know God, and love him, before we can see him in

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1 Reid, Works, ed. Hamilton, I, 450-461.
2 Flint, Thism, p.79.
natural things with any clearness or to any profit"? This question becomes even more pertinent when Flint continues
by declaring:

"Awaken, through Christ's death, the love of God within me, and then all Nature will speak to me of God; otherwise she will hardly speak to me one intelligible word. The Gospel must give me the requisite intelligence and the requisite interest."  

Or, again, Flint can be heard maintaining:

"There is no logical necessity why a mere theist should become an atheist, but the causes which tend to produce atheism are too strong to be counteracted by any force inherent in mere theism; and hence, as a matter of historical fact, mere theism has always, even in modern Christendom, largely given place to atheism. Mere theism might have sufficed us had we remained perfectly rational and perfectly sinless . . . In the state into which we have fallen . . . we need the light which only shines from the gracious countenance of Christ."  

If consistent, therefore, Flint must mean that as things stand now only the Christian apprehends God in a process "of the same natural and direct, yet inferential, character" as that used in the apprehension of another finite self. This, in turn, entails the view that natural man, the non-Christian, is a man whose mind either does not possess all the functional characteristics described by Reid as the principles of common sense or else does not operate normally. The first of these alternatives Flint, unlike most of the theologians using the Scottish Philosophy, avoided by denying that God was known intuitively. The second alternative fastens on Flint securely. And so, on the surface of things, it appears he has the logical privilege of

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1 Flint, Christ's Kingdom Upon Earth, p. 7.
2 Flint, Theism, p. 305.
accusing all non-Christians with having abnormal or inconsistent minds.

It might be expected that a theologian would make such an accusation. The situation is different with respect to a Common Sense Realist who follows Reid, for a closer look will reveal that by making such an accusation Flint must logically deny the very teaching of Reid upon which it depends. Since the vast majority of mankind have not seen God in nature "with any profit," and since a good share of the human race have been or are militant atheists, it must not be true, contrary to Reid and Flint, that one of the universal, necessary, and self-evident principles of thought is "that from certain signs or indications in the effect, we may infer . . . intellectual or moral qualities in the cause." Most of mankind have not always made such an inference. Hence the majority of human beings, as a matter of fact, do not think in the manner set forth in this allegedly common sense principle of thought. Only sometimes do all men make the inference mentioned—when they infer the existence of other finite selves. Therefore, the really universal, necessary, and self-evident principle of thought is that we may infer the existence of a finitely intelligent and moral cause from certain characteristics in the effect. It would then appear that it is the Christians' minds, the minds of the minority of mankind, who are operating abnormally or inconsistently. They are claiming to be able to make an inference for which no supporting or enabling common sense principle exists. Needless to say, Flint or Reid would abhor such a logical reduction of their position, but
it is nonetheless fair.

2) The success with which Flint conceived himself to have formulated the theistic inference is of course reciprocally related to his confidence in Reid's optimistic analysis of man's epistemological capabilities. Hence, Flint's ultimate appeal to the Christianised version of the Platonic theory of ideas logically raises doubts as to both his confidence in the a posteriori arguments for God and his loyalty to the Common Sense school.

As a disciple of the philosophy of Reid, Flint was duty-bound to anathematise all insertions of hypotheses between the knower and the objective facts. Hypothesisation for scientific purposes was entirely acceptable, but to declare for instance with Locke that the objects of knowledge are ideas rather than independently existing realities was, according to Reid, a prime example of the kind of philosophising which understandably led to Hume. Reid extended his ban to include all a priori metaphysical speculation.

By the time Flint came on the scene, however, another "giant" had appeared in the land, whose menace to "common sense" was scarcely less pressing than the scepticism of Hume had been in Reid's time. As explained earlier, the prospects of formulating a semi-monistic personalism with the assistance of the modified metaphysical monism proffered by Absolute Idealism was proving to be irresistibly appealing to an increasing number of the later nineteenth century heirs of the Scottish Philosophy. They were no longer satisfied with what seemed a truncated system which virtually stopped with an epistemological dualism in which both sides of the dualism were known. As A. Seth (Pringle-
Fattison) put it, they were no longer content "for their personal ontology . . . to merely lean upon the language of religion, which relates God to the world as its Creator, and to man also as his Creator, and, in a special sense, his Father and his God."\(^1\) While wanting to appear as open to the new way of thinking as possible, Flint clung to the essentials of the old way. Nevertheless, the tide toward the new way could not be wholly resisted without bringing the charge most dreaded by any rearguard defender of a dying cause, namely, the charge of obscurantism. So Flint persuaded himself to launch out into the territory forbidden by the Common Sense school by refusing "to dispense with as much of \textit{a priori} reasoning as necessary to establish that a denial of the eternity, or immutability, or omnipotence, or ubiquity, or omniscience, or any other attribute implied in the infinity of the Divine Being, logically leads to absurdity."\(^2\) The criticism that in such statements are to be diagnosed the symptoms of "the Hegelian view of religion and its 'speculative idea' of God"\(^3\) has been examined and dismissed in this thesis as unsustainable. What he really has in mind here is the Platonic proof of God. And in accepting the Platonic form of the \textit{a priori} argument for God Flint has been seen to take on the whole notion, securely brought into the Church by Augustine, of the Platonic ideas being, as Casserley would say, "the ground plan of creation, subsisting eternally in the mind of God."\(^4\)

\(^{1}\) A. Seth /Pringle-Pattison/, \textit{Scottish Philosophy}, p.215.

\(^{2}\) Flint, \textit{Theism}, p.292.

\(^{3}\) Flint, \textit{Theism}, p.435.

Nonetheless, the *a priori* reasoning involved in the Platonic proof took one beyond the limits of human understanding, according to the Common Sense school. Thus it devolves upon Flint to justify his use of it. The case he presents in defense of his move is twofold: First, he affirms that the absolute, infinite, perfect God is not known unless the validity of the *a priori* reasoning especially of Augustine, Anselm, and their followers be granted. Second, he maintains that when used after the *a posteriori* arguments the *a priori* argument (especially its Platonic form) is valid. The first statement of this defense is no doubt true in itself, but can hardly be considered a defense of anything since it is simply an affirmation of the problem for which a solution must be found. The second statement is indeed a defense, a strong one. In fact, it must be admitted that by placing the *a priori* argument after the *a posteriori* arguments Flint set up theistic argumentation in its most persuasive form, especially since he stipulated that the various arguments be regarded as "organically related." Nevertheless, by his own admission, the apprehension of God's metaphysical attributes, the attributes of infinity and perfection, ultimately hinges on the viability of the metaphysics of the *a priori* argument. It is precisely here that there still remains a gap between where the *a posteriori* arguments Flint formulated with the principles of Reid leave off and the *a priori* argument based on the Christianised version of the Platonic ideas begins. The latter argument must still fend for itself, Common Sense can-

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1Flint, *Theism*, p. 74.
not reach it.

Accordingly, Flint's \textit{a priori} argument was examined. It was seen that he adduces what Laird calls "the Proof from the Sovereign Essences and the Proof from the Eternal Truths."\footnote{See above, pp.173-176.} But Laird's criticisms of these "proofs" were strong enough to cast too much doubt on the viability of these "proofs" for permitting Flint's \textit{a priori} argument to carry the burden he placed upon it.

