

The Historian's Craft and Theology in the Thought of John Warwick Montgomery

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Abstract: *This present study explores John Warwick Montgomery's epistemological model (historical empiricism) on the reasonable objectivity of the theological in relationship with historiography. Montgomery is of the opinion that objective, historical evidence for Christian truth has a great merit of openness to public inquiry; it cannot be easily ignored as the product of inner wish fulfillment. Objective facts are difficult to refute with ad hominem arguments—by the subtle or not-so-subtle redirection of the argument from the issue of the truth of the Faith to the psychology, needs, and personal hang-ups of the apologist.¹ Accordingly, this model suggests that by using reasoning proper to what is at the core of the historical inquiry, namely, facts and their interpretations, the investigator is forced by the logic of the historical enterprise to ask the right questions of the documents in order to arrive at a probable historical truth and also to diminish unnecessary historical criticism and skeptical creative verbiage of intellectualism concerning theology.*

John Warwick Montgomery has written scholarly works on a wide variety of topics. In this study we offer a painfully brief summary of a particular aspect of his thought. It is almost impossible to approach this subject in a few pages. However, our attention will be on historical theology² and Montgomery's position as to how historians can have access to past. For that task a few pages will suffice.

¹ John Warwick Montgomery, ed., *Myth, Allegory and Gospel: An Interpretation of J. R. R. Tolkien, C. S. Lewis, G. K. Chesterton, Charles Williams* (Minneapolis, MN; Bethany Fellowship, 1974), 18.

² By historical theology I mean Christological events, the Christ event or the economy of salvation (incarnation, passion, death, physical resurrection of Jesus with all its theological values) as we find in the early church, patristic theology, and Protestant classical theology with all its historical realism. There is a long debate about realism in theology concerning these events but in the absence of *greater* contrary factual evidence than what we find in the New Testament documents (as, for example, the well-known works of historian N. T. Wright or Martin Hengel and others indicate). I have to treat historical theology as any other historical issues as true with all its probable epistemological results. However, as we read the New Testament documents/texts the probability is *greater* on the side of the historical theological set of propositions given the fact that until now the negative of these propositions remain lower (*pace* Bart D. Ehrman). As Montgomery pointed out, "Evidential probability of a historical nature" *pace* Plantinga "is thus a friend to religious truth claims, not its enemy." T. McGrew, "Has Plantinga Refuted the Historical Argument?," *Philosophia Christi* 6, no. 1 (2004); John Warwick Montgomery, *Tractatus Logico-Theologicus* (Bonn: Verlag für Kultur und Wissenschaft, 2005), sec. 3.11821. Thomas R. Schreiner writes, "But we know that there is no such thing as uninterpreted history—written from a neutral standpoint. No historian has the secure Archimedean standpoint from which to declare the truth of history. All historians must adopt a certain perspective and select certain events and speeches in order to write history. Thus we should not reject the Gospels merely because they contain interpreted history and are written by people with a certain point of view. What we must decide is whether the story of Jesus of Nazareth presented and interpreted by the Gospel writers is credible, including the claim that he was raised from the dead." Thomas R. Schreiner, "New Testament Theology," in *New Dimensions in Evangelical Thought: Essays in Honor of Millard J. Erickson*, ed. David S. Dockery (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1998), 57.

Why do we need a methodological approach to the past called *historical empiricism*?³

Because claims to truth, in the study of strong religious and non-religious philosophical identities (such as Marxism or Marquis de Sade—whatever the objections be made), come from traditions that are claiming some kind of *historicity* (as Marquis de Sade wants back the “pagan gods”).

Montgomery observes that

sects and cults proliferate; philosophies of life, explicit and implicit, vie for our attention; and older previously dormant religions, such as Buddhism and Islam, are engaged in vigorous proselytizing. All about us ultimate concerns spring up, each claiming to be more ultimate, more worthy of our total commitment, than the other. In the university world the pluralistic cacophony is louder than perhaps anywhere else: materialism, idealism, pragmatism, communism, hedonism, mysticism, existentialism, and a hundred other options present themselves to the college student in the classrooms, bull-sessions, student organizations, political rallies, and social activities.⁴

Today the study of history is done in a broader sense and almost everything falls under the topic of history (from the very suggestive topics such as “a history of the devil” to the “history of science”) as a narrative construction and even at the popular level where untrained vain talkers are giving their advice on historical method and historical theology and so there are various “histories.” However, not everything that falls under the topic of these various histories is a part of the recordings of the past. For a certain reconstruction of history to be empirically proven

³ From the outset, we should note that Montgomery does not speak of naïve empiricism. As a realist who defends traditional historiography, C. Behan McCullagh says, “We cannot simply ignore the critics and assert naïve empiricism once again. We need a new, more sophisticated theory of historical knowledge to inspire us. I propose that it be called a ‘critical theory of truth.’ This name highlights the fact that credible history is history which has survived criticism and is rationally justifiable, not merely the product of an historian’s imagination. The theory is also a kind of critique, a critical analysis of historical judgment.” C. Behan McCullagh, *The Logic of History: Putting Postmodernism in Perspective* (London: Routledge, 2004), 8. Montgomery differs slightly from McCullagh on the correspondence theory of truth (Ibid., 9) where McCullagh gives two reasons for the theory to be unintelligible and he moves to a “correlation theory” of truth which is similar but, he argues more sophisticated. See Keith Windschuttle, *How Literary Critics and Social Theorists are Murdering our Past* (Australia: Macleay Press, 1996), 327-328. Montgomery argues as follows: “The very possibility of arriving at knowledge of the world requires the assumption that a relation of agreement, fit, or correspondence exists between true assertions about the world and the nature of the world as it actually is.” John Warwick Montgomery, *Tractatus Logico-Theologicus* (Bonn: Verlag für Kultur und Wissenschaft, 2005), sec. 2.38. And “The ‘weak’ correlation theory has been regarded as superior to the ‘strong’ theory because it supposedly does not involve a denotative theory of meaning (‘a term means whatever it denotes’); however, correspondences-as-correlation employs an implicit denotative meaning theory and requires a strong congruity relation between language and the world for its own acceptance.” Ibid., sec. 2.3813.

⁴ John Warwick Montgomery, *Faith Founded on Fact: Essays in Evidential Apologetics* (New York and Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1978), 39.

reasonably in the historian's investigation we need the proper questions that are not at least a pressure of the subjective tyranny of the investigator over the *content* of the documents. Not all the questions are the same and we cannot construct hypothesis that are not at least at the minimum level connected to some historical witnesses. In the study of history *ex nihilo* hypotheses are not to be considered. But how are we going to ask the right questions concerning historical theology? I am of the persuasion that an inclusion of historical theology in the debate for truth-claims is not only more than needed but proper historically, and veritable questions are implicit in what is considered to be historical in general. Montgomery comments that "it is almost a truism to state that theological problems have held a very prominent place in the thinking of the great Western philosophers,"⁵ and we can add more to this observation. The emphasis here should be on the fact that approaching history per se and historical theology we are not dealing with a pseudo-problem, such as esoteric verbiage without an empirical content to be verifiable or irrational romanticism where a cause is sustained by political manipulations of historical theories. At a minimum level it is something of a body of common knowledge and historical traditions of common inquiry. However, what follows is the question: what is significant in history? Scott Alan Metzger says that "significance in history revolves around factors that (1) point to connections between past events and subsequent major developments, and (2) are essential to long-term explanations of why the past happened the way it did,"⁶ Historical theology fulfils these human factors of significance and it should not be seen historically as a "metaphysical robbery" of man, as atheist philosopher Fernando Savater would say of theology in his *La vida eterna* thoughts. Although he wrote a few decades ago, Montgomery observes that "the twentieth century inherited the central historiographical dispute of the nineteenth century: whether history should be regarded primarily

⁵ John Warwick Montgomery, *The Shape of the Past: A Christian Response to Secular Philosophies of History*, rev. ed. (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany Fellowship, 1975), 187.

⁶ Scott Alan Metzger, "Magna Charta: Teaching Medieval Topics for Historical Significance," *The History Teacher* 43, no. 3 (May 2010): 347.

as a science or as an art. It is this problem which has especially occupied secular historians of our own day. But at the same time a new dimension has appeared in the historiographical scene: a serious attempt to relate theology to the historian's task."⁷ A-theological objectors should observe that even a-theological theorizing was made possible by "the disenchantment of the world" operated by Christian theology, in the words of historian and philosopher Marcel Gauchet.⁸ More than an appeal to the various objectors, historical theology of the New Testament stands for itself because it speaks of its factuality in terms of singular Christology of events and their appropriate interpretations. Thus, we are still concerned here with historical theology as a serious attempt to relate it to the historian's task. As scientist John Polkinghorne observed, commenting on Thomas F. Torrance, "We should recognize that there is no universal epistemology, so that entities can only be known in a manner that conforms to the way that actually are. You know something only in accordance with its nature, and you develop your knowledge of it as you allow its nature to prescribe for you the mode of rationality appropriate to it."⁹

**Exposition of Montgomery's historical thought and epistemological model:
(1) Epistemic historical theological probable certainty provided by historical enquiry.**

As a lawyer, philosopher, and theologian, Montgomery wrote extensively on theology, but at the heart of his thought there is a very important place given to historical method with specific emphases on *historical empiricism*. Montgomery's thought and *model* are symptoms of the problems and also an answer. Historical empiricism is referred to in order to explain the

⁷ John Warwick Montgomery, *Faith Founded on Fact: Essays in Evidential Apologetics* (New York and Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1978), 79.

⁸ Marcel Gauchet, *Le désenchantement du monde: Une histoire politique de la religion* (Paris, Gallimard, 1985).

⁹ John Polkinghorne, *Faith, Science and Understanding* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000), 181.

implications of historical factuality for theology and thus we speak of *evidentialism*.¹⁰ Since “theology is no longer sure if its data,”¹¹ historical empiricism reveals a specific methodology that connects theology to historical facts (a kind of critical realism and a means to justify theological certitude resulting from the subject of inquiry), and yet it reaffirms generally accepted principles for historical research. Montgomery defines history as “an inquiry focusing on past human experience, both individual and societal, with a view towards the production of significant and comprehensive narratives embracing men’s actions and reactions in respect to the whole range of natural, rational, and spiritual powers.”¹² The emphasis is on history conceived not as a closed body of knowledge but as an “inquiry,” and the historian’s task is viewed comprehensively, embracing all phases of past human experience, not merely certain traditional areas such as political and economic life.¹³ Given his propensity toward historical theology and church history, I suppose that Montgomery speaks in his definition of “natural, rational, and spiritual powers” and “all phases of past human experience” in order to approach church history and theology as fundamentally based on historical facts in the sense that he does not presume to be there, but they derive epistemologically from historical phenomena. Actually, Isaiah Berlin defended historical

¹⁰ Philosophers define evidentialism as follows: “What we call evidentialism is the view that the epistemic justification of a belief is determined by the quality of a believer’s evidence for the belief.” Richard Feldman and Carl Conee, “Evidentialism,” in *Epistemology: An Anthology*, ed. Ernst Sosa and Jaegwon Kim (Blackwell Publishers, Ltd, 2000), 170. Montgomery observes that “the facts that A. J. Ayer and other contemporary logical positivists defined—evidence too narrow in developing the principle of verification in no way vitiates the principle itself. Its principle merely states that if factual assertions are to be sensible, they must at least be subject to evidential testability, for that which is compatible with anything and everything says nothing.” John Warwick Montgomery, *Faith Founded on Fact: Essays in Evidential Apologetics* (New York and Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1978), xi. Also, “the Verifiability Principle still stands as the best available road map through the forest of truth-claims.” *Ibid.*, *The Suicide of Christian Theology*, 3rd printing (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 1975), 352, n 30. Whatever objections are made by skeptics, we cannot simply dismiss the content of historical theology which is founded on fact, as the New Testament documents are exemplifying.

¹¹ John Warwick Montgomery, *Faith Founded on Fact: Essays in Evidential Apologetics* (New York and Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1978), 39.

¹² John Warwick Montgomery, *The Shape of the Past: A Christian Response to Secular Philosophies of History*, rev. ed. (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany Fellowship, 1975), 13.

¹³ *Ibid.*

objectivity against general historical skepticism¹⁴ in the forms of determinism and relativism.

Why I believe that there is an advantage in Berlin's position to be mentioned is that he emphasizes the distinction between eye witnesses and regularities in history, or theories, criticizing a kind of trying to fit the facts according to preconceived theories, although given his philosophical position I am not that sure how he would rationalize material and immaterial factors in connection to history and theology, but it seems to me that given his historical epistemology he presents a more integrative attitude at the level of historical criticism. I am not trying to obtain a mere consent from known scholars on history for Montgomery's strong scientific terminology. As we have to admit, at the end all professional historians must admit scientific results. It is not enough to choose between bad and good historiography: historical investigation aims at the truth of the past.

Whatever objections may be raised against the purpose of historical inquiry if there is no assumption that we have access to past in terms of truth¹⁵ and objectivity to work with, what will the historian do? There are many suggestions from postmodernists, non-historians, and relativistic historians,¹⁶ but they end up in offering no solution for having access to the past. Instead,

Montgomery tries to offer epistemic justification for historical trust at the heart of which there is an

¹⁴ Isaiah Berlin, *Adevăratul studiu al omenirii* [The Proper Study of Mankind] (București: Editura Meridiane, 2001), 177, n 20 (he speaks ironically or indirectly of material and immaterial factors).

¹⁵ As Steven D. Mathewson agrees quoting philosopher Nicholas Wolterstorff, "As an interpreter studies the text, he or she must ask, 'What did the author intend to communicate with their set of facts?' Nicholas Wolterstorff claims, 'The issue is not whether one's interpretation is valuable in one way or another—exciting, original, imaginative, provocative, beneficial—but whether it is true.'" Steven D. Mathewson, *The Art of Preaching Old Testament Narrative* (Ada, MI: Baker Academic, 2002), 39.

