

CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY

BOOK I

Introductory Issues to Theology

Notes Compiled

By

Dr. Danny Akin

The Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary
Wake Forest, NC

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PROOFREADERS' MARKS

OPERATIONAL SIGNS

TYPOGRAPHICAL SIGNS

- Δ Delete
- \bigcirc Close up; delete space
- \textcircled{B} Delete and close up
- # Insert space
- $\text{op} \#$ Make space between words equal; make leading between lines equal
- $\text{le} \#$ Insert hair space
- lg Letterspace
- P Begin new paragraph
- $\text{no} \text{P}$ Run paragraphs together
- \square Move type one em from left or right
- \sqsupset Move right
- \sqsubset Move left
- II Center
- \sqsupset Move up
- \sqsubset Move down
- $=$ Straighten type; align horizontally
- \parallel Align vertically
- tr Transpose
- sp Spell out
- stet Let it stand
- \downarrow Push down type; check type image

- lc Lowercase capital letter
 - cap Capitalize lowercase letter
 - sc Set in small capitals
 - ital Set in italic type
 - rom Set in roman type
 - bf Set in boldface type
 - wf Wrong font; set in correct type
 - \times Reset broken letter; check repro or film
 - \textcircled{D} Reverse (type upside down)
- PUNCTUATION MARKS
- ^ Insert comma
 - ^ Insert apostrophe (or single quotation mark)
 - “” Insert quotation marks
 - $\textcircled{.}$ Insert period
 - $\textcircled{?}$ Insert question mark
 - $;$ Insert semicolon
 - $:$ Insert colon
 - $=$ Insert hyphen
 - $\frac{1}{x}$ Insert em dash
 - $\frac{1}{\text{H}}$ Insert en dash

EXAMPLE OF MARKED PROOF

\square Authors As Proofreaders \square

ctr / lc

“I don’t care what kind of type you use for my book,” said a myopic author to the publisher, but please print the galley proofs in large type. Perhaps in the future such a request will not sound so ridiculous to those familiar with the printing process. Today, however, type once set is not reset except to correct errors.”

1. Type may be reduced in size, or enlarged photographically when a book is printed by offset.

Proofreading is an art and a craft. All authors should know the rudiments thereof though no proofreader expects them to be masters of it. Watch not only for misspelled or incorrect words (often a most elusive error) but also for misplaced spaces, “unclosed” quotation marks and parentheses, and improper paragraphing; and learn to recognize the difference between an em dash—used to separate an interjectional part of a sentence—and an en dash used commonly between continuing numbers (e.g., pp. 5–10; x.d. 1165/70) and the word dividing hyphen. Sometimes, too, a letter from a wrong font will creep into the printed text, or a boldface or d turn up in a MS. should, of course, be italicized in print. To find the errors overlooked by the proofreader is the authors first problem in proofreading. The second problem is to make corrections using the marks and symbols, devised by professional proofreaders, that any trained typesetter will understand. The third—and most difficult problem for authors proofreading their own works is to resist the temptation to rewrite in proofs.

Fig. 3.1

Manuscript editor \square $\text{c} \text{f} \text{sc} / \square$

THE GOD-ABSORBED LIFE
We are called to an everlasting preoccupation with God.
—*That Incredible Christian**

THE WORLD'S WORST WASTE
A man by his sin may waste himself, which is to waste that which on earth is most like God. This is man's greatest tragedy, God's heaviest grief.
—*The Root of the Righteous**

THEOLOGIAN FOR THE DAMNED
The devil is a better theologian than any of us and is a devil still.
—*Man: The Dwelling Place of God**

THE REAL SPIRITUAL LIFE
True spirituality manifests itself in certain dominant desires.

1. First is the desire to be holy rather than happy.

2. A man may be considered spiritual when he wants to see the honor of God advanced through his life even if it means that he himself must suffer temporary dishonor or loss.

3. The spiritual man wants to carry his cross.

4. Again, a Christian is spiritual when he sees

everything from God's viewpoint.