Furthermore, by admitting the inability of the \textit{a posteriori} arguments alone to reach an absolute, infinite Being and by thereupon appealing to the Platonic form of the \textit{a priori} argument, Flint must logically be said to tacitly call in question the whole method of Common Sense. Instead of relying implicitly upon the psychological fact of man's allegedly universal, necessary, and self-evident belief in an absolute, perfect, infinite Being, Flint offers an epistemological justification, which in this case is metaphysical. But a consistent adherent of the Common Sense school should be fully satisfied with the psychological certainty of a belief; by definition he needs no epistemological justification, much less one that involves metaphysical speculation. However, it is just such a justification Flint adduces when he argues that belief in an absolute, perfect, infinite God is not erroneous because the laws of creation, including the laws of human reason, are expressions of characteristics and ideas eternally resident in the Divine mind.
3) Another factor contributing to the over-robust confidence Flint had in man's capability to apprehend God lay in his assurance that the methodology which he was using was fully in line with the orthodox scientific method of the nineteenth century. But he has been found partially mistaken in this, for in the execution of his method he claimed a rationalistic certainty for an inference whose underlying logic was allegedly inductive. This trait of Flint's has appeared in several guises.

a) The occurrence of this trait which comes immediately to mind because of the discussion just ended is his claim that the conclusion of the \textit{a posteriori} arguments for God permits and demands supplementation by some (preferably the Platonic) form of the \textit{a priori} argument. God being the highly probable inference of an analogical argument, Flint must have a satisfactory answer to the problem of causal connection. The answer he gives is provided by Reid's intuitive principle of causation, itself discovered empirically by scientific observation of the phenomena of mind. At least such is the case as far as his approach to the \textit{a posteriori} arguments is concerned. But there is more to Flint's idea of God. True, it is not the regulative idea of Kant, Hamilton, Mansel, and Spencer; neither is it the innate idea of Descartes. Rather it is the result of reasoning which is "\textit{a priori} inasmuch as it rests on necessary ideas, but \textit{a posteriori} inasmuch as it proceeds from these ideas upwards to God in a manner which is essentially analytic and inductive."\footnote{Flint, \textit{Theism}, p.271.} There is no call for again demonstrating that the principle of
causality provided by Reid for the scientific movement from effect to cause or cause to effect is constitutionally inapplicable in the realm of "necessary ideas." Flint's claim to be able to use it here is plainly a case of question-begging.

b) A second crucial example of Flint's failure to carry through his avowed aim of proceeding with a fully scientific method came to light in his philosophy of history. In the first step of the construction of his philosophy of history Flint's pretention to a scientific method is not entirely implausible, if the presuppositions brought from his Common Sense Realism be granted. If, however, the number of philosophers of history be small who today would concede the possibility of inducing the laws of rational freedom, progress, and unity from the "facts" of history (—Flint, it will be recalled, claimed to presuppose only that "the reign of law somehow extends over human affairs," and he adopted the then current positivistic view of historical "fact"—) hardly anyone would agree that these laws permitted the scientific deduction of Providence. Indeed, in spite of his representations to the contrary, Flint did not himself really make such a scientific deduction of the doctrine of providence. It has been shown that his doctrine of providence was dependent upon his doctrine of the Kingdom of God, which latter doctrine, in turn, centered in Jesus Christ.1 Moreover, the fact that Flint's philosophy of history was actually dependent upon God's special revelation makes one wonder how scienti-

fic the induction of his three basic laws of history really was.

4) Responsibility for Flint's tendency toward rationalism must also be shared by his analysis of what may be called the structure of the Christian faith-situation.

In the discussion of the conditions Flint set up for the appropriation of Divine knowledge from any and all sources, the point was made that by failing to recognize the possibility of anything but an inferential knowledge of God, Flint, as an adherent to the Scottish Philosophy, could naturally be expected to limit the Holy Spirit's work in the genesis of Christian faith to that primarily of satisfying the rational criteria of a prospective believer. As a "scientific" theologian, Flint will accept nothing on authority. Having withdrawn his subscription to the doctrine of an infallible, plenary inspired, Scripture; and regarding the assertions of another man, an institution, or a book as an improper cause for belief in Christ; Flint has two remaining alternatives, if he would have faith in God through Jesus Christ. The current view "that revelation is not merely from Subject to subject, but also of Subject to subject,"¹ even although it had been heralded by Wilhelm Herrmann as far back as 1887,² was never considered by Flint. Hence, he took the only course open to him: he believed in the spiritual truths concerning God in Jesus


Christ; and, he believed in these truths because he claimed to be able to "apprehend them by the exercise of ... his own faculties."¹ "Religious truths," according to him, must be accepted only when "apprehended and realised by us as properly religious truths, we must have a living insight into their nature and significance, and a veritable spiritual experience of their influence on our hearts and lives."² And such criteria have been seen to be, for Flint, ones informed and dominated by the demands of "reasonableness" and "self-evidence."

We would submit that with respect to the believer's relationship to the Object of faith in faith in Christ, Luther may be regarded as having had a truer insight than Flint when the former wrote: "Faith is a firm assent (firmus assensus), by which thou dost lay hold on Christ, so that Christ is the Object of faith, or rather not the Object, but --if I may put it so--in faith itself Christ is present."³ Such an apprehension of Christ is effected by the testimonium spiritus sancti internum. If this be mysticism, then it is a unique kind of mysticism, for the knowledge of Christ in faith is a knowledge unacceptable to the ordinary mysticism. As Brunner points out, the knowledge of Christ available to man in faith is a knowledge which "combines objectivity with a knowledge which is subjective and present." It is a knowledge

¹Flint, Agnosticism, p. 539.
²Flint, Agnosticism, p. 550.
³Martin Luther, Werke (Kritische Gesamtausgabe: Weimar: Hermann Böhlau's Nachfolger; 1911), 40, I, 228-229 (and not 285 as Brunner erroneously stipulates); quoted by E. Brunner, Revelation and Reason, p. 180.
hinging upon "the radical mediacy, the absolute union with
the historic Mediator and the historical Word concerning Him,
and with the act of atonement which has taken place once for
all on the Cross."¹ And as Brunner clearly saw, "the word of
the Cross is folly and scandal to my natural reason," it is
"the divine hammer which knocks on the closed door of the
autonomous, self-imprisoned reason...and liberates it."²

²Emil Brunner, Revelation and Reason, p. 179.
II. Final Evaluation of Flint's Philosophical and Theological Method

Flint's firm belief in the orthodox nineteenth-century scientific method, and his metaphysical extension of the Scottish Philosophy with the Christianised version of the Platonic theory of ideas have been seen to result in his using two forms of rational procedure: generalisation from observed facts on the model of natural science, and the interpretation of reality in terms of universals. The outcome amounted to an allegedly factually based but nonetheless rationalistic demonstrative metaphysics. Accordingly, (1) he has been found setting forth a theistic inference which started by assuming only the principles of Common Sense and ended up not only with the expected a posteriori arguments but the inclusion of an a priori argument; (2) he believed a scientific theology which started with data inductively drawn from all sources of knowledge of God would, through speculative hypothecation—all sciences advance by means of hypotheses, he assures his readers—finally pull philosophy within the orbit of theology;¹ (3) he accepted the old nineteenth-century scientific and positivistic historicism, yet claimed that the generalisations thereby afforded were meaningful only in terms of a philosophy of history built around the concept of Divine Providence (and a particular concept of Divine Providence at that).

¹According to Flint, "philosophy must inevitable become in the highest stage of its development a speculative theology" because "the absolute principle of philosophy can be no other than God Himself, and its highest task no other than to show him to be the essence of all existence, the light of all knowledge." (On Theol., Bibl., and Other Subjects, pp.108-109.)
Enough has been said about how Flint's speculative philosophy of history was not as dependent upon his science of history as he had imagined. But with respect to his science of history it may simply be noted that the half-century since Flint's death has witnessed the dereliction of "Kanke's claim that the historian was an impartial spectator and objective recorder of what really happened;" Bury's assertion that history was "simply a science, no less and no more;" and Lord Acton's advice that "a historian is seen at his best when he does not appear."¹ The historiography and philosophy of history of today must be able to thrive in a climate initially determined by the theories of Kierkegaard, Burckhardt, and Dilthey. While historical scepticism is no more advocated today than yesterday, the pretension to what Walsh terms an "objective historical consciousness" is no longer made as it was "by the nineteenth-century positivists when they proposed to make history scientific by resting it on the scientific study of psychology and sociology."² Instead, most historians now regard their activities as analogous to that of an artist: both bring their own perspective to the material, yet both (if the artist is a portrait painter, for instance) must make their reconstruction strictly on the basis of the evidence from which they start.³

¹Hans Meyerhoff, ed., The Philosophy of History on Our Time, "Introduction" by editor, p.16.
²Compare Flint's praise of Lazarus' Völkerpsychologie as the best way to make history scientific; above, pp. 200-202.
Turning to philosophy and philosophical theology, the present-day reader soon discovers that the days are gone when metaphysics could unhesitatingly interpret and describe reality in terms of analogies taken from mathematics, logic, and the natural sciences, whether physical or organic.