¹⁶ "(1) What M. Foucault said: that the historical document does not represents the 'recollection' 'remembrance' of a society, but history represents a certain modality to confer a status and an elaboration of a mass of documents from which it cannot separate itself (a very vague and neutral definition of the exercise of the historian's job); (2) what R. Rorty said that 'culture will refer to more concrete realizations, paradigms, and less to the method ... the great man of science will not be the one who understood correctly, but the one who renewed the perspectives' (because his concept of solidarity involves a cognitive exercise of understanding objectivity in order to introduce the weaker version of objectivity); (3) what G. Vattimo said to be the 'naïve' (postmodernism as 'postposition') attitude toward things in order to preserve an open view toward all forms of the way in which our human nature moves to. Postmodernism at its core, in our view, is pathologically existential and rationally a-theological." Damian Liviu, "The Cognitive and the Existential Dimension of Theology and Historiography and its Societal Implications in the Post-modern Epistemological Dilemma," in *Religion in the History of European Culture: Proceedings of the 9th EASR Conference and IAHR Special Conference, 14-17 September 2009, Messina*, eds. G. Sfameni Gasparro, A. Cosentino, and M. Monaca (Palermo: Biblioteca dell'Officina di Studi Medievali, 2013), 16. 1/2.

insistence on understanding that in approaching the past of historical theology we have (1)

presuppositions in the method:

We accept the canons of historical method (i.e., scientific method as applied to historical phenomena) because such heuristic presuppositions assume as little as possible and provide for the objective discovery of as much as possible. Kant conclusively showed that all arguments and systems begin with presuppositions; but this does not mean that all presuppositions are equally desirable. It is better to begin, as we have, with presuppositions of method (which will yield to truth) rather than with presuppositions of substantive content (which assume a body of truth already). In our modern world we have found that the presuppositions of empirical method best fulfils this condition; but note that we are operating only with the presuppositions of scientific method, not with the rationalistic assumptions of Scientism (The Religion of Science)¹⁷

and (2) *the relationship between facts and interpretations:* “The declaration that facts are self-interpreting means that, to understand a given fact, one must ask: ‘Which conceptual Gestalt best explains it?’ and then allow the fact itself to judge among the competing Gestalts,”¹⁸ and “Ian Ramsey, following Wittgenstein, employs the analogy of *the shoe and the foot* to illustrate this point: the world of fact is like a foot and our interpretations of it like a shoe; what we seek is the ideal interpretation which will be neither too narrow (pinching the foot) nor too broad (fitting *any* foot and therefore not helpful in the particular case).”¹⁹

The general sketch of Montgomery’s thought is to be found in the principles of historical methodology. The issues raised by some skeptics are that the material of historical theology is not history as other material would be on the basis that it reflects something out the human ordinary, regular, and general historical experience as it happens to be the case with our present. But this is just a mere assertion: they presuppose that since this material contains theology, then it must be a result of man simply creating religious unreal images of the world and descriptions. Or, that man is objectifying himself without knowing it as if atheism is purely neutral or an objective starting

¹⁷ John Warwick Montgomery, *The Shape of the Past: A Christian Response to Secular Philosophies of History*, rev. ed. (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany Fellowship, 1962), 141.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, *Tractatus Logico-Theologicus* (Bonn: Verlag für Kultur und Wissenschaft, 2005), sec. 2.374.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, sec. 2.376.

point. But what kind of *content* constitutes a historical document/text? We cannot answer this question by naturalist and materialist presuppositions or by others, but only by investigating the document. As Edward J. Barnes wrote,

By many critics, nonetheless, work of a religious nature is open to suspicion, and more corroborative evidence of its validity is demanded than for any other kind of writing. The historian, however, proceeds in a strictly empirical manner, and applies identical standards to documents be they secular or religious. As to the Gospels, it is true, the historian disinterestedly cites as corroborative evidence works by contemporary and later ancient writers who were Christians. He would not be a good historian if he did not do this. Equally without prejudice he explores the pertinent ancient writings by non-Christian authors.²⁰

Thus, Montgomery indicates that “the historian will not create differing standards of evidence, depending on the alleged ‘importance’ of the event to be investigated (for example, requiring an incredibly high level of evidence for matters relating to the life of Christ, since much depends on that life; but being satisfied with lesser evidence in support of, say, the accounts of Herodotus).”²¹ To say that an a-theological starting point is free of the same objectifying that religion is guilty of, just because it is not working with specific religious imagery, is delusional, and only people with no care for methodological responsibility can make such claims.²² Actually, Montgomery argues constantly that

the only way we can know whether an event can occur is to see whether in fact it has occurred. The problem of “miracles,” then, must be solved in the realm of historical investigation, not in the realm of philosophical speculation. And note that a historian, in facing an alleged “miracle,” is really facing nothing new. All historical events are unique. . . . No historian has a right to a closed system of natural causation, for as the Cornell

²⁰ Edward J. Barnes, “The Dependability and value of the Extant Gospels Manuscripts,” in *The Shape of the Past: A Christian Response to Secular Philosophies of History*, rev. ed., ed., John Warwick Montgomery (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany Fellowship, 1975), 343.

²¹ John Warwick Montgomery, *Tractatus Logico-Theologicus* (Bonn: Verlag für Kultur und Wissenschaft, 2005), sec. 3.1171.

²² Montgomery quotes on the new concept of the natural law from Shailer Mathews (from *The Faith of Modernism*) a liberal theologian, who recognizes the proper attitude that even the modernist should have toward theological historical claims to events: “The Modernist assumes no a priori position relative to the historicity of the stories of miracles in the biblical literature. . . . He insists, however, that the records of such events should be tested by the ordinary processes of literary and historical criticism, and by the facts of science. That is to say, he asks not whether they were miracles, but whether they actually took place.” John Warwick Montgomery, *The Shape of the Past: A Christian Response to Secular Philosophies of History*, rev. ed. (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany Fellowship, 1975), 308, n 61.

logician Max Black has shown, the very concept of cause is “a peculiar, unsystematic, and erratic notion” and therefore “any attempt to state a universal law of causation must prove futile.”²³

The texts must be judged not upon philosophical speculative presuppositions of the a-theological objector, namely that theology by default denatures history, although there are cases in which religion and atheistic imagery denatures the data or is of a constructivist type, as Russian philosopher Nikolai Berdyaev observed of Marxism. There is also an implicit hidden bizarre objectivity required from these objectors: that the event in discussion to be credible to modern historian must repeat at least ones for each questioner! This hidden assumption is worse in its so-called scientific claims for objectivity than 19th century positivism. It is actually a pseudo-problem as the unprovable metaphysical assumption of the impossibility of historical theology.²⁴ We have to begin with research first since the material pretensions, for example, to eye witnesses in New Testament documents what actually happened as opposed to myths such as heathen mythologies or Gnostic fables and genealogies in the conjunction of Judaism with oriental philosophy (or whatever modern *eisegesis* of myths make of the findings in the first century Christian texts of the supraempirical) and as the exact terms of discussion as the texts appear *prima facie* to be presenting their case. Thomas F. Torrance comments that

our understanding and interpreting of historical events must be derived from their own actuality and verified on their own ground, in processes of thought in which we develop forms of knowledge appropriate to their distinctive nature. In all genuinely scientific operations we interrogate realities in such a way as to let them disclose themselves to us, so that they may yield to us their own meaning and be justified out of themselves, without the arbitrary application to them of criteria that we have developed elsewhere and subjected to our disposal. Here more than in the science of psychology we have to force the events to answer our questions, but here too we have to listen and learn from the realities through their own self-disclosure more than in natural science where we are concerned only with

²³ John Warwick Montgomery, *History, Law, and Christianity* (Calgary, AB: Canadian Institute for Law, Theology, and Public Policy, Inc., 2002), 61. In this book Montgomery argues by juridical method the approach to historical texts. See also Montgomery's *Tractatus Logico-Theologicus* (Bonn: Verlag für Kultur und Wissenschaft, 2005), sec. 3.1191.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, sec. 3.1183.

wordless phenomena. Indeed the closest analogy we have to historical inquiry is to be found in forensic interrogation with its mixture of compulsion and listening applied to spoken and written testimony in which we seek to determine what actually took place through a clarification both of intention and physical fact.²⁵

This parallels Montgomery's insistence upon legal principles applied to the investigation of historical theology. Now consider the following example of Berlin's position:

Yet if per contra a historian were to attempt to cast doubt on—or explain away—some piece of individual observation of a type not otherwise suspect, say, that Napoleon had been seen in a three-cornered hat at a given moment during the battle of Austerlitz; and if the historian did so solely because he put his faith, for whatever reason, in a theory or law according to which French generals or heads of state never wore three-cornered hats during battles, his method, one can safely assert, would not meet with universal or immediate recognition from his profession. Any procedure designed to discredit the testimony of normally reliable witnesses or documents as, let us say, lies or forgeries, or as being defective at the very point at which the report about Napoleon's hat occurred, would be liable to be regarded as itself suspect, as an attempt to alter the facts to fit a theory. I have chosen a crude and trivial instance; it would not be difficult to think of more sophisticated examples, where a historian lays himself open to the charge of trying to press the facts into the service of a particular theory. Such historians are accused of being prisoners of their theories; they are accused of being fanatical or cranky or doctrinaire, of misrepresenting or misreading reality to fit in with their obsessions, and the like. Addiction to theory—being doctrinaire—is a term of abuse when applied to historians;²⁶ . . . The true reason for accepting the propositions that I live on earth, and that an Emperor Napoleon I existed, is that to assert their contradictories is to destroy too much of what we take for granted about the present and the past. Any given generalization may be capable of being tested or refined by inductive or other scientific tests; but we accept the total texture, compounded as it is out of literally countless strands—including both general and particular beliefs—without the possibility, even in principle, of any test for it in its totality. For the total texture is what we begin and end with. There is no Archimedean point outside it whence we can survey the whole of it and pronounce upon it. We can test one part in terms of another, but not the whole.²⁷

This is an observation of methodology, and similarly Montgomery insisted in his writings, in order to maintain the historicity of theology, that even if theology and church history insists on spiritual factors that are not regular and general, if facts are to be found in favor of the particular (an event that does not fit a theory of the regular and general) then the general must yield not the

²⁵ Thomas F. Torrance, *Theological Science* (London: Oxford University Press, 1969), 331-32.

²⁶ Isaiah Berlin, *Concepts and Categories: Philosophical Essays*, ed. Henry Hardy, intro. Bernard Williams (London: Pimlico, 1999), 112-13; emphasis added.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 114.

event.

On the present scene, the condition of history as a discipline of knowledge where historians *still* have to defend²⁸ their object of study from scientism, literary critics, and social theorists who are murdering our past,²⁹ a recapture of the “how” question (methodological historiography³⁰) is necessary. René Girard, in his *Things Hidden since the Foundation of the World*, says,

It seems to me to be a sign of decadence in the human sciences to allow an invasion by the spirit of a certain literary criticism. Yet even in literary criticism there is nothing more banal and mystifying, finally than the obsessive emphasis on the infinite diversity of literary works, on their ineffable and inexhaustible character, on the impossibility of repeating the same interpretation—on the negation of any definite statement, in other words. I cannot see in this anymore than a huge unionization of failure.³¹

At least for this reason, the appeal to Professor Montgomery’s methodological position seems to me to be needed. Montgomery uses stronger scientific terminology in his method, than other

²⁸ In 1996 Alexander Koyre wrote that humanist erudition was the enemy of science, because humanists were more interested in texts and antiquity, than in nature and the progress of knowledge. However, over the last thirty years such a crowd of learned scholars has successfully challenged this claim that his statement now seems incredible. Pamela H. Smith, “History of Early Modern Science,” *Renaissance Quarterly* 62, no. 2 (Summer 2009): 360-36.

²⁹ See Keith Windschuttle, *How Literary Critics and Social Theorists are Murdering our Past* (Australia: Macleay Press, 1996), where he discusses the key concepts such as knowledge, truth, science, and disciplines. He observes that what the “new humanities” have in common is a criticism that “on each of these concepts . . . the Western tradition has got it wrong” (p. 7). However, Windschuttle noticed that what has happened with these new humanities and their approach as a post-epistemological trend in practice is that “in a growing number of Australian art schools, students complain they spend most of their time on theories of fashionable Parisians such as Jean Lyotard and Jean Baudrillard, but are not taught how to draw properly” (Ibid., 8-9). This is the subjective tyranny of postmodernism that somehow it demands to replace “facts” with “biographies” with the implicit assumption that at least the “biografized” person was a real historical figure. And the implicit gratuitously epistemological gap unabridged in postmodernism and its representatives is that it does not offer any reason why we should accept as real its biographical poetry to a factual world. The legitimate question of why we should accept “x” and not “y” to which postmodernists do not bother to answer is the explicit refusal to work with scientific methodologies. This reminds me of the 1967 Chicago debate between Professor Montgomery and atheist Madalyn Murray O’Hair where Montgomery tried to quote a positive statement of F. Kenyon on textual criticism on the New Testament and Madalyn Murray O’Hair could not help it but simply burst uncontrolled denying the authority of the textual critic saying that she does not care—and her whole denial was based on her subjective speaking so much of nothing. Postmodernism in this sense is a matter of *philosophical moods* not of factual investigation of the world. For the same reason, postmodernism is so much an *attitude* and not a method. It is similar to what Romanian philosopher Lucian Blaga observed of Nietzsche’s logic that hypnotizes the reader, but it does not demonstrate. All the proofs that he collects for his theses are transformed by his word into magic. Lucian Blaga, *Zări și etape* (București: Editura pentru literatură, 1968), 190.