5. Another desire of the spiritual man is to die right rather than to live wrong.

6. The desire to see others advance at his expense.

7. The spiritual man habitually makes eternity-judgments instead of time-judgments.
—*That Incredible Christian**

HEARERS ONLY
Among the plastic saints of our times Jesus has to do all the dying and all we want is to hear another sermon about His dying.

—“Three Faithful Wounds” pamphlet*

A STOLEN THRONE
Sin has many manifestations but its essence is one. A moral being, created to worship before the throne of God, sits on the throne of his own selfhood and from that elevated position declares, “I AM.” That is sin in its concentrated essence; yet because it is natural it appears to be good. “What shall we do?” (Acts 2:37) is the deep heart cry of every man who suddenly realizes that he is a usurper and sits on a stolen throne.

—*The Knowledge of the Holy*†

* Published by Christian Publications Inc., Camp Hill, Pennsylvania

† Published by Harper Collins, New York, New York

SPEECH BY CHARLES COLSON

Bringing the Gospel to Athens

*Westminster Theological Seminary,
March 15, 1995*

In the darkest days of the Second World War, when the British forces had been driven to the beaches of Dunkirk, a pall fell over England. Hitler's armies could move forward and annihilate 300,000 of the finest young British men. There was no way to get them off those beaches. Their backs were to the English Channel. The English people waited in great suspense for what would happen to their army.

Over the teletype came a three-word message from the troops: “And if not.” Immediately the people of England knew what this meant. The reference was to Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego before Nebuchadnezzar's furnace. *Our God will save us, and if not . . .* These young men trusted God but were willing to die rather than give in.

This message galvanized Britain, and the people went down to their harbors. They got in their little boats, and they sailed out across the English Channel. Nearly 300,000 troops were rescued. Steeped in Christian culture, the British people had to hear only three words, “And if not,” and they knew exactly what their brave troops meant. The people responded and saved them.

Can you imagine what would happen in America today if a message came across, “And if not”? People would scratch their heads. We don't communicate with biblical language and metaphors and references today. We communicate with the language of our common culture: “Where's the beef?” “You only go around once.” People would not even recognize a biblical allusion.

I cite this only to illustrate how post-Christian we have become in 50 years. The polls indicate it clearly. In 1963, 65 percent of the people believed the Bible to be literally true. In 1992,

when George Gallup asked that same question, he didn't get 65 percent; he got 32 percent. Thirty years ago you could say, “The Bible says,” and two-thirds of the people would respond in belief. Today you say, “The Bible says,” and one-third respond in belief.

Steeped in Christian culture, the British people had to hear only three words, “And if not,” and they knew exactly what their brave troops meant.

Just look at the change in 20 years. In 1976 when I was out of prison, I finished a book titled *Born Again* and went on the “Today Show” with Barbara Walters. She took my book, held it up to the camera, and said, “This is a great book. It is the story of Chuck Colson's conversion to Jesus Christ.” Three or four days later, someone in New Hampshire ran up to a presidential candidate, an obscure former governor of Georgia, and asked him if he was born again. He said yes. He won the primary, and the *New York Times* splashed: “Born Again” in the headlines. In 1976 *Newsweek* ran a cover: “The Year of the Evangelical.” Being born again was the most fashionable thing in America! Everybody and everything was “born again,” even antique cars, football teams. Born again was the thing to be in America in 1976.

It has today become the most unfashionable thing in America. In 1992 a Gallup poll found that 50 percent of the people were concerned over fundamentalists. Only 38 percent were concerned over secular humanists. Last year a ^{USA} poll asked people whom they would least like to have living next door to them. Three percent would not want a Jew living next door; 30 percent would not want a fundamentalist. Thirty

percent of the American people do not want us living next door to them! We've gone from being the most fashionable group in America to being the most feared! I could go on and on with statistics. One-half of all Americans believe that all roads lead to heaven; one-quarter believe in reincarnation; one-half believe in ESP. All the statistics tell us that, for all our churches and all our religious activity, we have clearly become a post-Christian culture.