Flint lived and wrote in that part of the nineteenth century, when the most urgent problem facing the philosophy of religion\(^1\) concerned the relation of science to religion. With his favourite teacher at university being one of Great Britain's most famous scientists (Lord Kelvin) it is hardly surprising that the young philosophically inclined theologian Flint set out to vindicate his Christian religion in the name of science from the attacks of those claiming scientific support and from those advising Christianity for its own safety to ignore science. In Scottish Common Sense Realism Flint had an epistemology which admirably met the requirements of a scientific nineteenth century with its assumption of an objectively real world to observe and experiment upon, and knowably real selves to do the scientific study and to be scientifically studied. Hence, he quite naturally was trained to think that the scientific method and the Scottish Philosophy taken together could give Christianity the defense it needed.

But the nineteenth century concept of scientific method to which Flint fell heir was modelled upon the natural sciences. This, compounded with his desire to use the philosophical starting-

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\(^1\)The term "philosophy of religion" is used in Flint's sense: the one general theological science.
point and method of common sense, led him to blur some important distinctions between science and philosophy which most present-day thinkers are concerned to carefully mark out. For example, John A. Hutchison establishes the following differences between the methods of science and philosophy: First, he asserts,

"Although science is impersonal and objective knowledge, philosophy is always related to the personal activity of one's own mind. In science, every care is taken to eliminate personal equation, thus rendering the resultant knowledge objective and impersonal. Science is neutral as to values; but philosophy deliberately undertakes to synthesize facts and values in its synoptic vision of the scheme-of-things-entire."

Next, he points out, by carefully marking out and describing its problems science, unlike philosophy, can occasionally find solutions. Philosophy is not primarily engaged in solving particular problems, but "the clarification of universally human dilemmas."1 Thirdly, he remarks that whereas science can boast of progress in providing answers to a series of particular questions, philosophy deals with those aspects of experience which never change. Finally, Hutchison affirms that "in learning science, the mind encounters new facts and relations which it had not previously known." In the case of philosophy, he thinks R. G. Collingwood has correctly called attention to the difference between, in the words of the latter,

"knowing better and knowing worse, but none between knowing absolutely and not knowing at all. In pursuing this knowledge, we should not begin with utter ignorance of the subject-matter or any part of it, but with a dim and confused knowledge."2

A key chapter of M. B. Foster's *Mystery and Philosophy* is devoted to a study of the current descriptions being given of modern science. He summarises his findings thus:

"Scientific language is technical, an instrument of man; scientific evidence is communicable to man as man; the experimental method of science is a method of commanding nature to answer man's questions; the aim of modern science is man's mastery over nature." The applicability of science is to all things which are subject to man. "What does this leave outside the limits of science? God... and all those things which are not by nature but by grace (the test of what these are will be whether or not they are man's to command), e.g. unity, and peace."

Although the thinkers just cited differ between themselves in many things, they are united in reflecting the changed attitude usually taken now, as compared with that taken six or seven decades ago, to the relation of science and philosophy. The trend which has gained strength in the last six or seven decades is that of disengaging, within prescribed limits, the methodologies of philosophy and science. The very notion of seeking, as Flint did, to scientifically demonstrate on the pattern of the natural sciences (which in turn were in the last century still operating on a mechanistic model of nature) the particular answers he chose for man's perennial philosophical questions has been largely abandoned. Whatever be the merits and demerits of existentialist philosophy and of what Hepburn argues should properly be called the "philosophical style" whose "commonest nicknames" are "the philosophy of language,"

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'linguistic analysis,' their appearance upon the scene has rendered even less promising a philosophy of religion claiming a scientifically objective detachment from its subject matter and a universally acceptable starting-point and foundational principles.\(^2\)

In the concluding paragraph of his critical examination of the Scottish Philosophy of Common Sense, Grave reports that for the adherents of that school

"there are questions asked by philosophers and answered by common sense, which therefore contains 'a philosophy prior to philosophy.' With the untroubled assumption that the beliefs of common sense show their metaphysical character as they show their authority, the philosophy of Common Sense came into existence in order to make this claim."\(^3\)

But as was intimated earlier, at the end of Chapter III, the Scottish school of Common Sense never succeeded in wrestling free from the clutches of empiricism nor altogether successfully answering the criticisms emanating from empiricists like J. S. Mill. Moreover, the attack on what R. J. Hirst calls "the belief that in mathematics and the basic principles of science we have knowledge which is \textit{a priori}, and so necessarily and universally true, but which is not simply analytic or logically certain"


\(^2\)It is of relevance here to notice Hepburn's contention that what he holds to be the new and sharper attacks levelled against the traditional arguments for God by linguistic philosophy are to a large extent, "a developing of arguments deployed originally by Hume, notably in his Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion. (R. Hepburn, \textit{Christianity and Paradox}, p.4.)

has naturally been intensified in the present century. With reference to Kant, but, mutatis mutandis, of equal application to Reid, Hirst anticipates little opposition today when he describes these "mathematical and scientific principles" as "not necessary and universal." Hirst explains in his authoritative and thorough new volume on the philosophical problems of perception that the

"spatial relations do not necessarily or universally conform to Euclidean geometry as Kant thought they did: not necessarily, because there are alternative non-Euclidean geometries which might conceivably hold good of our space, and not universally, because scientists claim that neither interstellar space nor the spatial relations of protons and electrons are Euclidean. There is also reason to doubt the necessary and universal applicability in science of two categories Kant stressed as a priori . . . . One is that of causation, expressible in the principle that every event has a cause. Now far this holds good at the sub-atomic level is a subject of dispute among physicists, some holding that statistical laws are fundamental; but at least the fact that it can be seriously entertained and argued that the principle of causality does not hold there shows that it cannot be part of the way we inevitably organize our experience—an alternative is conceivable. Much the same applies to the duality of waves and particles, for example, suggest that the old category of substance may be inadequate to the discoveries of modern physics; we seem forced to new ways of thought that should be neither necessary nor possible if Kant is right."

Of course Reid did not agree with Kant that these categories were imposed by us upon the data of experience, but he did agree that they were necessarily and universally true; so, the criticisms mentioned by Hirst must also be brought against Reid.

The penetration of Hirst's attack is greatly increased, of course, by the passing of what M. B. Hesse terms the "conception of the 'billiard-ball' universe" which dominated nineteenth

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The modern view is determined by the electromagnetic theory of radiation, the theory of relativity, and the quantum theory, explains Hesse. Thus it would appear that, at least in the form given its content by the Scottish Philosophers, there can no longer be said to be a corpus of self-evident, necessary, and universal, beliefs, principles, or propositions which can be termed "a philosophy prior to philosophy."

Before consigning Common Sense Realism to the scrap-heap, however, it is only fair to scrutinise it in its most up-to-date form. Immediately one's mind turns to G. E. Moore.