³⁰ John Warwick Montgomery, *The Shape of the Past: A Christian Response to Secular Philosophies of History*, rev. ed. (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany Fellowship, 1975), 7.

³¹ René Girard, *Things Hidden since the Foundation of the World*, trans. Stephen Bann and Michael Metteer (Redwood City, CA: Stanford University Press, 1987), 40. We also argue with Peter Barry that “textual reading does not require a special kind of crypto-technique to unearth meanings which are encoded somewhere deep beneath the surface of the text. On the contrary, the meanings of works of literature are not usually hidden.” Peter Barry, “Re-thinking Textuality in Literary Studies Today,” *Literature Compass* 7, no. 11 (2010): 99.

historians, reminding us continuously that we have to “check the facts.” Checking the facts leads to interpretations, and there has been so much debate about the interpretation of events and surprisingly even scholars believe that interpretations of any event can be endless. I believe that today’s media of “TV talking” has easily created an image of pros and cons conditioning the conscious of the mostly uncritical viewers to believe in the “twins-ism” of journalism and historical method. Thus, for some, including various thinkers, the meaningless effort to investigate anything and to arrive at a proper interpretation seems obvious and to banter to historians’ approach to the past.³² However, this is a too easy way of dealing with *facts* and their *value* and reveals the epistemic ignorance of the banter. If there is a problem with knowing and understanding the past so with the present and we have to take ourselves seriously. As Montgomery observes,

If one removes his nose from philosophical speculation and breathes the fresh air of societal and personal decision-making, he will find abundant illustration that facts must carry their own interpretations (i.e., must arbitrate among diverse interpretations of the data). In the law, for example, the very possibility of justly deciding societal conflict on the basis of factual evidence is dependent on the ability of facts to speak for themselves. . . . Just where would crucial decision-making in law, history, or ordinary life arrive if facts could not be relied upon to yield the appropriate ‘set of inferences’ for their interpretation?³³

³² C. Behan McCullagh observes that for Hayden White and F. R. Ankersmit, “it is self-evident to them that historians’ accounts of the past reflect their personal interests and vision of past events; and they would think it nonsense to suppose that there is some objective standard of interpretation against which some accounts could be judged biased and others not.” C. Behan McCullagh, “Bias in Historical Description, Interpretation, and Explanation,” *History and Theory* 39, no. 1 (February 2000): 39. However, he argues that “historians have long been aware that the data available to them have often been selected by archivists for certain purposes, and that written documents reflect the concepts and interests of their authors. *Their response has been not to take data at its face value, so to speak, but to construct explanations of its origins that will account for its features as fully as possible.* They then look for coherence among the various explanations to decide what really happened. If the English describe the Battle of Waterloo as a great victory for Wellington over Napoleon, and the French describe it as an unlucky defeat thanks largely to the Prussian army which came late in the day to support Wellington, historians have little difficulty in working out what really happened, and why the accounts differ as they do. Historians use their own language and beliefs, both general and historical, in arriving at these explanatory accounts. *If the evidence is extensive and varied, and one explanation of what happened is far superior to any other, then historians quite rationally judge it likely to be true.* For it seems likely to be part of the ideal explanation of our observations of the world, which is true if the things in the world are such as would produce all the possible observations the ideal theory entails.” *Ibid.*, 60; emphases added.

³³ John Warwick Montgomery, *Faith Founded on Fact: Essays in Evidential Apologetics* (New York and Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1978), xxii-xxiii.

It is surprisingly interesting that the present popular level of discussion with its alcoholism of information from non-informed people who do not labor in the scholarly field was coined by the scholars who dealt in a loose manner with things that cannot be understood simply by pointing the finger—especially in the field of church history and theology. Recently, Emily Robertson commented that

the education system should not promote a wholesale skepticism about knowledge since the widespread citizen lack of trust in knowledge systems has potentially high costs, both to individuals and to the public at large. On the other hand, students as future citizens and individual knowers do need to learn how not to be gullible and to be critical consumers of views distributed by established practices and institutions. Which sources are to be trusted and why? What are the factors that degrade the credibility of scholarly communities that merit reform, sometimes through public policy? Who has been included and who excluded in the production and dissemination of knowledge and with what outcomes?³⁴

She agrees with historian Kevin M. Kruse, who has argued in *The Real Loser: Truth* (New York Times), that

decline of public trust in institutions and professionals since 1970 has abetted manipulation of citizens by politicians who have determined that they can safely disregard the facts. Understanding why the results of scholarly inquiry can be worthy of trust means that students need to know more than is commonly the case about how knowledge is created. Trickle-down versions of sophisticated views of the social construction of knowledge can lead to the belief that it's all just made up to accord with someone's political agenda. Or deeply rooted political and religious views can lead to an unwillingness to accept research findings that appear to conflict with them.³⁵

In such a case the insistence upon rigorous methodologies and facts would clean the mess of so much gratuitous opinions and the excessive verbiage made by people who are determined to have their own show instead of accepting a conclusion of a rigorous research where interpretations are arbitrated by the facts not by unjustified opinions. Thus, we agree with Montgomery that “the historian differs from other scholarly inquirers not in that he limits himself to the past while they study the present, but in that he focuses his attention on the past, and brings resources of both

³⁴ Emily Robertson, “The Epistemic Value of Diversity,” *Journal of Philosophy of Education* 47, no. 2 (2013): 306.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

present and past to bear upon the past in an effort to understand it. The historian is concerned to understand the past as a meaningful phenomenon. The historian, in other words, is willing to sacrifice his own personal needs and goals in the present to understand the needs and goals of those who cannot articulate them any longer. ... The student who is a slave to his own personality will face an insuperable barrier to understanding the men of the past and the issues which moved them.” However, subjectivity is not a handicap of the historian. Quoting J.W.N. Watkins, Montgomery agrees that “though the historian needs empathy with her subject-matter, it does not follow, as existentialist historians claim, that the past is undiscoverable apart from a ‘life relation’ between the historian and what she is investigating—otherwise it would be the case that to understand Genghis Khan the historian must be someone very like Genghis Khan.”³⁶ This is quite different than the subjective methodologies that are actually “autobiographies” of the person who argues. Criticizing Raymond Aron, Montgomery says that historical relativism offers, on the other hand, no satisfactory alternative approach; in Aron, we particularly see the debility of this position when carried to its logical conclusion, for decision itself becomes an absolute, my choice becomes as good as yours among “the plurality of systems of interpretations,” and each individual historian becomes his own god of history.³⁷ Recently, in Romanian historiography, historians of imagery Lucian Boia³⁸ and Neagu Djuvara,³⁹ who studied under Raymond Aron, both maintained forms of

³⁶ John Warwick Montgomery, *Tractatus Logico-Theologicus* (Bonn: Verlag für Kultur und Wissenschaft, 2005), sec. 3.1111.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, *The Shape of the Past: A Christian Response to Secular Philosophies of History*, rev. ed. (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany Fellowship, 1975), 85.

³⁸ Lucian Boia, *Pour une histoire de l'imaginaire* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1998). Sometimes we find a positive tone in Boia's writings, and he affirms that being conscious of subjectivity and relativism (“beneficial relativism,” as historian Alexandru Zub observed) should not puzzle the historian. Instead, he should become more rigorous, but Boia did not express clearly methodologically where we can draw the line between constructivists of history, such as Marxists and communists, and others such as legends, fables, mystics, etc., and the professional discourse without which none can make a step further in the historical research or to able to choose between alternatives. See Alexandru Zub, *Oglinzi retrovizoare, Istorie, memorie și morală în România. Alexandru Zub in Dialog cu Sorin Antohi*, Editura Polirom, Iași, pp. 178 -79. The problem with Boia and Djuvara is that they use historical professional exercise in order to relativize the intelligibility and objectivity of history—which is quite contradictory.

historical relativistic approaches of events in which students are taught more about how are they are programmed as humans to think in terms of imagery and respectively how to “feel” and have empathy with the subject in order to understand. We do not develop here a criticism of both approaches,⁴⁰ as I addressed these issues on another occasion, but we refer to Montgomery who agrees with an historian of the Middle Ages Johan Huizinga that the

strongest argument against historical skepticism is that man who doubts the possibility of correct historical evidence and tradition cannot accept his own evidence, judgment, combination, and interpretation. He cannot limit his doubt to his historical criticism, but required to let it operate on his own life. He discovers at once that he not only lacks conclusive evidence in all sorts of aspects of his own life that he had quite taken for granted, but also that there is no evidence whatever. In short, he finds himself forced to accept a general philosophical skepticism along with his historical skepticism. And general philosophical skepticism is a nice intellectual game, but one cannot live by it.⁴¹

Actually, Karl Popper, who has many more valuable words to say on historical method, writing about the myth of framework is of the opinion that

criticism is the engine of the growth of knowledge. ... It is of the utmost importance to realize that a bad problem and an erroneous conjecture are very much better than none. At the same time we must realize that this is so because we criticize our conjecture from the point of view of their adequacy. That is to say, their truth, their significance and their relevance. That we constantly have their truth and their relevance in mind is perfectly compatible with the fact that many conjectures may appear to us to be true at one stage may be discovered at a late stage to be erroneous. New documents may force us to interpret old documents. Or they may raise new problems. And in the light of a new problem an inscription that previously appeared insignificant may assume a completely unexpected significance. This solves a famous, but, I think, not very deep methodological problem—the problem of historical relativism.⁴²

³⁹ Neagu Djuvara, *Există istorie adevărată? [Is there Truthful History?]* (București: Humanitas, 2004).

⁴⁰ What is striking is that these theories imply something more for the historian (especially Neagu Djuvara’s position of “existential hermeneutic,” *ibid.*, pp. 56-57) than what is usually called objectivity in historical studies. I already quoted Montgomery on that “life relation” that requires existentially something more than the scientific objectivity itself, and it leads the historian nowhere. For Montgomery’s treatment of Raymond Aron, see *The Shape of the Past: A Christian Response to Secular Philosophies of History*, rev. ed. (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany Fellowship, 1975), 94-95. Nicholas Rescher argues that objectivity “is a matter of how reasonably one manages to proceed within the context in which one operates: namely, by doing that which any rational person would do in the particular conditions and circumstances at issue.” Nicholas Rescher, *Objectivity: The Obligations of Impersonal Reason* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997), 32.

⁴¹ John Warwick Montgomery, *The Shape of the Past: A Christian Response to Secular Philosophies of History*, rev. ed. (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany Fellowship, 1975), 139-140.

⁴² Karl Popper, *The Myth of the Framework: In Defense of Science and Rationality*, ed. M. A. Notturmo (London: Routledge, 1997), 142. Montgomery agrees in many aspects with Popper, but he comments on falsifiability:

Montgomery holds to the fact that empirical or scientific method is a valid way of approaching truth because it alone can accomplish to the satisfaction of all what the other methods cannot.⁴³ He says that this should be the case “not only do its results not need to be tested for error independently, but it is itself capable of determining what authority to follow and what common sense beliefs and presuppositions to hold.”⁴⁴ He agrees with others that the evidence in science is open to scrutiny to all, and if a scientific result is to be refuted, it must be refuted by the same kind of evidence. If the experimental results are favorable to a theory, everyone must, in spite of extra-scientific considerations, regard the theory as more acceptable than it was previously. It is not because someone says so (authority); not because of any ethical or emotional reasons (faith); not because of any feelings of certainty (intuition). It is because the evidence is of the kind that compels assent.⁴⁵

Montgomery is well aware of the implications of his strong scientific terminology which led some of his critics, from the presuppositionalist theological circles, such as Greg Bahnsen, to say that he holds to an obsolete *positivism*.⁴⁶ However, Gary Habermas defends Montgomery’s

“Falsification is indeed vital, for it clears the field of chimerical players in the game of truth.” John Warwick Montgomery, *Tractatus Logico-Theologicus* (Bonn: Verlag für Kultur und Wissenschaft, 2005), sec. 2.921; and “However, since there are in theory an infinite number of possible worldviews, to eliminate even a significant number of them will never, by process of elimination, yield the true worldview (if such there be),” *Ibid.*, sec. 2.922; also, “Moreover, as in Popper’s own case, exclusive concentration on falsification leads to a perpetually tentative view of the world contradicted by the day-to-day necessity of decision making,” *Ibid.*, sec. 2.923; as he quotes philosopher Stephen Toulmin: “Popper’s own philosophy of science had this element of paranoia in it. Because what he used to teach us is that the nearest thing to a true theory is one that hasn’t betrayed you yet,” *Ibid.*, sec. 2.9231.

⁴³ John Warwick Montgomery, *The Shape of the Past: A Christian Response to Secular Philosophies of History*, rev. ed. (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany Fellowship, 1975), 265.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ *Ibid.* See also n 17 on p. 301.

