Chapter Summaries: *Introduction to Christian Philosophy* by Clark, Chapter 1

In chapter 1, Clark reviews the purpose of Christian apologetics, and then proceeds to briefly review the failures of secular philosophy in four areas: epistemology, science, ethics, and religion. He notes one of the problems with Christian apologetics is that the responses are piecemeal. This piecemeal approach runs the risk of producing two direct replies that implicitly contradict one another. What Clark proposes is a broader look at Christian apologetics, and states that while secular attacks on Christianity have been made in every field of learning, so Christians must pay attention to them all.

The first secular area that Clark examines is its failure in the area of epistemology. He reviews Plato and Hegel, then Aristotle and empiricism, including flavors from Hume, Nietzsche, and Dewey. He concludes his historical survey by stating that secular epistemology is a failure. Chaos is not a philosophy, and eternal principles are the prerequisites of all argumentation. While Plato had some concepts that are hard to argue with, they break down when they leave the realm of the theoretical. Empiricism fails on a number of fronts.

The second area Clark examines and demonstrates its failures is science. He notes that science as a discovery mechanism, as a cognitive enterprise, has also failed to provide knowledge. Scientific laws are not discoveries and depend on non-observational factors. Scientific laws change almost as often as science textbooks. Clark states that as a manipulator of laws and things, science is quite effective and has produced such things as the computer and the atom bomb. However, as the confident science of naturalism, it has failed to produce certain knowledge.
The third area is ethics. Clark examines very briefly Kant, Utilitarianism, relativism, and existentialism. Utilitarianism is impossible, as no one can calculate the pleasure and pain oneself may receive, let alone that for any other human being. Relativism breaks down into chaos when applied in the street and to its logical conclusion. Existentialism also fails to provide norms of conduct pr to justify one type of action in contradistinction to its opposite. Its chief failure is its subjectivity with regards to epistemology.

The fourth and final area is religion, not specifically Christianity but the religion of humanism. Again, humanism cannot provide norms of conduct and any other concepts outside of the human.

This lecture established at least two conclusions. One is that no construction in philosophy is possible without some sort of presupposition or a priori statements. The second is that the idea of discovering unbiased truth in any secular philosophy has produced many difficulties.
Chapter Summaries: *Introduction to Christian Philosophy* by Clark, Chapter 2

Chapter Two is an examination on the axiom of revelation. After examining in the last lecture the notion of philosophy without *a priori* statements and that unbiased truth is difficult to produce in any secular philosophy, Clark now examines the idea that revelation should be accepted as our axiom. Many skeptics and secular thinkers have often demanded proofs of revelation. However, the idea that revelation should be accepted without proofs or reasons, undeduced from something admittedly true, seems odd until one actually examines the nature of axioms. Axioms are never deduced from more original principles; they are always tested in another way. Clark shows that God would be unknowable unless revelation is a given. Knowledge about someone is difficult unless the person wants to make himself known. To extort knowledge of God from an unwilling God is impossible.

Revelation has at least two different meanings according to Clark. One is natural revelation, where the existence of God can be demonstrated from an observation of the world. The second refers to verbal communication. In this case, knowledge does not come by analysis of things in nature, but through words which God spoke to men. Clark shows that making the first axiom, “The Bible is the Word of God,” will encompass all of Scripture, the law of contradiction, and logic. Starting with the Scriptures instead of God or some other proposition allows one to have precise knowledge that God has verbally spoken to man, and is broad enough to cover many different subject areas.

Clark addresses several alternate views such as knowledge by analogy and knowledge of God other than through self-disclosure. Those who make use of analogy
conceive of God as limited and finite. If God is omnipotent, then He can surely communicate with his creatures in a way that they can understand. Clark also addresses the neo-orthodox and their religion of the personal experience. However, Clark shows that the Christian religion is not an affair of the emotions, at least no more than politics or economics are, but fundamentally an acceptance of an intelligible message.

Revelation does not deprive us of knowledge otherwise attainable, but instead gives us the most important knowledge otherwise unattainable.
Chapter Summaries: Introduction to Christian Philosophy by Clark, Chapter 3

Chapter three is a final lecture on several implications of the axiom of revelation. He begins by briefly discussing Herman Dooyeweerd’s concept of time, and then jumps into several practical implications of revelation in the areas of history, politics, ethics, and religion.

In history, secular philosophies cannot determine meaning for history, nor can they determine the criteria for distinguishing between events of significance and any other event. Sources are incomplete, and historians must select and discard, so no form of history is completely unbiased and completely objective. Revelation, though, explains the significance of history. Without revelation, there is no possibility of developing significance.

In politics, several philosophers have developed a social contract theory, but in each case, man gives up rights to a government that is idealized and thus is born totalitarianism. The fact of total depravity of the human race is not taken into account in secular philosophies of politics. However, revelation provides answers to questions about what kind of government, the function of government, restrictions on government, private property, laws, capital punishment, and many other aspects of civil government.

Clark examines revelation’s implications on ethics. Secular philosophies cannot provide norms for conduct, and one cannot obtain what ought to be done from what is observable. When the establishment of normative laws is placed in the hands of God, secular attempts are seen as unnecessary and impossible. In Christianity, God did not will such things as laws because they were in themselves right and he was bound to will
them, but instead they are therefore equitable and right simply because God wills them.

Rightness is determined by the will of God. Clark also shows that one major objection to
the law of God, the “law of love,” does not provide direction for conduct. It sounds good,
but in the end is no better than secular philosophies.

Finally, Clark discusses the implications of revelation on religion. Revelation
makes religion possible. Clark compares existentialism with religion based on revelation.
This type of religion is common to many evangelical churches today and is based on a
non-doctrinal, anti-intellectual, religion of personal experience. This is subjective
religion of relativism, and is not Biblical religion. The Good News is not an existential
fable, nor is it a pointer or a symbol. The Good News is propositional and speaks the
truth of events that happened in history. Since revelation is propositional and true, it
follows that logic can be used to deduce conclusions from revelation. The Christian
religion is intellectual in nature.