In his critical exposition of G. E. Moore's thought, Alan White presents Reid as the forerunner who most closely anticipated Moore. First, White finds Reid and Moore using the same criteria in defining a statement as a statement of common sense: "universal acceptance," "compulsive acceptance," its

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1 M. B. Hesse, *Science and the Human Imagination* (London: SCM Press Ltd.; 1954), pp. 47-69. Hesse quotes Flint's respected teacher, Lord Kelvin, as admitting, "I never satisfy myself until I can make a mechanical model of a thing. If I can make a mechanical model I can understand it." (p. 60.) It will be recalled that Flint described perception as being "dependent both on mental activities and on imperceptible external causes or conditions, such as ether-motions without and nerve-motions within the organs" yielding sensation. (Flint, *Agnosticism*, p. 60 Italics are ours.) Hesse records that "during the nineteenth century a tremendous amount of energy was expended in trying to construct a theory of an aether capable of transmitting waves with the observed properties of light." (p. 60)

denial resulting in inconsistencies, "they simply and self-evidently are true." 1 Second, White decides that "Reid's and Moore's views about the appeal to common sense differ... only in that the former looked for the origin of such beliefs in 'the constitution of our nature,'... whereas the latter sought no explanation." Third, White thinks "Reid also handed down unchanged... the companion... appeal to ordinary language as... an indication of what we all believe and, usually therefore, of what is a statement of common sense... as a standard of what it is correct to say... as a touchstone for testing philosophical views." 2 Fourth, White notes that both men "held that all knowledge must be built on first principles." 3 Fifth, White concludes, "apart from his close anticipation of the appeals to common sense and to ordinary language and a few other topics, including the act/object distinction of Moore's "The Refutation of Idealism" and the difference between grammatical and logical form, Reid's views on definition and analysis have an interesting similarity to Moore's." 4

Turning to Moore's thought itself, he can be found proclaiming in "A Defense of Common Sense" his conviction that "the

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1 Alan H. White, G. E. Moore: A Critical Exposition (Oxford: Basil Blackwell; 1958), pp.11-15 and 193-195. White appends long lists of corroborative references from Reid and Moore for all his assertions, but it would serve no real purpose to include them here.


3 White, G. E. Moore, p.194.

4 White, G. E. Moore, p.198.
Common Sense view of the world, is, in certain fundamental features, wholly true. Stemming from this conviction, continues Moore, is his belief that "there is no good reason to suppose either (A) that every physical fact is logically dependent upon some mental fact or (B) that every physical fact is causally dependent upon some mental fact." This belief, in turn prevents him from seeing any good reason for supposing that "all material things were created by God," confesses Moore. In fact, he forthrightly stipulates that he cannot conceive of any good reasons for thinking "there is a God at all" or that the soul of man is immortal.

It is our humble opinion that this contention of Moore's constitutes the dénouement of the kind of objectively scientific, common sense grounded philosophy of religion Flint regarded himself as having formulated. Moore has beaten Flint at his own game, if you please. It is impossible to conjure up a possible retort for Flint to hurl at Moore which would not incur Moore's scorn for being unscientifically based on unneeded presuppositions. Moore can bring Ockham's "Razor" to bear upon any proposition Flint might be expected to add to Moore's account of the beliefs of common sense. The scientific method requires that the Common Sense philosopher who argues from or for the least number of self-evident principles must be given the greatest credence.

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1 G. E. Moore, "A Defense of Common Sense," Contemporary British Philosophy, 2nd Series, ed. J. H. Muirhead (London: George Allen and Unwin, Ltd., 1925), p. 207. Moore explains that although all philosophers could be said to share this conviction, many differ from him also holding views inconsistent with the Common Sense view.

Nevertheless, Moore no less than Flint has no right to utter the last word on these matters, for, as will now be contended, they and all other thinkers appealing to common sense overlook what H. A. Hodges calls the problem of "standpoint." Confessedly in the debt of Kant, Dilthey, and Collingwood, Hodges argues that down through the centuries man has utilised various (not only one as Kant maintained) sets of "principles or presuppositions, together with the type of question to which they give rise and the way of looking at things which results from them." In short, more than one standpoint has been held to be ultimate.¹ On the other hand, he explains, there is one standpoint adopted the world over and expressed in the "'ordinary language'" of every human being, namely, the standpoint of common sense. Hence,

"when we proceed to take up the special standpoints of philosophy, science, and the like, we are consciously diverging from the accepted norm; but we carry over with us into these special disciplines a great deal of the language of common sense, which, when thus used in a new context depending on a different standpoint, can be the source of considerable confusion."²

A couple of instances of this confusion cited by Hodges in which Flint has been observed somewhat entangled are the following:

The first one to be mentioned centers in the failure of seventeenth and eighteenth century thinkers to recognise that the standpoint of the new physics and the standpoint of the traditional metaphysics were both using a common language which, even


²H. A. Hodges, Languages Standpoints and Attitudes, p.17.
if it had been gradually adapted to medieval philosophy, was for that very reason bound to clash with the new methods and principles of the new sciences. Affirms Hodges, "Words like 'matter,' 'substance,' 'energy,' 'motion,' 'cause,'" while retaining their old meaning for those who still moved in the thought-world of Aristotle, took on other meanings in the context of mathematical or experimental physics." Another form this confusion of standpoints took which has partially ensnared Flint is the one taking "grammatical forms . . . as evidence of ontological relations."

But, counters Hodges, this is an erroneous procedure because,

"words and combinations of words are treated as if they contained answers to questions which are not in the minds of those who speak to them. They are not understood from the standpoint from which they are spoken, and so they are misunderstood. The subject-predicate relation, the use of abstract terms, the disjunctive sentence, are useful ways of conveying answers to the kind of questions with which common sense concerns itself, and a unit-sentence of common-sense discourse, taken as a whole, performs its function well enough. But it does not follow, and it is not true, that the grammatical structure of the sentence conceals a true theory about the structure of the world, and that every verbal element in the sentence, taken separately, is a symbol for a distinct element in the composition of the universe."

If Hodges be on the right track here is there finally any hope of avoiding the morass of complete relativism? The linguistic analyst as such can offer little consolation on this point. He can instruct the reflective person in the art of becoming aware of his particular framework of reference. But the language philosopher has no categories for accommodating the fact that people choose to judge one set of fundamental principles and presuppositions better than another. Deliberations on the

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1H. A. Hodges, Languages Standpoints and Attitudes, pp. 18-20.
criteria used in passing judgments on the various proffered standpoints can be fruitfully resumed when it is realised that, as D. Emmet asserts, "metaphysics is an analogical way of thinking." By that is meant, "it takes concepts drawn from some form of experience or some relation within experience, and extends them either so as to say something about the nature of 'reality,' or so as to suggest a possible mode of co-ordinating other experiences of different types from that from which the concept was originally derived."  

The question still remains as to why one key concept is chosen and the others left. Emmet is ready with an answer. Explicitly likening "religious judgments" to "the basic metaphysical judgments," she contends that they are both "of the nature of total assertions; they are judgments of importance and significance which govern the development of a theory." Speaking directly to the question at hand she says,

"If you ask from whence are these basic judgments derived, I should suggest that they are derived predominantly from some particular type of experience, e.g. intellectual, aesthetic or moral, which has seemed to provide a clue in terms of which a Weltanschauung or philosophical attitude could be developed."  

Complete relativism may still be knocking at the door, however. Stephan Pepper, in expounding a position similar to Emmet's, a position he denominates "the traditional analogical method of generating world theories," argues that each "basic analogy or root metaphor" which can be developed into a "world hypothesis" accounting for most of life's facts is as good as  

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any of its fellows. World theories with comparable coverage of the facts are "autonomous," he declares. A further warning against the approach advocated by Emmet is sounded by another protagonist, John Wild. Affirming that "every philosophy begins with a value image already present in the mind which determines its point of view," Wild notes that the mind is often oblivious of this "value image." "If this guiding image is never clearly focused, as in most rationalistic systems, it takes the place of evidence," he warns. Yet another strike against Emmet's view where it entails the introduction of God into the scheme is forthcoming from the dialectical theologians. Exclaims Barth, "Wollen wir die Offenbarung wirklich von ihrem Subjekt, von Gott her verstehen, dann müssen wir vor allem verstehen, dass dieses ihr Subjekt, Gott der Offenbarer, identisch ist mit seinem Tun in der Offenbarung, identisch auch mit dessen Wirkung." Brunner begins Der Mittler with the declaration: "Gott kann nur durch Gott erkannt werden."

Are our key metaphysical analogies, then, totally relative, without insight into the nature of reality, misleading, and of ultimate irrelevance to the religious believer? To answer this

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3 Karl Barth, Die Kirchliche Dogmatik I, 1, Die Lehre vom Wort Gottes (München: Chr. Kaiser Verlag; 1932), 312.