⁴⁶ Greg Bahnsen did not pay attention to what Montgomery wrote, for reasons given in his christocentric philosophy of history, in the *Shape of the Past*, “Thus the historian who is a Christian will be unafraid to inject his own personality into his writings; he will not make the mistake of the ‘scientific’ historians who attempt the impossible task of writing complete impersonal history. Moreover, he will resist the temptation to which positivistic historiography has succumbed: the reduction of human history to a product of ‘trends’ and ‘forces.’” *Ibid.*, 148. We can refer for Montgomery’s position to other more or less secular references. Karl Simms comments the following on Paul Ricoeur: “But ‘the problematic of a historical science does not coincide with that of a natural science.’ ... A historical science does not aim at *the* truth, but at *a* truth that is valid: ‘the validity of the interpretations made in psychoanalysis is

position as follows:

Bahnsen is certainly correct that contemporary philosophy has moved far beyond the positivism of earlier this century. We could also add a further point here. The vast majority of recent historians and philosophers of history also reject the view that historical occurrences are self-interpreting, brute facts. Facts derive their meanings from their contexts, along with other considerations. Among these are human factors, which always enter into historiography, since there are usually multiple perspectives. Prejudices, biases, and ordinary preferences affect our interpretations in all areas. But Montgomery is well aware of the dynamic interactions between data and theories, between the naïve understanding of facts being “self-interpreting” and the Peircean concept of abduction and all that goes with proper theological theorizing.⁴⁷

subject to the same kind of questions as the validity of a historical or exegetical interpretation.’ ... These are questions along the lines of ‘is there a weight of evidence to suggest that this is plausible?’ rather than ‘can you prove this to be true?’ This distinction between the singularity of scientific truth as opposed to the plurality of historical truth is something to which Ricoeur returns when he examines the status of historiography (history writing) in relation to narrative. Psychoanalysis is, then, like history in that it is not *verifiable*, but instead derives its validity from whether or not it can be shown that what it describes is historically motivated. ‘Motivated’ means that there is a reason that is the probable cause of someone acting in a certain way. But then what differentiates psychoanalysis from history as such? The difference is that the province of history as such is to discover any motivation behind behavior, whereas psychoanalysis is limited to the field whereby the motivation is desire.” Karl Simms, *Paul Ricoeur* (London: Routledge, 2003), 50-51. However, Paul Ricoeur with all the complexities of his approach to hermeneutics is in favor of historical knowledge although he does not use a strong scientific terminology as Montgomery does. Paul Ricoeur’s suggestions are toward historical knowledge, and I believe that he keeps the same thought also in his late work *La mémoire, l’histoire, l’oubli* (Paris: Seuil, 2000); although this work is more intricate with implicit meanings. Actually, *Histoire et vérité* endorses historian Marc Bloch’s apologetics for the historian’s craft. A pertinent investigator at maturity is growing in overcoming his “bad subjectivity,” educating it by the historical material that he investigates, as Paul Ricoeur agrees in his *Histoire et vérité (History and Truth)* in the first chapter of the book on objectivity and subjectivity in history. And theologian David Ford says that in the hermeneutics of suspicion Paul Ricoeur “gave priority to the hermeneutics of retrieval—yet he never forgot the radical question of suspicion.” David Ford, *Theology: A Very Short Introduction*, 2nd ed. (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2013), 138. Of course, but one of the theses in *Histoire et vérité* is that the objections raised against *l’objectivité historique* do not dissolve the object of the historical inquiry making way to the specific type of objectivity of history among other objectivities. Paul Ricoeur, *Histoire et vérité*, 2nd ed. (Éditions du Seuil, 1964 [first edition 1955]), 32.

⁴⁷ Gary Habermas, “Greg Bahnsen, John Warwick Montgomery, and Evidential Apologetics,” *Global Journal of Classical Theology* 3, no. 1 (2002): 3. See also Ronald Wells, *History and the Christian Historian* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1998), 76-78; where he discusses briefly Montgomery’s early reception and controversy. Also, reasoning by presupposition, Cornelius Van Till, *Christian Apologetics* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1976), 61-65. We could refer to many other opponents from the theological presuppositionalist camp (e.g., Carl F. H. Henry, Ronald Nash), but it just seems to me generally speaking that the opponents do not make sense: if we refer to church history and historical theology any investigation of the claims that are foundational for theological belief, purely on factual epistemic grounds and methodologically has nothing to do with merely presuppositionalism as to begin with. In this case, if someone wants to establish historical truth what will do is to presuppose implicitly (in a hidden manner) the facts from which we presuppose a worldview, facts from which were informed from the past about certain things that determines us to presuppose, since we cannot presuppose anything we dream and to expect to be treated reasonable by our neighbors. Presuppositionalism makes sense as any other epistemic position only in connection to our existence and that relates to facts. Thus, covering facts, but verbally affirming them as a starting point it means that the opponents of historical empiricism actually presuppositionalize facts. And if there is no factual content to be informed with, what will presuppositionalism look like? What will the presuppositionalist presuppose? In working with historical facts presuppositionalism is not empty in its approach: it is not detached from “factness.” It is parasitic on facts that are denied chronologically to start with and then are referred to for presuppositionalistic content. For that matter I consider the assertion of professor Moreau in response to Montgomery a merely methodological excuse (a dialog that took place in 1965): Montgomery listed several historical facts concerning the Christian faith saying that it is “premised upon the fact” and Moreau answers

Writing about empiricism Montgomery comments that the difference between rationalism and empiricism lies in the fact that whereas rationalists attempt to deduce their worldviews from their presuppositions, empiricists use their presuppositions only to justify investigation of the universe, and this investigation provides the data for their worldview.⁴⁸ Montgomery agrees with E. A. Burtt: “But to substitute for thoroughly empirical process of the improvement and social correction of the senses a speculative apriorism that flatly contradicts the immediate testimony of sense and places its objects in spatial relations wholly different from those in which they are sensed, can only lead, if carried out to its logical conclusions, to the complete confusion and mystification of science.”⁴⁹ An important ramification of the scientific method should be noted at this point: nothing is certain (other than the presuppositions of empiricism and the data with which the empiricist works, by definition). Thus one must make his decision on probability, for the conclusions of empirical method are always hypothetical (to varying degrees of course, depending

that “I couldn’t do that, because you are beginning with the assumption that it did take place.” John Warwick Montgomery, *History and Christianity* (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 1965), 108. Well, if we all begin with the assumption that everything we say in history did take place, then we do not do history. We would not be able to choose between presuppositions (mere assertions) and facts (facts as evidence established by rigorous scientific approach to the past). Since all people can claim presuppositionally kinds of authority for their point of view in the absence of any historical referent, we are truly murdering our past by our gratuitous assumptions. If we engage in calling facts presuppositions then we do not have an excuse for being taking seriously: Cornelius van Till argues that “it is in vain to speak about the fact without speaking of the meaning of the fact. For factness of the fact is to any mind that deals with it that which he takes it to mean.” Cornelius Van Till, *Christian Apologetics* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1976), 95. However, Keith Windschuttle rightly observes that “philosophers usually approach from the abstract end of the spectrum by asking questions to do with how we justify our beliefs or whether we can know anything for certain. Historians often start from the position that we actually do have knowledge and a high degree of certainty about many aspects of the past. They then seek to justify why this is so, or to respond to objections from those who claim that historical knowledge is not well grounded.” Keith Windschuttle, *How Literary Critics and Social Theorists are Murdering our Past* (Australia: Macleay Press, 1996), 328. New Testament scholar D. A. Carson analyzing the “new hermeneutic” said, quoting J. A. Passmore, “Finite human beings may know truly, even if they cannot know exhaustively. The study of history is the study of objective phenomena, akin to geology if not to physics, as Passmore has brilliantly argued. It follows, says Carson, then, that the new hermeneutic perform ‘what is true for me,’ not ‘what is true.’ Theology proper becomes impossible.” D. A. Carson, “Hermeneutics: A Brief Assessment of Some Recent Trends,” *Themelios* (January 1980): 15. This is not the case only with historical theology, but with historical documents of any kind.

⁴⁸ John Warwick Montgomery, *The Shape of the Past: A Christian Response to Secular Philosophies of History*, rev. ed. (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany Fellowship, 1975), 266.

⁴⁹ E. A. Burtt, *The Metaphysical Foundations of Modern Science* (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 2003 [1924]), 319.

upon the strength of present evidence and the probability of relevant new evidence arising).

Montgomery admits at least two presuppositions, in method, that (1) *a factual world exists* and (2) *the inferential functions of the human mind are valid*. If presuppositionalism is a proper epistemological position, then everything else would be wrong even before the argument begins. Montgomery's historical empiricism is based on empirical *probabilities* and his presuppositions are methodological, they are not expressed gratuitously directly against the content of historical documents. The fact that he uses strong scientific terminology for analyzing historical data does not mean that he holds to absolute proofs as a result of the so-called methodological positivism.⁵⁰ Nevertheless, it does not mean that there is no historical truth supported with probable conclusions as it happens to be in other areas of our life and other disciplines. Since there is no way of obtaining in the realm of history absolute certainty (as in formal logic), Montgomery says that we can rest with the probable. Not possibility, but probability. Philosophically, in our contingent universe everything is possible. In historical studies if there is anything of factual nature it should be only

⁵⁰ Many historians believe that a strong scientific terminology (facts, evidence, verifiability, and empirical) in the field of history implies obsolete positivism and backward methodology. Montgomery says that instead of purifying historicism from its own humanistic scientism and rationalism, the anti-positivists throw the most important discovery that historicism had to offer: the inductive method. Ibid., *Încotro se îndreaptă istoria?* [Where is History Going?] (Oradea: Editura Cartea creștină, 1996), 179. Consider the following: "Like the scientist, the historian employs logic, collects facts, sets forth explanatory constructs to explain the facts, tests the constructs against the facts, and accepts those explanations which best accord with the totality of the factual situation (Barzun)," Ibid., *Tractatus Logico-Theologicus* (Bonn: Verlag für Kultur und Wissenschaft, 2005), sec. 3.11; "The historian cannot engage in repeatable experiments because of the nature of historical subject matter, but, as we have seen, neither can all scientists (palaeobotanists, astronomers dealing with distant galaxies no longer in existence); and for precisely the same reason," Ibid., sec. 3.113; "The historian's conclusions, like those of the scientist, are open to examination and criticism by others," Ibid., sec. 3.114. The strong scientific terminology used by Montgomery must be employed because it describes exactly the principles of historical inquiry and there is nothing outdated about it. Postmodernists who "say that the patterns or events and of social relations that historians describe exist only in the historians' minds. They cannot really be observed in the world, neither through historiographic evidence nor in historical events." C. Behan McCullagh, "Colligation," in *A Companion to the Philosophy of History and Historiography*, ed. Aviezer Tucker (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2008), 158. They are self-contradictory, and in order to arrive at this conclusion they affirm Montgomery's observation which is true that "to prove that what we perceive with our senses is real, we would have to collect and analyze data in its behalf, but we would then already be using what we are trying to prove." John Warwick Montgomery, *Faith Founded on Fact: Essays in Evidential Apologetics* (New York and Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1978), 53. The question is how any postmodern, such as Keith Jenkins with his metahistory and his opinion that facts such as *dates* are true but trite, can use reasoning that is denying the exact denial that he wants to affirm against classic historiography and the principles of historical investigation and then to have the pretensions to be accepted in his position as true? Now postmodernism is a post-position trend. They express much more the naïve poet who does not have any epistemic weight on his shoulder. This is for sure more than a trite fact.

that which is related to historical events. For that matter a simple (but heated) example will suffice: Islamic theology in addressing historicity claiming to correct and touch up historic Christianity by the *qara'a* is purely a priori. Simplistic thinking forces us to say that historically chronology does not favor a priori assertions about an historic event that can be established as such by historical research independent of the Islamic a priori religious assertions. The “apriorisms” are read back into the past, and there is no historical support for going backwards methodology unless we rest with gratuitous metaphysical religious claims. But then are we doing history? The margins of interpretations are traced by facts. Philosophy has no rest (depends on the philosopher). How much can we get in our interpretations if we want to cross beyond facts? There can be innumerable interpretations. However, after checking the facts it is reasonable and rational to choose only those interpretations that will “fit the facts.” Personal conviction can be based on “historical uncertainty,” in the absence for the historian of absolute universal empirical factual knowledge. But this is an epistemological route to knowledge and truth, empirically probable in the realm of historical facts: “the epistemological route does not determine the value of the target, inasmuch than utilizing an imperfect map will not lead us into a city that has the same imperfections as the map.”⁵¹ The skeptic may object saying that historical truths are insufficient for a foundation for faith because of their relative degree of certainty and the very nature of faith requires absolute certainty for its foundation and that only a priori has apodictic certainty. Montgomery answers:

But how do we choose among a priori positions? Each religion has its own a prioris, and many of the most fundamental tenets contradict those of other faiths. Without an objective criterion, one is at loss to make a meaningful choice among a prioris ... the basis is only of probability, not of certainty, but probability is the sole ground on which human beings can make decisions. Only deductive logic and pure mathematics provide ‘apodictic certainty,’ and they do so because they stem from self-evident formal axioms (e.g., tautology, if A then A) involving no matter of fact. The moment we enter the realm of fact, we must depend on probability; this may be unfortunate, but it is unavoidable.⁵²

⁵¹ Ibid., 166.

⁵² Ibid., *The Shape of the Past: A Christian Response to Secular Philosophies of History*, rev. ed. (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany Fellowship, 1975), 143.

It means that we do not have to have all the events/facts as evidence for supporting a historical view of the past. There is no metaphysical rule out there which says how evidence should be qualitatively and quantitatively. What generally the historian poses in his approach to the past are various data that after being checked leads the historian to a probable conclusion. And this is in his favor. This probability of established value for the events we may call *reasonable objectivity*. The following observation of Montgomery seems appropriate for historical studies although he referred in this passage to historical theology. But given the fact that even a secular historian has to choose among alternative beliefs (or urban/anti-theistic secular mysticism of any kind) and interpretations we reproduce the following: “I am not arguing (note well) that empirical verifiability of the historical and scientific content ... produces subjective commitment to the truth. ... However, only where objective verifiability is present can genuine faith be distinguished from blind faith. To engage in the existentialist ‘leap of faith’ is to topple headlong into the domain of analytic meaningless.”⁵³ Thus a principal of verifiability is necessary: “A verifiability principle cannot be avoided,” and “those who argue to the contrary are employing an implicit criterion of verifiability to refute it.”⁵⁴ As Petrie Flinders observed, “All history is an observational science. ... No view of a subject is invalidated by objecting to the amount of its support, but only by showing that some other view is better supported. There are many scientific views which have serious weaknesses, ... but indecisive as a result may be, it holds the field until there is something better. It is construction and not destruction that leads men.”⁵⁵ Since according to Montgomery’s definition of history there are various factors in play, the historian’s attention to past recordings must not be

⁵³ Ibid., *The Suicide of Christian Theology* (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany Fellowship, 1975), p. 355, n 64.

⁵⁴ Ibid., *Tractatus Logico-Theologicus* (Bonn: Verlag für Kultur und Wissenschaft, 2005), sec. 2. 9-2.91.

⁵⁵ Petrie Flinders, “The Antiquity of Egyptian Civilization,” *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 9, no. 3/4 (October 1923): 153. We do not refer here to Derrida, although we do not agree with him, who explicitly said that deconstruction is positive and not negative, and that we have to be alert of the implications of historical sedimentation of language which we use and that is not destruction. See Susan J. Hekman, *Hermeneutics and the Sociology of Knowledge* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1986), 192.

vitiated by preconceived thoughts as Isaiah Berlin rightly observed, and Montgomery holds to this position for including here historical theology. If many of the positions of Isaiah Berlin who speak of historical objectivity in his studies would take their methodological observation—regardless of what established event they refer from the ancient texts—to its logical conclusion, then it would be very easy and reasonable to approach historical theology as a legitimate field of study not as a generic religious metaphysical banditry set of poetical propositions. But “if an event touches the wellsprings of universal human need, its significance can hardly be doubted”⁵⁶ —one may think of the historical empirical factual status of Michel Foucault *Histoire de la sexualité*. Some of the same persuasion would say that there is no need to work with verifiability principles and consequently talking about empirical is nonsense. Isn't it interesting that historian Michael Psellos in his *Χρονογραφία* (1.14), who lived in the 11th century in Byzantium, records that emperor Basil came on the battle field to enrich in those of the war (Βασίλειος ... τὴν πρὸς τοὺς πολέμοις ἐμπειρίαν λαμβάνων)? In the Greek text the word used is ἐμπειρίαν (empeiria) that is “by experience,” or to know, to be enriched in those of the war “from experience.” This is simply historical empiricism. [Professor of nuclear science Ian Hutchinson in dialog with theoretical chemist Ronald Hoffman agrees that history as a discipline is about knowledge, but then he says that the term empirical is now connected to natural sciences. And so, history in that sense is not a science.⁵⁷ Well, this could be a chapter on the use and abuse of the “empirical” for authority in knowledge, but whoever baptized the term “empirical” into the natural science framework of arriving at truthful knowledge does not make any difference for establishing knowledge, and the use of the term “empirical” is still valuable in history not due to its mystical nature but because it is

⁵⁶ John Warwick Montgomery, *Faith Founded on Fact: Essays in Evidential Apologetics* (New York and Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1978), 51.

⁵⁷ See the dialog between Ian Hutchinson and Ronald Hoffmann in *The Finite and the Infinite*, 30 March, 2012, <http://veritas.org/talks/finite-and-infinite/>, February 1, 2014. The dialog was organized by *Veritas Forum* as a university event.

related to verification principles of historical phenomena. And the Greek term may support historical phenomena as we have seen with the simple example from the Greek usage]. So what kind of facts are then those of the past for which historical theology, for example, is less *historical* than a *Histoire de la sexualité*? And so we turn the historian in a literate spirit abusing of the term “narrative” just because we do not want to let ourselves not only to interpret historical theology and the past based on rigorous methodology, but also to be *interpreted* (sic!).⁵⁸ This is not gratuitous *presentism*, but it is a reasonable approach of what is significant in history and what answers to the meaning of human life in the written tradition about man. However, we do not have to measure historical theology with *Histoire de la sexualité* to get historicity; instead, what this comparison shows is that the student of history cannot deny the established events of historical theology by the means of historical inquiry just because of its religious *values*. It could not be appropriately subjective by the student (because of his free will), but it cannot be dealt with as nonexistent objectively in the past (given the historical support for it). As Montgomery pointed out,

⁵⁸ Not in the sense of the hermeneutical circle, “that no exegesis can ever be regarded as genuinely objective.” John Warwick Montgomery, *Faith Founded on Fact: Essays in Evidential Apologetics* (New York and Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1978), 183. Precisely for that the text educates the bad subjectivity of the reader helping him toward an objective exegesis. Susan J. Hekman comments that “it is interesting that Derrida, who is so insistent in his argument against the historicists that the author’s intention does not establish the meaning of the text, falls prey to their error: the assumption that interpretation is one-sided. . . . Derrida sees interpretation as the function of the reader alone. . . . Derrida and Foucault lead us toward a kind of nihilistic Tower of Babel in their rejection of historically grounded foundations for human understanding.” *Ibid.*, 195-196. German theologian Wolfhart Pannenberg makes the following pertinent methodological statement: “If somebody says that a certain event really took place in the past, then, I think, he makes a statement that implies historicity insofar as that he thinks that he will get away with that statement even if it is put to a test, if it is put to critical questioning. And, of course, the historical-critical instrument is nothing else but the ensemble of means of testing statements affirming something about past events. And so our understanding of what belongs to the historical method is constantly changing according to our changing assessments of what can be used in order to find out what really happened in the past by questioning of tradition and evidence. And therefore I say, any simple statement on past events, involves a claim to historicity as much as it affirms something to be the case in view of the possibility of being checked.” Wolfhart Pannenberg, “The Historicity of the Resurrection: The Identity of Christ,” in *The Intellectuals Speak out about God*, ed. Roy Abraham Varghese (Addison, TX: Lewis and Stanley Publishers, 1984), 258. Thus, the one that denies, for example, the singular scriptural Christology also has the burden of the historical proof as the one who raises the question of historicity. Denying the singular Christology is harder than proving it. It would be harder in the sense that the objector has to have more historicity in his denial than the documents in case present as their data for Christology.

If one intends, therefore, to speak of religious or historical meaning, he must offer concrete evidence in behalf of his claims—or, at minimum, show that his views are not compatible with all negative evidence! Granted, only a high level of probability can ever be adduced in support of such synthetic claims; but to demand absolute certainty is to obtain pure formality and thus no knowledge of the world at all. . . . All our verifiable knowledge of the world, present or past, is based on the sifting of experiential data, and just as in ordinary life we must constantly jump the gap between probability and certainty by faith, so in the religious realm we have no right to demand—much less any expectation of acquiring a certainty transcending the probabilities of historical evidence.⁵⁹

History, the laboratory of theology:
(2) *Facts and interpretations.*

How is a historian to determine what happened in the past? Speaking of a theology based on history (Christological events—not a study of historical development of various theologies), as I call it, Montgomery asks,

How does an historian properly determine what has in fact occurred and interpret it? Admittedly he takes to a study of any particular event his fund of general, usual experience. He relies upon it wherever it serves a useful function and not because he has any eternal, metaphysical justification for doing so. But the moment the general runs into tension with the particular, the general must yield, since (1) the historian's knowledge of the general is never complete, so he can never be sure he ought to rule out an event or an interpretation simply because it is new to him, and (2) he must always guard against obliterating the uniqueness of individual historical events by forcing them into a Procrustean bed of regular, general patterns. Only the primary/source evidence for an event can ultimately determine whether it occurred or not, and only this same evidence will establish the proper interpretation of that event.⁶⁰

The merit of this observation is the logic of the methodology employed by the historian. He must be concerned with the facts and “in interpreting events, one's proper goal is to find the interpretation that best fits the facts.”⁶¹ The issue with historical theology is the nature of Christology where theological values are imbued to events and the materialist and naturalist historian is resisting considering such events as facts and evidence historically. But Montgomery comments,

⁵⁹ John Warwick Montgomery, “Tillich's Philosophy of History,” *Themelios* 4, no. 2 (1967): 36-37.

⁶⁰ John Warwick Montgomery, “A critique of Certain Uncritical Assumptions in Modern Historiography,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 40, no. 4 (December 1997): 656-57.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 656.

Ideally, then, one will set alternative explanations of an event against the facts themselves to make an intelligent choice. But which facts will our explanations be tested against: the immediate facts to be interpreted, or the entire, general range of human experience? Where particular experience is in accord there is no problem. But where they conflict, the particular must be chosen over the general, for otherwise our investigations of historical particulars will be investigations in name only since the results will always reflect already-accepted general experience. Unless we are willing to suspend regular explanations at the particular points where these explanations are inappropriate to the particular data, we in principle eliminate even the possibility of discovering anything new. In fact we then limit all new (particular) to the sphere of already-accepted (general) knowledge. The proper approach is just the opposite: The particular must triumph over the general, even when the general has given us immense help in understanding the particular.⁶²

Unlike the scientist, historians cannot repeat experiments under controlled conditions. Would this be a methodological stumble for the historian? Montgomery argues: “Although repeatability is helpful, it is not in any way essential to the establishment of factual truth (your school experiences are not repeatable, but presumably you know that you *had* them), and historically research is perfectly able to determine, for example, that Lincoln was shot in Ford’s Theater and did not fatally slip on banana peel in Peoria.”⁶³ And actually,

facts are not made of wax, capable of infinite molding from the pressure of interpretative world-views. Even Thomas Kuhn, who attempted (not too successfully) in his *Structure of Scientific Revolutions* to show that changes in scientific perspective are largely determined by metaphysical and cultural factors, has to admit that in the last analysis the factual results of “crucial experiments” can sound the death knell of an old theory and the enthronement of its replacements. Facts ultimately arbitrate interpretations, not the reverse, at least where good science (and not bad philosophy) is being practiced.⁶⁴

Otherwise, “the inevitable consequence is an infinite regress to absurdity.”⁶⁵ This observation results from the fact that to postulate an infinite number of interpretations as a theory to fit the facts result in twisting the meaning of facts. In what sense does Montgomery speak of the meaning of facts? In 1971, Paul D. Feinberg wrote an admirable article in defense of Montgomery’s

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid., *Faith Founded on Fact: Essays in Evidential Apologetics* (New York and Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1978), xx.

⁶⁴ Ibid., xxii.

⁶⁵ Ibid., xxiv.

philosophy of history. He gave an example of what he sees as Montgomery's understanding of the meaning of facts:

Let us consider an example from recent history. It can be substantiated that some 6 million Jews died under German rule in the Second World War. Let me suggest two mutually exclusive interpretations. First, these events may be interpreted as the actions of a mad man who was insanely anti-Semitic. The deaths were murders, atrocities. Second, it might be asserted that Hitler really loved the Jews. He had a deep and abiding belief in heaven and life after death. After reviewing Jewish history, Hitler decided that the Jews had been persecuted enough, and because of his love for them he was seeking to help them enter eternal blessedness. If no necessity exists between events and interpretation, then there is no way of determining which meaning is correct. We would never be justified in claiming that one holding the latter view is wrong. This is both repugnant and absurd. There must be an empirical necessity that unites an event or fact with its correct interpretation.⁶⁶

It is evident that those who are questioning the possibility of historical interpretation because of the *possibility* of multiple, various, endless interpretations of events should not be taken seriously, as with those who proclaim the relativity of objectivity in interpreting past events we should point that that regresses to absurdity. It is an uncritical fear not based on methodological thought because there is more than the regular or actually the *expected* to be accepted. According to the above example, we must agree that facts carry their own meaning and we will choose only those interpretations that are very close to the nature of events. Thus, "historical ... methods parallel scientific methodology"⁶⁷ because "the world of fact is like a foot and our interpretations of it like a shoe; what we seek is the ideal interpretation which will be neither too narrow (pinching the foot) nor too broad (fitting any foot and therefore not helpful in the particular case),"⁶⁸ and the empirical necessity unites an event or fact with its correct interpretation. I fully agree with Nicholas Rescher with his four principles as axiomatic for the quality assessment of historical work, and he adds:

⁶⁶ Paul D. Feinberg, "History: Public or Private? A Defense of John Warwick Montgomery's Philosophy of History," in *The Shape of the Past. A Christian Response to Secular Philosophies of History*, rev. ed. (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany Fellowship, 1975), 379; see also Montgomery's *Tractatus Logico-Theologicus* (Bonn: Verlag für Kultur und Wissenschaft, 2005), sec. 2.3721.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, sec. 3.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, sec. 2.376.