4 E. Brunner, Der Mittler (Vierte, unveränderte Auflage: Zürich: Zwingli-Verlag, 1947), p.3.
question is to define the relation between philosophy and religion, and especially, for us, the relation between philosophy and Christianity. This definition will be determined in keeping with what has been said in the previous pages about the impossibility of any reflective thinker's avoiding a starting-point which (starting-point) is something more than that constituted by a supposedly universal philosophy of common sense.

In a discussion of "religious outlook and theory of knowledge" John Oman writes,

"Theories of knowing are not first demonstrated, and then the nature of reality deduced from them: But philosophers, like other people, form their views of the world from their whole intercourse with it and according to their widest knowledge and highest knowing; and, like other people too, they only use their reasoning powers to test, and sometimes merely to maintain, what, on other grounds, they already believe. Hence their religious, or perhaps their non-religious outlook, is primary, and their philosophy, even when sincerely used for its true end, is only a touchstone of it."¹

The late John Baillie argues similarly in his treatise on The Interpretation of Religion. He teaches that the science of religion, or theology, "stands in precisely the same relation to philosophy as does any other special science; which is to say that its task is one that is logically prior to the task of philosophy." Baillie goes on to comment that "the most effective way of puncturing ... superintellectualism is perhaps to point out how very obviously the determining factor in the formation of philosophical systems has again and again been the initial presence

¹John Oman, The Natural and the Supernatural (Cambridge: At the University Press; 1931), p.149.
or absence of religious faith in the philosopher's heart.¹ N. Kemp Smith,² and A. Seth Pringle-Pattison,³ are correctly cited by J. Baillie as holding virtually the same view.⁴

Emil Brunner also argues that man is inevitably and primarily a religious being. He claims that any civilisation or culture is determined by three factors: natural factors, the physical and spiritual capabilities of the people, and thirdly, "the spiritual presuppositions of a religious and ethical nature which not in themselves cultural, we might call the culture-transcendent presuppositions of every culture." He goes on to point out that this third factor refers to the fact that

¹John Baillie, The Interpretation of Religion, pp.37-38. He reports that "the discovery of this fact was part of the intellectual conversion of the greatest man of letters of the later nineteenth century. Tolstoy writes: 'However much privileged science and philosophy may boast themselves, asserting that they are the guides and directors of man's mind—they are not the directors but the servants. A ready-made outlook on life is always supplied to science by religion; and science only works along the paths indicated to it by religion. Religion shows man the meaning of life, and science and philosophy apply this meaning to various sides of life.'" (Baillie quotes Leo Tolstoy A Confession and What I Believe, trans. Aylmer Maude "The World's Classics" Series, CCXXIX /London: Oxford University Press: Humphrey Milford; 19217, p.235.)

²The Present Situation in Philosophy (Edinburgh: James Thin; 1919), pp.5, 27, 29.


⁴John Baillie, The Interpretation of Religion, pp.39-40. He also claims that D. M. Baillie argues for the same view in the latter's article "Philosophers and Theologians: an Irenicon," in the Expositor for July, 1923. However, the present writer has been unable to find any such article in any issue of the Expositor from 1913 onward.
"there are a number of fundamental basic questions regarding human existence which, in any case, must be answered and are answered, whether in a Christian or in a non-Christian manner. Such questions are the problem of being, of truth, of meaning, and so on. Whether one is conscious of them or not, these questions are present; they must be answered and the answer cannot be put off."

Now, linking together (a) what has been said a few pages back about every Weltanschauung being founded on a key metaphysical analogy taken from experience by which the rest of experience is interpreted, with (b) what has just been maintained about the impossibility of a thinker's avoiding tacitly or overtly the answering of questions bearing religious significance at the very beginning of his reflective activity, the conclusion may be drawn that a philosopher's key metaphysical category will most likely be taken from within his religious beliefs. Whatever has the highest priority in his life, whatever constitutes the ultimate concern of his whole existence, may be expected to provide or even become the key metaphysical analogy, the "guiding image," the basic metaphysical judgment by which or around which all aspects of his experience will be oriented. Paul Tillich, who is commonly recognised to be "the outstanding representative of apologetic theology at the present time" 2 puts the matter more eloquently in the following statement which we take the liberty of quoting at length:


"The philosopher, like the theologian, 'exists,' and he cannot jump over the concreteness of his existence and his implicit theology. He is conditioned by his psychological, sociological, and historical situation. And, like every human being, he exists in the power of an ultimate concern, whether or not he is fully conscious of it, whether or not he admits it to himself and to others. There is no reason why even the most scientific philosopher should not admit it, for without an ultimate concern his philosophy would be lacking in passion, seriousness, and creativity. Wherever we look in the history of philosophy, we find ideas and systems which claim to be ultimately relevant for human existence. Occasionally the philosophy of religion openly expresses the ultimate concern behind a system. More often it is the character of the ontological principles, or a special section of a system, such as epistemology, philosophy of nature, politics and ethics, philosophy of history, and so forth, which is most revealing for the discovery of the ultimate concern and the hidden theology within it. Every creative philosopher is a hidden theologian (sometimes even a declared theologian). He is a theologian in the degree to which his existential situation and his ultimate concern shape his philosophical vision."

This point has been found exemplified in Flint's actual procedure. Flint seriously felt that his methodology was in every respect analogous to that of the men who, in Great Britain at least, had established the model and set the norm for the scientific method in all fields, namely, the natural scientists. But it has been discovered after taking a close look at Flint's thought that he does not in fact abide by their scientific canons of a strict and impersonal objectivity as he goes about setting up his philosophy of religion. He always approaches the problems of religious philosophy as a firm believer in the Christian religion. His actual procedure is therefore as it should be; it is his theory that is misguided. Flint provides a clear example of the truth that religion and philosophy are inseparable. Try as he might he was unable to escape the truth that presuppositions carrying religious significance and even, for him

at least, derived from a particular religious tradition are inextricably woven into the warp and woof of a philosophy of religion, no matter what philosophical starting point might be chosen, common sense or any other.

From this general conclusion the following implication may be drawn:

Despite its inconsistency with his own theory as to method (but not inconsistent with the method he has been shown to have actually employed), Flint was right in defining the philosophy of religion as "the one general theological science," and in equating it with theology. He was correct in setting the goal of a merger of philosophy and theology. He was wise in seeing that if God were to be shown "to be the essence of all existence, the light of all knowledge," if a truly scientific Christian Theism were to appear, then philosophy must avail itself of a "theological-speculative use of reason," and theology, including Christian theology, must adopt a procedure which, while answerable to "facts and inductive results" is "essentially synthetic and speculative."¹

Flint has been found mistaken and inconsistent in thinking that he had, on the model of the physical sciences and with only the starting point of common sense, erected the substructure upon which to build the superstructure of a Christian Theism. He seems most of the time to forget when discussing theism (as distinguished from Christian Theism) his adherence to the Reformed doctrines of mankind's depravity, the supernatural uniqueness of

special revelation, and the witness and illumination of the Holy Spirit. The impossibility for purely philosophical reasons of his ever accomplishing such a theism has also been indicated. But we would suggest that within the Christian framework, using the special revelation of God known to Christians as the basis of an ultimate concern, finding in the Word of God the key metaphysical insight, it is entirely proper to organise and interpret the whole gamut of experience in a systematic and scientific fashion.¹ Philosophy and theology would then be engaged upon the same task and may naturally be expected to finally realise this fact.

Although there is no one "basic analogy or root metaphor" used by mankind the world over, there is some one that is used. There are no times when none is employed. Every man has a central organising principle of his experience to which he owes supreme allegiance and loyalty. In short, man is a religious being. He is also a reflective thinker. These two characteristics taken together mean, if the discussion of the preceding pages be allowed, that every man must also have a philosophy of religion. He must scrutinise ultimate concern around which other men have constructed their philosophy and he must step outside of himself as far as he is able in order to examine critically his own organising principle. These inquiries constitute philosophy of religion proper. The examination of one's own ultimate concern from the viewpoint of its being the authoritative standard of one's own life and system constitutes, or at least results in,


Such a study "is theological in the strict sense of the word; it is rational mind looking at what we may call theological facts and trying to reduce them to system and order." Thus, every man will have a philosophy of religion, but, and this is of great importance, it will not automatically be similar to the next man's religious philosophy. This fact is what Flint failed to fully comprehend. He had the insight that all men have a philosophy of religion, but he implied that at its lower level at least it was the same the world over.