Interestingly, while historians nowadays often abandon any pretensions to a “scientific history” that describes “what actually happened” they nevertheless almost always want to maintain an objectively defined distinction between competent and incompetent workmanship. There are very good reasons for this. If one way of proceeding were no more rationally cogent than any other—that is, if any and all pretensions to objectivity were abandoned—then no standards could be possibly be developed to differentiate between good and bad historiography. The line between conscientious competence and careless ineptitude would vanish. Few historians would gladly go that far.⁶⁹

In order to justify a historical empirical approach to the pretensions of historical theology, we should observe that Montgomery’s historical epistemology includes the four principles set forth by Nicholas Rescher (see footnote 69); Montgomery argues:

To investigate anything of a factual nature, empirical method must be employed. It involves such formal or heuristic assumptions as the law of non-contradiction, the inferential operations of deduction and induction, and necessary commitments to the existence of the investigator and the external world. Empirical method is not “provable.” The justification for its use is the fact that we cannot avoid it when we investigate the world. (To prove that what we perceive with our senses is real, we would have to collect and analyze data in its behalf, but we would then already be using what we are trying to prove!) One cannot emphasize too strongly that this necessary, methodology does not in any way commit one to a substantively regular universe: to a universe where events must always give patterns. Empirical method always investigates the world in the same way—by collecting and analyzing the data—but there is no prior commitment to what the data must turn out to be. . . . In short, whereas irregularity in basic empirical methodology would eliminate the investigation of anything, the discovery of unique, nonanalogous events by empirical method in no way vitiates its operation or renders the investigator

⁶⁹ Nicholas Rescher, *Objectivity: The Obligations of Impersonal Reason* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997), 33. The four principles are: (1) That any historical account be based on the available evidence—and that net of available evidence should be spread as widely and inclusively as possible, with no suppressions, exclusions, or distortions made on purely partisan grounds; (2) That insofar as the evidence at hand leaves the questions at issue unresolved, and alternative constructions and interpretations are possible, these information-gaps should be explicitly indicated and their indecisiveness as between alternative interpretations specified; (3) That where we have to deal in probabilities rather than determinate certainties these should be weighed by the same standards of plausibility and conscientious care that would be expected elsewhere; (4) That where a historian’s own interests are at stake and her own biases of interpretation operative, these should not be glossed over or concealed but should be made explicit so that readers can assess their possible influence for themselves. *Ibid.*, 32. Necessarily is also to consider the arguments to the best explanation of Christopher Behan McCullagh, *Justifying Historical Descriptions* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 19: (1) The hypothesis, together with other true statements, must imply further statements describing present, observable data; (2) The hypothesis must have greater explanatory scope (that is, imply a greater variety of observable data) than rival hypotheses; (3) The hypothesis must have greater explanatory power (that is, make the observable data more probable) than rival hypotheses; (4) The hypothesis must be more plausible (that is, be implied by a greater variety of accepted truths, and its negation implied by fewer accepted truths) than rival hypotheses; (5) The hypothesis must be less ad hoc (that is, include fewer new suppositions about the past not already implied by existing knowledge) than rival hypotheses; (6) The hypothesis must be disconfirmed by fewer accepted beliefs (that is, when conjoined with accepted truths, imply fewer false statements) than rival hypotheses; (7) The hypothesis must so exceed its rivals in fulfilling conditions 2–6 that there is little chance of a rival hypothesis, after further investigation, exceeding it in meeting these conditions.

liable to the charge of irrationality.⁷⁰

If we interpret or explain historical events along ordinary lines (in accord with ordinary experience) where this does not contradict the events to be interpreted, are we therefore required to conclude that unique, nonanalogous events do not occur even when ordinary observational evidence exists in their behalf?⁷¹ I already argued Montgomery's position. However, much more can be said: whatever position we hold to the study of history, we must face the challenge made by historical traditions and check their claims, and historical theology must face the same challenge, but

when one insists on regarding all events, however empirically established as unique and nonanalogous, as ordinary events. Eventually one acquires so flexible and all-inclusive a notion of "coincidence" that the concept loses all significance and functions as a kind of asylum of ignorance. At such a juncture, a new kind of faith is introduced to avoid the pressing claims of religious faith, namely the blind faith (credulity would be a better word for it) that maintains, against all evidence, that a unique, nonanalogous event is somehow really a regular, ordinary event after all. But when this naturalistic faith is set against supernatural faith (and they must be opposed, since both cannot be true), the former must rationally yield to the latter, since naturalistic faith flies in the face of the data, while supernatural faith is willing to go wherever the empirical evidence leads.⁷²

There is no reason for excluding historical theology and its claims to its proper truth if there are historically critical arguments for its claim. These arguments must be met on historical grounds, not simply by philosophical hostile arrogance. Konrad Lorenz arguing for historical religious tradition says,

Among epistemologists, there is widespread belief that a hypothesis is definitively refuted if one or several facts do not fit in. Were this the case, all existing hypotheses would be refuted, for there is scarcely one that does justice to all relevant facts. All our knowledge is only an approach to the extrasubjective reality that we are trying to know. However, it is a progressive approach. A hypothesis is never disproved by a single contradictory fact but only by another hypothesis that can fit in more facts than it can itself. "Truth" is thus the working hypothesis most suitable to pave the way to that other hypothesis which is able to

⁷⁰ John Warwick Montgomery, *Faith Founded on Fact: Essays in Evidential Apologetics* (New York and Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1978), 53-54.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 55.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 68.

explain more.⁷³

Do naturalism and materialism, as atheists explain historical theology, offer hypotheses that can fit in more facts? The more we search we find that even for a singularly naturalistic and materialistic approach of historical events there is no way of claiming exclusive exhaustive truth, a monopoly on knowledge that would put aside any truth for historical theological claims to historicity. What we have to deal with here is not simply an establishment of simply mundane natural materialistic facts, against which theology is not. Theology is against the philosophy of naturalism (of which the work of philosopher Alvin Plantinga concludes that is defeated⁷⁴) and materialism that the desire of the naturalist to extract philosophies of life from these events *moralizing* them leads to gross interpretation where *values* in history just do not fit scientism. As Thomas F. Torrance observed, we have experienced a change in modern science concerning materialist obsession that

has demonstrated that only when empirical and phenomenal events are correlated to the space-time metrical field and understood through coordination with its objective framework, can they be explained in the natural forms in which we experience them without mutilation or artificial manipulation. This amounts to a gigantic reversal of the old materialist obsession with perceptible and tangible magnitudes as the exclusively real, for the really objective framework that embraces and regulates the behavior of all things within the created universe is in fact the imperceptible, intangible magnitude of the space-time metrical field, in which structure and substance, form and being, are inseparably fused together. That is why rigorous scientific method operates from the very start with the closest correlation of theoretical and empirical components in knowledge, the imperceptible and the perceptible, the intangible and the tangible coiner together at every point.⁷⁵

If Karl Popper's observation is true, as I think it is, that "I do not deny that it is as justifiable to interpret history from a Christian point of view as it is to interpret it from any other point of view; and it should certainly be emphasized, for example, how much of our Western aims and ends,

⁷³ Konrad Lorenz, *Civilized Man's Eight Deadly Sins* (Munich: R. Piper & Co. Verlag, 1978), 78-79.

⁷⁴ Even Immanuel Kant, with all his criticism, in his *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics* (1783) did not want naturalism, materialism, and fatalism as interpretations of the universe, and he criticized Hume who woke him up from his dogmatic sleep.

⁷⁵ Thomas F. Torrance, *Theology in Reconciliation: Essays towards Evangelical and Catholic University in East and West* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1975), 282.

humanitarianism, freedom, equality, we owe to the influence of Christianity,”⁷⁶ how could naturalism and materialism philosophically then be true in their pontifical attitude over knowledge where these *values* are understood historically as human but they stream out of a theological concern? History then is the laboratory of such specific values⁷⁷ having man as moral agent. However, what people of a-theological persuasions do, in my interpretation of the opposition when they touch the *written historical tradition about man*, is that they speak of morality in terms of “science” which is actually scientism. It seems to me that for people such as the a-theological objectors, they reduce existence to feelings as hermeneutical keys for interpreting it since their scientism has to do so in the absence of anything else and because their science does not go beyond, as there is no rationalization of truth-claims and objective evidence in historical research. Bertrand Russell was of the same opinion when asked by Frederick C. Copleston in the famous debate (1948) how do you differentiate between good and bad, and Russell’s response was “by my feelings.” Scientism is the pretension to superior knowledge given the absence *in* naturalism and materialism of such philosophical and theological complexities that we find in history, namely humanitarianism, freedom, and equality that have not been worked out historically by a-theological objections of the sort of in scientism. For that matter it is painfully simplistic on the “why” questions, as we have seen with Bertrand Russell. And because we are rationally irrelevant in our existence to the laws of nature—whatever rationally irrelevant to the laws of nature means—the “why” question is nonsense, says the a-theological objector of scientism. Even from a

⁷⁶ Karl Popper, *The Open Society and Its Enemies: Hegel, Marx, and the Aftermath* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1966), 320.

⁷⁷ Montgomery comments that “science knows no investigative boundaries; its limits are imposed not by the stuff with which it is permitted to deal, but by the manner in which it can treat its data. *Ex hypothesi*, science is methodologically capable of studying the world in an *objective* manner only: it can examine anything that touches human experience, but it can never, qua science, ‘get inside’ its subject matter; it always stands outside and describes. This is, of course, both the glory and the pathos of science: it can analyze everything, but it is prevented from experiencing the heart of anything.” John Warwick Montgomery, *The Suicide of Christian Theology*, 3rd printing (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 1975), 279.

secular position we find philosophically very hard to accept scientism which is science making nature appear sufficient unto itself. Of course, it appears as such in scientism by what such proponents of scientism give as an interpretation of man's existence, which means that they are working with some extra-laboratory naturalistic/materialistic categories of thought. John Wild working on Heidegger's philosophy comments that

this scientific, calculative mode of understanding [...the science-technology marriage] is making exclusive claims for itself as the only sound and verifiable way of looking at all beings, including man. These absolute claims, however, are unjustified, for objective science has limits. For example, it cannot understand itself. There is no science of science. Furthermore, it is closed to being, and to global world meanings. Hence it is incapable of giving us an adequate grasp of our existence in the world. It is blind to what is essentially human and, if left to itself, will destroy us.⁷⁸

Karl Popper says of historical research that "this does not mean, of course, that all interpretations are of equal merit. First, there are always interpretations which are not really in keeping with the accepted records; secondly, there are some which need a number of more or less plausible auxiliary hypotheses if they are to escape falsification by the records; next, there are some that are unable to connect a number of facts which another interpretation can connect, and in so far explain. There may accordingly be a considerable amount of progress even within the field of historical interpretation."⁷⁹ These observations give on the negative side a high status of the historical method that is just passed by in the a-theological objectors' positions. But historical theology of the historic Church is on the side of the methodology that a theory depends upon its ability to fit the facts, and Montgomery constantly emphasized this aspect regarding historical epistemology of the theological issues.⁸⁰ The problem with theological history and scientism (the

⁷⁸ John Wild, "The Philosophy of Martin Heidegger," *The Journal of Philosophy* 60, no. 22, American Philosophical Association, Eastern Division, Sixtieth Annual Meeting (October 24, 1963): 671.

⁷⁹ Karl Popper, *The Open Society and Its Enemies: Hegel, Marx, and the Aftermath* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1966), 314.

⁸⁰ There are such strong emphases on terms such as "predictability" in scientism that it is almost enough that the objectors oppose this word in a discussion on theology and the historical method is gone. How is this possible? Why does predictability have anything to do with validating theological historical knowledge at all? Hilary Putnam argues, "But, in any case, to identify rationality with scientific rationality so described would be to beg the question of

limits of science on matter and nature philosophized) is that history is theology's proper place where it claims too much for its appropriateness but where is arriving to established probable values by the standards of historical epistemology. I would argue that where there is evidence in history for historical theology even in its "minimal approach" to historical theology, facts of the New Testament documents, there is evidence against scientism. At this level there is a conflict where scientism is against theological authority on morals because it touches the subjective of man's morals which are more fundamental than just being magically enthusiastic over gaining natural knowledge. But whether it is intelligent or stupid if theology is greater in its evidence than these rationalistic measurements of intelligence, stupidity should be accepted in its conclusions with its probability because having historical evidence is of more reasoned sense than being an a priori dogmatician of scientism. Historical evidentialism is greater and immediate to existence than rationalistic apriorisms or the facts of natural science where there are no observable values. Thus, John Polkinghorne endorses historical investigation on the progress of science saying that

later on, Kuhn himself came to realize that he had overdone it, and he backtracked somewhat from his earlier extreme position. Nevertheless, he had certainly hit on an important general principle of how to understand what is going on in science, namely that the history of science is the best clue to the philosophy of science. If you want to know how science operates, and what it may legitimately claim to achieve, you have to be willing to study how science is actually done and how its understanding actually develops. Evaluations are to be made on the basis of concrete experience and not by appeal to abstract general principles. The philosophy of science, properly pursued, is largely a bottom-up argument about how things have turned out to be, rather than a top-down argument about how they had to be.⁸¹

And whatever worldviews the historian holds to, Montgomery's comments are right that

the cognitive status of value judgments; it would be to say these judgments are not rationally confirmable because they are value judgments, for rationality has been defined as consisting exclusively of raw and neutral observation and the drawing of inferences from value-neutral premises. But why should one accept such a definition?" Hilary Putnam, *Reason, Truth, and History* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1981), p. 200. Given the differences between method in theology and science, Montgomery says that great scientific theorists have not achieved their primary success in theory construction through the predictive character of their formulations: both in science and in theology, it is "fit," not "future," that lies at the heart of successful theorizing. John Warwick Montgomery, *The Suicide of Christian Theology*, 3rd printing (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 1975), 278.

⁸¹ John Polkinghorne, *Quantum Physics and Theology: An Unexpected Kinship* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007), 49.

“since neither the historian nor the scientist stands outside the world, neither has or can have a comprehensive knowledge of what is possible or impossible within it; neither, therefore, is in a position to exclude events from consideration, or insist on ‘natural’ explanations for them, simply because they are unique in character or offensive to the researcher’s personal worldview.”⁸² And this is Montgomery’s merit on insisting that “correspondence views of truth assume—and must assume—that an objective world outside of the mind in fact exists and that the mind is capable of comprehending it,” otherwise, “were the critic not to assume such, he would be incapable of (inter alia): Distinguishing his wife from a prostitute (since only his ideas of wives and prostitutes, not the women themselves, exist in his mind for comparison).”⁸³ However, Montgomery rightly says that “this, however, is an unprovable assumption made not only by the advocate of correspondence but also by the critic, for one cannot function in this world at all without making it.”⁸⁴ Assuming that science is everything because when the a- theological objectors apply science they apply it over naturalistic and materialistic entities it is obvious that they will reduce everything in morals to pleasure and suffering or mere subjective illusions that we create—as the limits of knowing—as points of reference because science cannot do more. And because those of scientism psychoneurologized our past and present, that past is explained in terms of pre-scientific times and so is simply relevant but as a past collection of errors and the present is merely the god of feelings (indifferent morality). What those of scientism philosophizing can do at their best, whether they recognize or not, is to reduce existence to feelings and theological values to cognitive errors. I just cannot explain the irrationality of dealing with religiosity and historical theology in the way scientism does because they have no responsible epistemic attitude toward historical inquiry. At the time when he wrote on the scientific concept of history, Isaiah Berlin observed,

⁸² John Warwick Montgomery, *Tractatus Logico-Theologicus* (Bonn: Verlag für Kultur und Wissenschaft, 2005), sec. 3.1191.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, sec. 2.3852, 2.38531, and 2.385311.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, sec. 2.3853.