At this juncture we prefer Brunner's approach when he proclaims at one and the same time both that Christianity is the only religion in the world and that there have always been many religions in the world. Barth's denigration of the *Imago Dei* in *Nein* is too extreme as well as, we believe, contrary both to the letter and to the spirit of Calvin's *theologia naturalis*.

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On the other side, Flint, although persuaded that "Christianity as thus the absolute religion is a religion sui generis," had an excessively optimistic notion of what Barth terms the Anknüpfungspunkt. Says Flint:

"The mental process in virtue of which we have the idea of God comprehends and concentrates all that is most essential in human nature. It is through bearing the image of God that we are able to apprehend God. Take any essential feature of that image out of a human soul, and to apprehend God is made thereby impossible to it. All that is divine in us meets, unites, co-operates, to lay hold of what is divine without us."¹

Flint's view was that "almost" all but not absolutely all general revelation was impossible of apprehension apart from a prior knowledge of special revelation. He felt, for example, that "all heathen religions comprise elements of truth, features of goodness, disclosures of God, means of spiritual life; and in so far they lead up to the absolute religion."² A safer route is charted by Brunner between the more extreme positions of Barth on one side and Flint on the other. Brunner recognises that "the Holy Scriptures teach us to understand all pagan religion from the standpoint of the revelation through Creation."³ The Apostle Paul teaches that God's original revelation "is a present reality—even when men turn its truth into illusion," explains Brunner. "Behind all religion, therefore, there lies, on the side of God, truth, communication, the testimony of the Creator-God to himself."⁴

¹Flint, Sermons and Addresses, p.291.
²Flint, Theliam, pp.68-69.
³Flint, Sermons and Addresses, p.291.
⁴E. Brunner, Revelation and Reason, p.262; he cites Acts 14:17; 17:27.
⁵E. Brunner, Revelation and Reason, p.262.
But at the same time Brunner wisely posits the other element of the dialectic, for he sees that it is "only from the standpoint of the Word of God" that we can view aright the "phenomenon of human religion." Thus he declares: "In all religion there is a recollection of the divine truth which has been lost; in all there is a longing after the divine Light and the Divine Love; but in all religion also there yawns an abyss of daemonic distortion of the truth, and of man's effort to escape from God."¹ In following Brunner, therefore, we are unable to assent to Flint's tenet that the God of special revelation must first identify Himself in general revelation. But within this "both ... and" scheme elaborated by Brunner it is possible, nevertheless, to accommodate the truth which we are maintaining that Flint rightly stressed, namely, that all men have a religion, a philosophy, and a philosophy of religion.²

Turning our attention to Christian religious philosophy, that is, to the scrutiny by the believer in Christ of the basic metaphysical judgments in terms of which his own Weltanschauung is ordered, it becomes clear that the religious philosopher will, upon the completion of his scrutiny, have also formulated his theology. He will have systematically worked out his conception of the ultimate concern giving meaning to all areas of his experience. Hence we can agree with Flint's equation of the philosophy of religion and theology.

¹E. Brunner, Revelation and Religion, p.265.

²"The question of religion, ... is a question, not merely of reality, but of the ultimate reality." (John Oman, The Natural and the Supernatural, p.26.)
Having gone this far there is nothing hindering us from going all the way by reaffirming his goal of merging philosophy and theology. It is ideally inconceivable that a Christian's examination and exposition of the organizing principle of his world view would lead him to construct a world view which excluded or altered his views on the organizing principle. If consistent, a thinker cannot both affirm and deny his views concerning the guiding image he uses in rendering his experience coherent. Rather will a person engaged in constructive philosophy need to keep his deliberations fully in harmony with the conceptual system he has so far worked out concerning the ultimate concern of his life. We will, to use Flint's phrase, want to employ a "theologico-speculative use of reason." Likewise will theology, as Flint stipulates, need to adopt a procedure which, while always answerable to "facts and inductive results," is "essentially synthetic and speculative." For, seen from the Christian's standpoint, Flint may sound like a rationalist metaphysician interpreting reality as analogous to the spheres of mathematics and logic, but he still has hold of an underlying truth when he asserts:

"If the idea of God be the most comprehensive of ideas, inclusive of all the categories of thought and implicative of their harmonious synthesis and perfect realization, all thought and experience must of its very nature tend to lead onwards to a fuller knowledge of God." 

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3 Flint, Aposticism, p.559.
The Christian theologian can and must formulate a Christian
Theism if he wants to co-ordinate all facets of human life with
reference to what he believes is the supreme category of exis-
tence. As Casserley says, "the Faith must seek to understand
itself, but it is equally, if subsequently, true that it must
then go on to understand everything else by interpreting reality
in terms of its own vision and from its own standpoint."¹

But we cannot go along with Flint when, forgetting that he
always approached philosophy from the Christian standpoint, he
allowed Reid's confident description of man's epistemological
pretensions to carry him off into the position which holds that
Christian Theology and Christian Philosophy, in order to begin
their activity, must receive their license from a system of thought
previously constructed by the natural reason. The following
statement by Flint epitomises his view on this: "For all men . . .
who have religious beliefs and especially for all men who have
Christian beliefs, these questions, What evidence is there for
God's existence? and, What is known of His nature? are of primary
importance. The answers given to them must determine whether
religion and Christianity ought to be received or rejected."²

¹J. V. Langmead Casserley, The Christian in Philosophy,
Christian Philosophy, pp.94-115, enumerates the Protestant,
Catholic, "Objectivist," "Anthropological," and "Phenomological"
objections to the view of a Christian Philosophy we are adopting.
He also gives a reply to each of the objections. Cf. Alan
Richardson, Christian Apologetics (New York: Harper and Brothers;

²Flint, Theism, p.6. Italics are ours.
It has been seen that Flint is here demanding what is both philosophically and theologically impossible.

Of course the problems which the old natural theology sought to solve will figure in an over-all-view-of things from the Christian standpoint. The "billiard-ball" notion of the natural world may be discarded, and Reid's and Flint's version of the beliefs of common sense may no longer be viable, Flint's favourable attitude toward a demonstrative rationalism in which metaphysical analogies are derived from the sphere of mathematics and logic may now be discounterenced, but the Christian still regards God as the Creator and Lord of all. By regarding God as the Creator and Lord of all the Christian apologist has an answer to the questions still being asked in one form or another by man everywhere: the questions concerning God's existence, nature, and relation to the world. These are still legitimate questions and the Christian's philosophy of religion must and can properly deal with them on a discursive basis because, as A. F. Smethurst shows from the testimony of the scientists themselves, contemporary science operates on three major presuppositions: "belief in the orderliness of the universe," "belief in the principle of causality or intelligibility in the natural world," and "belief in the reliability of human reason."1

1Arthur F. Smethurst, Modern Science and Christian Beliefs (London: James Nisbet and Co. Ltd.; 1955), pp.5-12. Cf. John Dillenberger's report on the implications of quantum physics for "the meaning of prediction, probability, and the laws of nature": "Frequently philosophers, theologians, and a few scientists have drawn the conclusion that strict causal laws are no longer operative in science and have therefore been abandoned. It is said that disorder lies beneath everything; that laws are but the imposition of categories upon chaos. In
We concur with Smethurst's contention that these assumptions necessary to science are warranted solely by the Christian faith:

"Nothing but the belief that the universe is the intelligible work of a rational designing Mind; nothing but the belief that God is a God of truth who has created the human reason; nothing but the belief in one single, creative Mind and Will, infinite in wisdom and power, yet showing diversity in unity; nothing but belief that the world is His creation, can justify the assumptions underlying modern science."¹

But in order to avoid the error committed by Flint, we must be careful to always place statements of the truth just enunciated by Smethurst in a context which makes it plain that, as W. A. Whitehouse asserts, "science does not teach us that the universe is created by a God, and then tell us on safe scientific grounds what we may safely believe about Him." Instead, says Whitehouse, "science teaches us a great deal about the universe itself, and it is therefore incumbent upon Christians to ask next: 'Can God the Father, who is revealed to us in Jesus Christ, be thought of as Lord and Creator of the universe now revealed by science?'"²

more moderate terms, it is said that the absence of rigid order leaves room for occasional occurrences outside what we recognize as order. But it is not legitimate to draw either of the above conclusions. The breaking down of the old rigid causal laws once ascribed to nature occurred, of course, through the fact that they could no longer be substantiated in current physics. But in many areas, a circumscribed concept of causality is still helpful." (John Dillenberger, Protestant Thought and Natural Science (London: Collins; 1961), p.275. Cf. A. D. Ritchie, Studies in the History and Method of the Sciences, pp.6-9, 186-208.


The position we are working towards here is essentially similar to that of Casserley when he argues that "the existential approach to the problems of religion and the existence of God is not really as distinct from and independent of the cosmological approach" as is often supposed. He realises that the cosmological type of natural theology is not strictly amenable to the scientific method (i.e., the method of natural science) since such arguments at most can only corroborate from another standpoint beliefs already held by the natural theologian. On the other hand, he is aware that "we must not distinguish too much between those who claim to infer the existence of God, as something which they find logically implied by finite and contingent existence, and those who claim to experience the existence of God as a reality implicit in finite and contingent existence." But he goes on to relate how existentialist philosophers have given opposite interpretations of whether God's reality is to be discerned as implicit in human existence. For example, whereas Kierkegaard takes the affirmative, Jean-Paul Sartre takes the negative reply to this question. As Christians we may say from the purely philosophical standpoint that the irreligious existentialists have a less satisfactory account of human existence to offer than the religious existentialists. But in order to be able to make this judgment upon irreligious existentialism we must assume the rational, inherent and objective meaning of existence. As Casserley points out, while existentialism

is a revolt against "high and dry rationalism" it is no whit less interested in "being ultimately rational about the meaning and purpose of human existence." "The essence of existentialism is to insist that our own intimate experience of existence in the world ... is the most vivid kind of experience of reality which we enjoy and that it constitutes the proper and necessary point of departure in philosophy," says Casserley.¹ But if we are to begin our philosophising with self-conscious rational existence we must assume that such existence is the ultimate fact behind all existence. To be able to assume this we must first have faith in God which comes through His Word. Once we have faith in God our faith in reason is sustained, which in turn strengthens our faith in God.

Now, keeping in mind more firmly than Flint did, the truth that the Christian philosopher always begins "from that point at which God's revelation sets him,"² we may again look to Flint for hints on the proper procedure in formulating a speculative theology and a philosophy which will finally coalesce by portraying God as "the essence of all existence, the light of all knowledge."³

(1) We can appreciate his intransigent opposition to Kutschlian phenomenalism.⁴

¹J. V. L. Casserley, Graceful Reason, p.87.
²E. Brunner, Revelation and Reason, p.393.
⁴H. R. Mackintosh records without bibliographical data the following utterance by Kutsch which the former designates, "an uncompromising statement of theological positivism": "we know God only in His effects upon us." (Types of Modern Theology, p.152.)
In order to establish the doctrine that the activity of a
metaphysician is "to construct a theoretic model drawn from ana-
logy from some form of intellectual or spiritual relationship
which he judges to be especially significant or important," Emmet admits that it must "be maintained that experience is not
only a spontaneous process of form creation, but arises out of a
relation to that which transcends the subject. The transcendent
may then be outside our categories; but that does not mean that
it is entirely outside our experience." To the extent that this
is an affirmation of epistemological realism Flint would heartily
agree. In keeping with his Common Sense Realism, Flint held that
both general and special revelation were to be classified as
"divine self-manifestation, . . . . God himself is the agent
and object of both; He makes known what would otherwise be un-
known, and what he makes known is himself . . . to the faculties
of man through certain media."^3

While disapproving of Flint's allowing nothing more than an
inferential knowledge of God, ^ we can count on Earth's and

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3 Flint, Sermons and Addresses, pp. 291-292.
4 Since Flint's last publication appeared in 1905, it can
hardly be expected that he would contemplate anything other than
the inferential knowledge of other selves. As late as 1917 the
"accepted theory" of the knowledge of other selves is described
by a philosopher of the stature of John Laird as that "any one
self is acquainted with others by a process of inference only,"
(Problems of the Self (London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd.; 1917),
p. 24.) Although Laird thinks "our direct acquaintance with other
minds, if it exists, is too fragmentary and ambiguous to be the
sure foundation of a theory," he feels that "to deny it in toto
is equally unjustifiable." (p. 27.) The theory he flatly rejects
is the one Flint espoused, namely, "that we infer the existence
Brunner's support in commending Flint's anti-phenomenalism.\(^1\) One must be wary, however, of going too far with the combination of Kierkegaardian existentialism and Ebnerian or Buberian Neo-Personalism which figures so prominently in contemporary theology. Brunner, for instance, whose assistance has been accepted more than once in the preceding pages has forcefully combined and presented the Kierkegaardian "Individual," who comes into true concrete existence when standing at the momentary juncture of time and eternity, with the Ebnerian "Person," whose being depends on confrontation with the divine thou.\(^2\) But Brunner's

\(^1\) Cf. the statements of Barth and Brunner recorded above, p.358.

\(^2\) "In election we first perceive the word thou, with the weight of eternity. I have called thee by thy name, thou art mine . . . Here one is face to face with his God as one thou confronting another. Here alone exists the 'individual.'" (Brunner, *Das Gebot und die Ordnungen*, p.285; quoted by P. Jewett, *Emil Brunner's Concept of Revelation*, p.69.) (The analysis of Brunner just given was a paraphrase of Jewett's analysis.)
great emphasis on the truth that all knowledge of God arises from a free act of self-disclosure in the divine-human encounter runs the danger of overlooking the fact that, as John Mcintyre points out with reference to Brunner, in revelation God "falls on the side of that which is revealed ... not on the side of that through which or whom God is revealing Himself." In other words, Brunner fails to counter-balance his affirmation of the theophanic nature of revelation with an appropriate recognition of the status and role played by the media of revelation. J. Baillie uses the phrase "mediated immediacy" in his efforts at formulating a concept of revelation which will avoid both the erroneous view that we know God in His essentia and that we know Him merely inferentially. Of course Baillie does not intend the exclusion of all inferential elements in our knowledge of God or other selves.  

1 John Mcintyre, "The Concept of Revelation" (Lecture notes mimeographed by author, New College, Edinburgh University; N.D.) p.14.

2J. Baillie, Our Knowledge of God, pp.178-198, 211-213. The descriptive phrase "mediated immediacy" is probably a happier contribution to the present topic than Baillie's implementation of the phrase. Despite his outright repudiation of a participative divinitas, Baillie has not quite shaken off the vestiges of nineteenth century immanentism. (Cf. Baillie, Our Knowledge of God, pp.228-239.) Moreover, D. C. Macintosh is no doubt justified in suspecting Baillie of being "unduly dogmatic" and given to exaggeration when the latter affirms that we not only know God's reality but "his personality, goodness, infinity, eternity, omniscience and omnipotence, not by inference but by direct acquaintance." (D. C. Macintosh, The Problem of Religious Knowledge (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers; 1940), p.183. Macintosh has reference to Baillie, Our Knowledge of God, pp.250-252, 258.
(2) Flint's appeal to common sense can be welcomed.