In any case, the logic of historical thought and the validity of its credentials are issues that do not preoccupy the minds of the leading logicians of our day. The reasons for this are not far to seek. Nevertheless it remains surprising that philosophers pay more attention to the logic of such natural sciences as mathematics and physics, which comparatively few of them know well at first hand, and neglect that of history and the other humane studies, with which in the course of their normal education they tend to be more familiar.⁸⁵

Scientism as philosophy replacing history, theology, and philosophy *per se* is such a simplistic option that only ignorant people of past human knowledge can discard so easily anything else than their presuppositions of materialness in judging good and evil, right and wrong, hallucination and extraordinary objective facts that claim historicity. It is as simplistic and illusory at the level of historical existence as universal factuality wants to be. I believe that the explanations from natural sciences, in the form of scientism, that which is beyond merely feeling as a determining factor at the level of materiality, explanations of thought and consciousness rooted in the historical tradition as man experienced his human existence, scientism is destroying the very probability of anything else explained but not through the instruments of natural scientists turned into metaphysical naturalism magic. Hilary Putnam observed the problem: “One reason, then, for doubting that value judgments have any cognitive status is that they cannot be ‘verified by the methods of science,’ as it gets put over and over again.”⁸⁶ Although a-theological objectors praise their freedom of thought, when it comes to theological categories of knowledge, man is closed in scientific philosophical propaganda authority and not open to other aspects of human experience that are not the object of the natural sciences: for the fact of the matter is that we do not need William H. Calvin’s neurophysiology to tell us that outside of natural sciences and “mental Darwinism” we could not tell the difference between hallucination and an objective miraculous event (of the Christian historical tradition). It is simply not true that people of past traditions could not tell the

⁸⁵ Isaiah Berlin, *Concepts and Categories: Philosophical Essays*, ed. Henry Hardy, intro. Bernard Williams (London: Pimlico, 1999), 104.

⁸⁶ Hilary Putnam, *Reason, Truth, and History* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1981), p. 176, see also p. 200.

difference without his utensils of modern neurophysiology. We have to read history and see the difference. He is the one accusing others of being closed in their specializing fields not having a larger understanding of things related to mental life, while he is ignoring others. Actually, natural scientists, especially those of scientism, based on my general understanding of them, are terrible in their knowledge of theology, philosophy, and historical method, and Peter Atkins, Richard Dawkins, and Lawrence Krauss are just a few examples. They just cannot understand what historical method is worth scientifically in the realm of historical theology. I cannot help but give an example of how to understand hallucinations at the profundity of the results of scientific inquiry with the instruments of science of the “science masters” criticizing among philosophers the “ecclesiastical neurospecialists”:

We now know that ghosts appear real because of mistakes made in the brain. Some are trivial, everyday mistakes and others arise from abnormalities in dreaming sleep; a few are stirred up by small epileptic seizures or the pathological processes seen in psychosis. We call them hallucinations; they involve false sounds more often than false sights. The people and pets that they feature are often scrambled a bit, just as they are in the jumble of our nighttime dreams. Remember that the seemingly stable scene you normally “see” is really a mental model that you construct—the eyes are actually darting all around, producing a retinal image as jerky as an amateur video, and some of what you thought you saw was instead filled in from memory. A hallucination merely carries this mental model to an extreme: memories stored inside your brain are interpreted as current sensory input. Sometimes this happens when you are struggling to wake up, when the paralysis of the muscles during dreaming sleep hasn’t worn off as fast as usual. Dream elements appear superimposed on the image of real people walking around the bedroom. Or you might hear a dead relative speak to you with a familiar phrase. Half the brain is awake, and the rest is still dreaming away. With any luck, you realize this and don’t try to place a more exotic construction on it. Each of us, after all, experiences nightly the symptoms of dementia, delusions, and hallucinations in the course of our dreaming sleep; we’re accustomed to discounting such things. Yet hallucinations can also happen when you are lying awake at night, even when you are working during the day. I suspect many of these “ghosts” are just simple cognitive mistakes, like one that recently happened to me: I heard a distinct crunching sound in the kitchen, which was repeated a moment later. Ah, I thought as I continued typing, the cat is finally eating her dry food. It took another two seconds before “Oops, let’s play that again.” The cat, alas, had been dead for several months, and had had a long period of being fussy about her food. What I had faintly heard turned out to be the sound of the automatic defroster on our refrigerator—it’s somewhat more subtle than the racket made by icemakers—and I had routinely made a guess about what the sound meant without fully considering the matter. . . . Have the scientific explanations eliminated ghosts from our culture? At least for those at the educational level of juveniles, the whole notion

of ghosts remains a cheap thrill (for exactly the same reason that dinosaurs are so popular with children: they're the potent triple combination of big, scary, and safely dead). Temporal-lobe epileptics, before a physician explains their hallucinations to them, don't think ghosts are funny at all. Grieving relatives may wish, in retrospect, that someone had warned them about meaningless hallucinations.⁸⁷

If people think that we had to wait for neurophysiology to tell us what a hallucination is, then the name of science as messianic authority has fulfilled its role. To have to recognize such profound remarks under the name of science is to observe that objectively at least some non-neurophysiologists readers have a healthy brain. The words of C. S. Lewis are true: Good philosophy must exist, if for no other reason, because bad philosophy needs to be answered.⁸⁸ Were there any ways for determining hallucinations in history outside of the modern utensils of the scientist “then” and “now” given the condition of the brain in the past? Did he ever read what happened to Apostle Peter in the episode related in *Acts of the Apostles* (that could be dated before the death of Paul, AD 65-68)?

5 So Peter was kept in prison, but the church was earnestly praying to God for him. **6** The night before Herod was to bring him to trial, Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains, and sentries stood guard at the entrance. **7** Suddenly an angel of the Lord appeared and a light shone in the cell. He struck Peter on the side and woke him up. “Quick, get up!” he said, and the chains fell off Peter’s wrists. **8** Then the angel said to him, “Put on your clothes and sandals.” And Peter did so. “Wrap your cloak around you and follow me,” the angel told him. **9** Peter followed him out of the prison, but he had no idea that what the angel was doing was really happening; he thought he was seeing a vision. **10** They passed the first and second guards and came to the iron gate leading to the city. It opened for them by itself, and they went through it. When they had walked the length of one street, suddenly the angel left him. **11** Then Peter came to himself and said, “Now I

⁸⁷ William H. Calvin, *How Brains Think: Evolving Intelligence, Then and Now* (New York: Basic Books, 1996), pp. 39, 41, and 147-49. It is unfortunate that the typical natural scientist does not know anything about history but the crusades, the inquisition, and witch-hunting. Stig Stenholm makes a similar comment: “Medieval man lived in a universe of certainty. The Church delivered truth, nay it was the only truth. If one queried science or issues of conduct, the scholars could provide an answer. This was always to be found in Aristotle or the Church fathers respectively. Deviations from this received judgment. . . . No deviating answers emerged because the question could not be asked. The first break in this bulwark was caused by science.” Stig Stenholm, *The Quest for Reality: Bohr and Wittgenstein—Two Complementary Views* (Cambridge, UK: Oxford University Press, 2001), 1. However, at the level of the experimental science in the 13th century, Roger Bacon writes, “For authors write many statements, and people believe them through reasoning which they formulate without experience. . . . Therefore all things must be verified by experience.” Roger Bacon, “Experimental Science,” in *The Medieval Portable Reader*, eds. James Bruce Ross and Mary Martin McLaughlin (New York: The Viking Press, 1971), 627-28.

⁸⁸ C.S. Lewis, *The Weight of Glory and Other Addresses* (New York: Macmillan Publishers, 1980), 28.

know without a doubt that the Lord has sent his angel and rescued me from Herod's clutches and from everything the Jewish people were hoping would happen." **12** When this had dawned on him, he went to the house of Mary the mother of John, also called Mark, where many people had gathered and were praying. **13** Peter knocked at the outer entrance, and a servant named Rhoda came to answer the door. **14** When she recognized Peter's voice, she was so overjoyed she ran back without opening it and exclaimed, "Peter is at the door!" **15** "You're out of your mind," they told her. When she kept insisting that it was so, they said, "It must be his angel." **16** But Peter kept on knocking, and when they opened the door and saw him, they were astonished. **17** Peter motioned with his hand for them to be quiet and described how the Lord had brought him out of prison. "Tell James and the other brothers and sisters about this," he said, and then he left for another place. **18** In the morning, there was no small commotion among the soldiers as to what had become of Peter. **19** After Herod had a thorough search made for him and did not find him, he cross-examined the guards and ordered that they be executed. (NIV, 2011)⁸⁹

People of ancient times knew perfectly well that a man in chains, sitting in the prison could not be at the same time knocking at the door. And please note: they were religious zealous people praying! "You're out of your mind," they said. What they did, on Rhoda's *insistence*, was to give an interpretation of the supraempirical since they were confronted with the fact "at the door" that such things cannot happen otherwise. But to represent the people of the past as retarded or retrograde and to give an explanation of hallucination as the above is simply wrong. They differ in the causal explanation knowing that nature does not allow "anomalies" in this sense to happen. Athanasius, who lived in the fourth century, knew that by nature a virgin cannot give birth to a child. He knew not because of scientism but because of nature, but he concluded that there is a

⁸⁹ Because we speak of *Acts* I anticipate some skepticism. As a historiographical exercise, the reply of Michael F. Bird to the detailed study on historiography by Todd Penner on Luke-Acts should be considered. See *In Praise of Christian Origins: Stephen and the Hellenists in Lukan Apologetic Historiography*, Emory Studies in Early Christianity (London: T&T Clark International, 2004). Todd Penner, now at Westar Institute (with strong disagreements that I have on pp. 332-334 and in general), says that Luke in his gospel, first chapter, writes historiography in the historical model of his time "epideictic composition" (p. 221) that is a well-plotted and persuasive narrative in the sense that concerning history it is impossible to "move beyond the framework, order, characterization, and style of the narrative to a concrete bedrock of assured reliable and verifiable data" (p. 111). Still, Todd Penner, given his affiliation with a skeptical group of researchers, is saying that he cannot say that Luke (chapter 6 in Acts) is unhistorical or it is his invention and that leaves one at an "impasse" (p. 332). But the observation that Michael F. Bird makes is that "if one adds to literary history also numismatics, epigraphical, and archaeological evidence then surely this will affect our understanding of Luke as a historian if the text of Acts exhibits correspondences between his text and the ancient world. By this I mean that a historical approach to Luke-Acts is more than trying to excavate historical details from a text, it means orienting the text into the world of empirical history, and that affects in varying ways how one understands Luke as a historian." See "Michael Bird reviews Todd Penner's *In Praise of Christian Origins: Stephen and the Hellenists in Lukan Apologetic Historiography*," *The Bible and Critical Theory* 3, no. 1 (2007 [Monash University ePress]): 4-5.

supraempirical causal explanation, because the gospel story is compounded with some facts that are beginning and concluding with the supraempirical. Theology has also a human face in its realism! The marriage between heaven and earth, “myth” and fact. The supraempirical is actually against scientism. Today the difference is that we added to nature the word “scientism.” Thus, the solution of scientism is to consider that for people of the ancient times, since they did not have the scientific possibility of eliminating the ghosts, the supraempirical did not happen—maybe a cognitive error took place. Well, since we can do William H. Calvin’s experiment (mentioned above) at home, without the sophisticated laboratory of the testable, repeatable, falsifiable, and predictable, can a historian determine by his method what the difference between scientific utensils and the kitchenware is? Or do we need another vain treatise on alterity/otherness to determine the subjectivity of the *différance* of grammatology of the scientist’s work? Probably the only difference this kind of scientific observation creates is a false image that the present scientific time does better at explaining some human experience phenomena—and in some cases surely it does, but to give the impression through scientism, as some do, that the ancients were pre-scientific and thus amateurs in knowledge or not worthy of trust on matters even such as hallucinations implicitly creates a false pretension that even to understand hallucination you have to start with neurophysiology; and when a student of history will have in mind the obsessive “scientific” authority of scientism will just pass the judgment over the past dismissing the knowledge of the past as almost retarded.

Consider then the importance of historical studies in order to correct the modern belief of the Middle Ages’ “Flat Error”; Louise M. Bishop comments, “The conviction that medieval people believed in a flat earth supports an ideology of scientific progress necessarily achieved at the expense of wrongheaded religion. Many medievalists have unmasked the ways such positivist thinking continues to reflect our understanding of the far-from-unified Middle Ages; they have

also critiqued the Romantic sensibility that encourages a rosy-hued assessment of medieval culture. Whatever balancing act a medievalist must perform, no one should use an utter falsity to make a historical point. Jeffrey [Burton Russell] is surely right that it is high time for modern people to reject the false notion of medieval people's belief in a flat earth."⁹⁰ A dominated, uncontrolled scientific culture is and always will be subject to gratuitous scientism and bad humanistic knowledge (knowledge of the abuse of vocables such as "scientific") of those who copy and paste for themselves uncritical views of scientism. Not to consider, as a scientist, on authoritative grounds, the right to exercise the critical philosophical mind—because it is not scientific to be uncritical about your own hidden assumptions. Montgomery writes, "*Scientism*—the 'religion of science'— ... would pass off the worldview of the scientist as the equivalent of a legitimate application of scientific method."⁹¹ I believe that in many respects the way scientism is constructed semantically—natural sciences philosophized—is working against the naturalness of man: what is man when he passes beyond his naturalness morally, making himself to believe that he just religiously erred chemically in his body when all the judgmental self-reflection over human phenomena and/or phenomenology indicate the ravaging of the soul? To ignore by biological materialistic explanations man's self-reflection is by no means a *defeater* for taking himself seriously historically just because he does not know about certain quantities or units in physics that would give him a secondary thought of why he is a total non-conscious physical object irrelevant to the laws of nature (quite the opposite!). In many another respects, historical theology on epistemic grounds does not contradict naturalness and the materiality of the world (although it does something different than natural science) since it begins with historical

⁹⁰ Louis M. Bishop, "The Myth of the Flat Earth," in *Misconceptions about the Middle Ages*, eds. Stephen J. Harris and Bryon L. Grigsby (New York: Routledge, 1998), 100. For the factual evidence of this misunderstanding see pp. 97-98.