It is possible for the Christian theologian and philosopher to appeal to common sense without being reduced, as Flint was in the preceding chapter, to the position of claiming that only Christians possessed common sense because they alone were able to adequately infer God's existence from natural revelation. Similarly, the Christian thinker need not be dismayed when the latest protagonist of common sense as a philosophical starting-point asserts that "the Common Sense view of the world" has no room for God.\(^1\) The cases of both Flint and G. E. Moore provide an exemplification of the truth that the organising principle of a Christian's world view cannot be found by the method of common sense and within the realm of natural human experience. The Christian's ultimate concern is graciously given him through faith in Jesus Christ. From the Christian viewpoint, a man's existence is meaningless and without reason until God speaks to him through faith in Jesus Christ. But once a person is given through faith in Christ the guiding image in terms of which he will interpret all areas of experience,\(^2\) there is no excuse for him if, as he sets about his system building, he would remain oblivious to the assured results of critical philosophy and common sense. And if there was ever a Christian theologian and philosopher who endeavoured to keep his theorising within the bounds prescribed by

\(^1\)See above, p. 354.

\(^2\)Says Brunner, "If faith is the most intimate personal experience—experience of God through His Word—then there is as little reason to object to the validity of this experience in philosophical thinking as there is to object to the validity of any other experience." (Revelation and reason, p. 393.)
critical philosophy and common sense, it was Flint. Unfortunately he did not fully succeed because he failed to discern that some of what he was sure were common sense beliefs were actually assumptions brought in from his theological and cultural milieu. But this should not be allowed to detract from the merit of his steadfast opposition to the religious philosophies which in the second half of the last century were threatening to choke out what he considered to be a philosophy of religion grounded upon, and amenable to, the common sense principles of thought. His example may well be emulated today. Although Neo-Hegelianism on the one side and Ritschlian phenomenalism on the other side are relatively innocuous now, pantheism and phenomenalism are still very much alive. The Christian philosopher will not be dependent upon common sense for his initial starting-point, but from there onward he certainly must not disregard the dictates of common sense. Of course Reid's and Flint's enumerations of the common sense beliefs are outmoded now. A fact which should set us on our guard against neglecting to ascertain the extent to which any purportedly self-evident proposition is culturally relative. Indeed, it will be necessary to keep in mind that in the light of recent developments in mathematics and the physical sciences the common sense view of the world is usually unreliable. But even Flint realised that a distinction must be drawn between the un-critical and the critical beliefs of common sense. The common

3Cf. above, pp. 350-352.
4Flint, Scientia Scientiarum, pp.51-54.
sense view of the world must be critically refined, but that refining is impossible if we are at liberty to contradict at the same time all common sense beliefs. If the common sense view of the world is in every basic feature wholly false, then who could know this truth and who could communicate it? Or, as Stephan Pepper concludes, "Common sense continually demands the responsible criticism of refined knowledge, and refined knowledge sooner or later requires the security of common sense support."

To summarise this point: Contrary to Flint, the Christian should not imagine that his common sense entitles him to sit in judgment upon God's self-disclosures, but he will certainly need to use his common sense as he seeks to interpret the whole gamut of his experience in terms of his awareness of God. As Flint well saw, there is no justification for the Christian to place his philosophy, systematic theology, and philosophy of religion in poor repute by entangling them in philosophical systems which flout common sense.

(3) Finally, and as a corollary to the last point, we would do well to learn from Flint's pioneering efforts at working out a thoroughly scientific theological method.

We may have our reservations about Tillich's ontological theory, his theological norm("the 'New Being' in Jesus as the Christ"), his distinction between "ecstatic" reason and "formal" reason, and his "method of correlation," while admitting that he speaks for a great many of today's leading Protestant...

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theologians when he begins the first chapter of his *Systematic Theology* with the following statement:

"Attempts to elaborate a theology as an empirical-inductive or a metaphysical-deductive 'science,' or as a combination of both, have given ample evidence that no such attempt can succeed. In every assumedly scientific theology there is a point where individual experience, traditional valuation, and personal commitment must decide the issue."

Tillich goes on to explain quite plainly:

"If an inductive approach is employed, one must ask in what direction the writer looks for his material. And if the answer is that he looks in every direction and toward every experience, one must ask what characteristic of reality or experience is the empirical basis of his theology. Whatever the answer may be, an *a priori* of experience and valuation is implied. The same is true of a deductive approach, as developed in classical idealism. The ultimate principles in idealist theology are rational expressions of an ultimate concern; like all metaphysical ultimates, they are religious ultimates at the same time. A theology derived from them is determined by the hidden theology implied in them."

The question now arises, To what extent is Tillich's criticism applicable to Flint's conception of a scientific method in theology. To begin with, there is no denying that Flint had a fairly incomplete understanding of the existential element in the nature and apprehension of religious truth. This defect in Flint's thinking became obvious above in Chapter V during the review of his stipulations concerning the correct relationship in a scientific theological method between reason and religious fact or truth, and its evidence. The theologian (Flint) who, for example, will draw upon the truths of special revelation because, and only because, they are filled with "intrinsic light, of

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natural affinity to reason, of self-evidencing power" has surely missed the insight on the basis of which Tillich makes the above criticism. Yet there is a significant sense in which the "scientific theology" to which Tillich takes objection is not the kind of scientific theology Flint intended or actually did delineate. Flint's norm, in theory and in practice, was the two-fold norm of justification by faith in Christ and Scriptural authority. The claims Flint made about the scientific theologian's not accepting any doctrine simply on authority does not alter the above assertion. He always assumed the two-fold norm just mentioned when examining the "reasonableness" of any particular doctrine formulated by the Church. Hence, as argued in an earlier chapter, he was not an empirical theologian. Nor was he a "metaphysical-deductive" theologian. Despite the tendency in his theory to give the method of rationalism more allegiance than a Christian theologian should, as well as more than he (Flint) did in practice, he was (in practice) just as much of what is today called a kerygmatic theologian as is Tillich. In fact, the criticism which has been brought against Tillich for his willingness to de-emphasize the two-fold norm under discussion could not be brought against Flint. ²

Because Flint adhered so firmly to the two-fold norm of justification by faith and Scriptural authority his over-emphasis of the claims of reason with respect to religious truth or fact and its evidence did not vitiate as much as might have been

1 Flint, "Theology," p.263.
expected the contribution he made in the field of scientific theological method. Flint wrote at a time when, on the one side, Charles Hodge was representing theology as "the science concerned with the facts and principles of the Bible." On the other side and under the influence of Neo-Hegelianism, John Caird, and to a lesser degree his successors, such as William Hastie, were propounding a "truer" theological method purportedly founded on "a deeper and larger standpoint on which the Christian faith could be more essentially understood, and its inward and higher relations more directly grasped" than these men felt was then being done "either by the current rationalism or the traditional supernaturalism." Flint wisely charted a course between these extreme positions. For him Scripture was "the sole perfect standard by which truth and error . . . are to be separated in the religious consciousness of individuals and the religious history of the race." Yet, he wanted equally to stress that the theologian must study "all religious phenomena whatever." It is this healthy respect for all the sources of evidence for the reality of God which is at the same time a respect firmly anchored and guided by Holy Writ that kept in check his tendency toward rationalism in theological method without unduly restricting his earnest and praiseworthy attempt "to verify, analyse, combine and co-ordinate his notions as to spiritual things, so as to work them up into

3Flint, "Theology," p. 262.
a comprehensive, consistent, firmly established, adequately certified, naturally organized whole, a scientific system."
Hence, the fact that he advanced further than his contemporaries in delineating such a theological method makes his results all the more interesting and helpful.

The nearly sixty years since Flint ceased writing have not seen a slackening in the desire of theologians to be scientific, but it has witnessed an ever increasing willingness amongst theologians to admit the radical uniqueness of their method in a way for which Flint could have absolutely no sympathy. However, this should not divert us from appropriating the important contributions which Flint can make to the present situation in theology. No one has realised more clearly than Flint did that (1) the theologian must be convinced of the reality of his knowledge of God, (2) the theologian must not allow himself to be swept into espousing theories which common sense will not countenance, and (3) the theologian must be scientific, that is, he must avail himself of all the evidence of God's reality, he must accord to God's supreme and final manifestation of Himself the position of supreme and final authority in his system, and he must seek to construct a system with a method calculated to make "use of reason on appropriate facts as will best attain truth."\(^1\)

\(^1\)Flint, "Theology," p. 263.
\(^2\)Flint, "Theology," p. 263.
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