⁹¹ John Warwick Montgomery, *Tractatus Logico-Theologicus* (Bonn: Verlag für Kultur und Wissenschaft, 2005), sec. 2.711.

facts and philosophical arguments, but the theological content of those facts leads to a theological interpretation of those events and they seem gnoseologically proper to fit the facts.

Then, what kind of presuppositions are we working with? Montgomery states that “one can apply accepted historical method to the resurrection accounts without being a positivist, just as one can apply scientific method to a problem without accepting the presuppositions of ‘scientism’ (the religion of science).”⁹² But for the sake of philosophical arguments, philosophically J. P.

Moreland observes:

Along similar lines, John Searle has some pretty harsh things to say about the last fifty years or so of work in the philosophy of mind. Specifically, he says that the field has contained numerous assertions that are obviously false and absurd and has cycled neurotically through various positions precisely because of the dominance of strong physicalism as the only live option for a naturalist. Searle’s statement of the reason for this neurotic behavior is revealing:

How is it that so many philosophers and cognitive scientists can say so many things that, to me at least, seem obviously false? ... I believe one of the unstated assumptions behind the current batch of views is that they represent the only scientifically acceptable alternatives to the antiscientism that went with traditional dualism, the belief in the immortality of the soul, spiritualism, and so on. Acceptance of the current views is motivated not so much by an independent conviction of their truth as by a terror of what are apparently the only alternatives. That is, the choice we are tacitly presented with is between a “scientific” approach, as represented by one or another of the current versions of “materialism,” and an “unscientific” approach, as represented by Cartesianism or some other traditional religious conception of the mind.

In other words, philosophy of mind has been dominated by scientific naturalism for fifty years and scientific naturalists have advanced different versions of strong physicalism, however implausible they may be in light of what is obviously known by us about consciousness, because strong physicalism was seen as a crucial implication of taking the naturalistic turn. For these naturalists, if one abandons strong physicalism one has rejected a scientific naturalist approach to the mind/body problem and opened himself up to the intrusion of religious concepts and arguments about the mental.⁹³

That the naturalist does the same philosophizing it is not hard to see, but he should not find himself extracting meanings of moral and various subjectivities since flesh is moving unconsciously. He

⁹² John Warwick Montgomery, *The Shape of the Past: A Christian Response to Secular Philosophies of History*, rev. ed. (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany Fellowship, 1975), 170, n 113.

⁹³ J. P. Moreland, *Consciousness and the Existence of God: A Theistic Argument* (London: Routledge, 2008), 177-78.

should be consistent with his worldview. He should not be then a philosopher since he is irrelevant to the laws of nature. Or he should be more integrative in his approach. But this is precisely what he does not do. Wolfhart Pannenberg argues,

When natural scientists speak of the relevance of their findings and theoretical formulae for our understanding of reality, they are already in the realm of philosophical reflection on the processes and results of their sciences and no longer, in the strict sense, on the level of scientific argumentation. Such reflections on the relationship between natural law and the contingency of events, on causality and freedom, on matter and energy, on the concepts of time and space, or on development inevitably are couched in the medium of philosophical language and its history. Moreover, the fundamental concepts of natural science are derived, as a rule, from the language of philosophy, modified to meet the needs of scientific usage. Studies of the history of basic scientific concepts such as space, time, mass, force, and field have made the connections between the philosophical meaning of these terms and their scientific use clear. A knowledge of the history of science, especially the history of the terminology of the natural sciences, therefore belongs—together with an overview of philosophical discussion of these themes—to the preconditions for a fruitful dialogue between theology and the natural sciences.⁹⁴

Eventually, with scientism man is not anymore rooted historically in his world, but determined chemically, and as such there are no values and there is no historicity of existence. But in history, with all its chaos, the existence is about meaning. So the scientist or the a-theological objector of any kind jumps from mundane facts to extract philosophical interpretations from them. In this respect, he does not differ from the theologian or the historian who holds to a theology of history. Eventually, what make the difference are the facts of history where there is no history without values and those values cannot be found on the table of scientism. Theology makes the part of historical realism, while scientism makes them part of illusions in the brain. The scientist who practices scientism should withdraw. This calls to mind Konrad Lorenz,⁹⁵ who is not a theologian:

⁹⁴ Wolfhart Pannenberg, *The Historicity of Nature: Essays on Science and Theology*, ed. Niels Henrik Gregersen (West Conshohocken, PA: Templeton Foundation Press, 2007), 28-29.

⁹⁵ “The erroneous belief that only the rationally comprehensible or the scientific provable belong to the fixed knowledge of mankind produces disastrous effects. It encourages ‘scientifically enlightened’ youth to throw overboard the enormous fund of knowledge and wisdom contained in the traditions of every old civilization and in the teaching of the great world religions. Anyone who believes that all this is null and void is harboring another illusion, just as disastrous, namely, that science can create, from nothing and by reason alone, a whole culture with everything pertaining to it.” Konrad Lorenz, *Civilized Man’s Eight Deadly Sins* (Munich: R. Piper & Co. Verlag, 1978), 63-64. A hypothesis denotes a testable assertion, a statement or a proposition, about the relationships between two or more phenomena in the field of inquiry. In the first place, the hypothesis must be formulated in such a manner that deduction

if a naturalistic explanation is not exhaustive then there are hypotheses that are not philosophically naturalistic that could be considered since, as Montgomery observes,

The object of science is, after all, to comprehend facts of the world, not to create—much less presuppose—a system into which all facts must fit willy-nilly. To look for regularities in the behavior of data is entirely legitimate, and pragmatically to expect such regularities is the quintessence of wisdom; but to insist that all data conform to ordinary expectations and fit a non-miraculous model is the antithesis of the scientific spirit. Models must arise as constructs to fit the data, not serve as beds of Procrustes to force data into alien categories.⁹⁶

And “if the true scientist is willing—as he should do—to subordinate interpretation/explanation to the facts even if rational consistency suffers in the process, surely he cannot insist on forcing facts into the mold of substantive regularity! Regularity (like consistency) is properly employed up to the point where the data are no longer hospitable to its operations as an interpretative category: in the face of recalcitrant nonanalogous uniqueness, regularity—not the facts—must yield.”⁹⁷ Of course, “empirical arguments can be objective or subjective in nature, depending upon whether harmony with external experience (history, physical and natural science) or conformity with internal (psychological) experience is stressed,”⁹⁸ but what we are concerned with here is the methodological observation that “only deductive logic and theoretical mathematics, among human disciplines, are deduced from self-evident presuppositions, and these areas, it should be carefully observed, deal with no matters-of-fact at all, but only with conceptual relationships,”⁹⁹ and that “Kant has shown that philosophical presuppositions precede all forms of empirical inquiry. However, the a prioris of empirical investigation (to be distinguished sharply from those of logical positivism) are of a simple, self-evident variety, and instead of precluding discovery and

can be made from it and that consequently a decision can be reached as to whether it does or does not explain the facts considered. M. R. Cohen and E. Nagel, *Logic and Scientific Method* (London: Routledge, 1934), 207.

⁹⁶ John Warwick Montgomery, *Faith Founded on Fact: Essays in Evidential Apologetics* (New York and Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1978), 69-70.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 70.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 92.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 97, n 32.

intellectual progress, seem to provide valuable tools for investigative activity. Therefore, it appears wise to retain the distinction between rational and empirical arguments—a distinction incidentally, which is fundamental in understanding the role and development of modern science.”¹⁰⁰

Montgomery’s theoretical considerations of historical theology fit the following practical methodological questions on historical theology documents. The tests of reliability: (1) The bibliographic test refers to the analysis of the textual tradition by which a document reaches us; (2) internal evidence test: historical and literary scholarship continues to follow Aristotle’s dictum that the benefit of the doubt is to be given to the document itself, not arrogated by the critic to himself. This means that one must listen to the claims of the document under analysis, and not assume fraud and error unless the author disqualifies himself by contradictions or known factual inaccuracies; (3) external evidence test: do other historical materials confirm or deny the internal testimony provided by the documents themselves?¹⁰¹ Practically then the historian of historical theology as of any other history has the (1) source questions: What is the nature of the source (oral report, written report, personal observation, or a combination)? Is the source of the report one from which other reports have come? If so, what is their known reliability? Is the source of the kind that is likely to provide accurate transmission of the data? Is it subject to inadvertent error? Is the source biased because of prejudice, ignorance, and the situation or time in which it occurs? Was the document necessary to avoid or provide opposition? Was there an intention to conceal or deceive? (2) Author or transmitter questions: Is the authorship positively known? If so, is the author’s reliability known from any other documents? What are the author’s or transmitter’s qualifications as a reporter? Did he have the opportunity to observe directly the data he uses? Does he display sound knowledge of his subject and general data he uses? Does he display sound

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 92-93, n 27.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., *History and Christianity* (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 1965), 26-31.

knowledge of his subject and general intelligence on other scores? Is there any ground for thinking him susceptible to bias or to pressures likely to cause him to alter or suppress data? (3) Data questions: Are the data such as they can be observed directly? If so, *were* they observed directly? If not, are they such as can be indirectly observed with accuracy? With what degree of accuracy can they be recorded? Are they of a kind to make accurate recording likely? Are they verifiable by others? Have they been so verified? Do they stand in conflict with other data? Are they complete or only “representative”? If “representative,” what were the grounds of selection? Are the methods of analyses used appropriate? Do the data actually support the conclusions drawn from them? Would they support alternative conclusions as well, or nearly as well?¹⁰²

In light of the things said above, whatever the historical content of the text is, the historian formulates (1) a thesis, (2) searches for evidence, and (3) discovers facts on the basis of original authorities (eye witnesses, documents, and other materials contemporary with the events that they attest) and derivative authorities (historians, who chronicle that record and discuss the events that they did not witness, but they heard of and took information from the original authorities).¹⁰³ And so, Montgomery’s historical epistemology (historical empiricism) answers the fundamental issues connected with (1) historical objectivity, which is not whether history should be free from value judgments, but whether these judgments are justified *sui generis* or are open to criticism in light of the facts of history. What is the relationship between the facts of history and their interpretation? It is that the (2) facts themselves that provide adequate criteria for choosing among variant interpretations of them, (since facts of history carry their own interpretations) in the sense that the criterion or criteria must be satisfied in the context which the claim is made, and consist of both verbal and nonverbal behavior because “if language is to be a means of communication there must

¹⁰² Harold C. Martin, *The Logic and Rhetoric of Exposition* (New York: Rinehart & Company, Inc., 1958), 59-60.

¹⁰³ Richard J. Evans, *In Defense of History* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1999), 66.

be agreement not only in definitions but also in judgments” (Wittgenstein). Montgomery never denied that the possibilities of interpretation are infinite, but the (3) interpretations that fit the facts will be chosen as a method of telling what is the correct meaning. The event or facts supplied the criteria for arriving at the correct interpretation. And so, there is an (4) empirical necessity that unites an event or fact with its correct interpretation. And given the work of the historian to provide an interpretation that will fit the facts, it follows that for Montgomery the historian is not a passive observer of the past. The problem of history viewed from the (5) constructionist sense is the assertion that the historian remakes the past in his own image, constructs or creates parts of the past, a construction in accord with his own a priori worldview. Of course, the past cannot be observed directly, and all knowledge of the past is inferential and indirect, but the problem with the constructionist view is that it leads to solipsism, and if it is so then there is no criterion for choosing between alternatives and it is a purely verbal escape.¹⁰⁴ And coherence does not determine validity. Montgomery would argue that only empirical evidence can determine the relative validity of de facto coherence. This, however, defeats the claim. At best one can only suggest some further criteria. The alternatives are either solipsism or infinite regress.¹⁰⁵

Eventually, what Montgomery is devoted to do is to show that principles of historical theological knowledge are deduced from what historians would usually call facts, not simply fabrications of the human’s mind, namely the soteriologic events of historical theology that are found in the documents of the New Testament. There is a *historicity* of human life, it must be examined, and Montgomery’s *model* of historical epistemology puts the historian and the

¹⁰⁴ See Paul D. Feinberg, “History: Public or Private? A Defense of John Warwick Montgomery’s Philosophy of History,” in *The Shape of the Past: A Christian Response to Secular Philosophies of History*, rev. ed. (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany Fellowship, 1975), 376-80. A very important observation made by Feinberg is that Wittgenstein argues “that since meanings are public, there are public criteria for their application. This extends not only to things which are physically external, but to pain and sensation language, long the favorite argument of those who argue for the necessity of private language. The criterion or criteria must be satisfied in the context which the claim is made, and consist of both verbal and non-verbal behavior. This is what Montgomery means by events carrying their interpretation with them” (377).

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 382, n 21.

theologian in the proper position as “it is one of the defining characteristics of man that he is a thinking being who, by inductive and deductive processes, evaluates the data of the world to distinguish fact from fancy.”¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁶ John Warwick Montgomery, *Faith Founded on Fact: Essays in Evidential Apologetics* (New York and Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1978), 78.