We Live in a Postmodern Culture

We have also become a postmodern culture. By that I mean that in the modern era, even though intellectuals rejected biblical revelation as being the source of authority, they at least believed there was truth that could be obtained by human reason. But beginning in the 1960s, the cultural elite began to believe that there was no such thing as truth at all! For the last 30 years we have been systematically, through our cultural elite, eliminating the notion that there is such a thing as truth.

To win people to Christ, God does not need to win the culture. The Word of God convicts; it never returns void.

The polls again show it. In the 1960s there would have been no argument about there being absolute values. But in 1991 George Barna asked Americans, "Is there any such thing as absolute truth?" and 67 percent said no. That was in 1991. In 1994 he asked the identical question to a similar universe and discovered 72 percent saying no. That is how fast belief in truth is declining in our culture.

Before you sit there smugly saying, "Oh, isn't that terrible! The secular world doesn't believe in absolute truth," let me tell you that Barna asked that same question of self-confessed evangelical, born-again Christians; in 1991,

52 percent said there was no such thing as absolute truth. Last year that figure had jumped to 62 percent. That's frightening. And that is why I believe deeply that the fundamental issue today is prephilosophical, pretheological; it goes to the question of whether there is truth, and if there is, can it be known?

Being Faithful Witnesses

Considering the fact that we live in a postmodern culture, what do we do? How are we to live out and proclaim the Gospel? How are we to be salt and light?

To win people to Christ, God does not need to win the culture. The Word of God convicts; it never returns void. In one sense it makes no difference what culture we live in. I, of all people, would know that. I was a relativist. I believed that God graded, like any good professor, on a curve. I hadn't done anything in the White House that the Democrats hadn't done before me! I wasn't a particularly bad fellow. Like many Americans I went to church twice a year, at Christmas and Easter.

I was a perfect prototype of today's post-Christian, postmodern man. But in 1973 I saw in the life of another person something I knew I wanted. For the first time in my life I heard the Gospel. And in a flood of tears in my friend's driveway, I surrendered my life to Christ. So I, of all people, know that one's cultural milieu does not stop the Gospel, that the Word of God can penetrate the hardest heart. And if you believe what was in the papers about me at the time, I certainly had one of the hardest of hearts.

So in the midst of an unbelieving culture, we are to be steadfast in our witness. Just last week I received a letter that warmed my heart, because it shows that all we have to do is be faithful. An American businessman wrote me from Singapore. He was 42 years old and explained that he remembered quite a bit about me from the Nixon years. He said, "I hope you

don't mind my telling you the role you played in my life. Two years ago my wife and I joined a church in Singapore so our three boys could enroll in the Sunday school. I thought the boys should hear some religious teaching, even though my wife and I were committed nonbelievers."

He went on to say that an Australian pastor had come through who had referred to me and my being "born again." He hadn't paid the sermon reference much attention, until a month or so later, when he and I were on the same plane and ended up close to each other in the immigration lines in Jakarta.

He wrote, "At first I didn't recognize you, but your face looked familiar and you looked good—healthy, relaxed, rested!" (I had flown all night from New Delhi. I felt terrible standing in that line.) "You didn't look like the hassled, tired business traveler I am used to seeing. When I figured out who you were, I took a good look at you, mainly because the pastor's mention of your name was still fresh in my mind. I went back home, got a copy of *Born Again*, and read it." He then gave his life to Christ, he and his wife have been baptized and he described the complete joy he has discovered. I mean we can be witnesses just standing in immigration lines.

Being Able to Engage the Culture

Having said that, we nonetheless have to be concerned about the culture in which we live. After all, we are biblically commanded to till and cultivate, to take every thought captive in obedience to Christ, to work in so far as possible to see that all of creation reflects the righteousness of our Lord. Francis Schaeffer in fact called this pre-evangelism, arguing that the cultural mandate was an important step in conditioning the culture to hear the Gospel.

As we attempt to engage the culture, we can draw a lesson from the apostle Paul and his

experience at Mars Hill in Athens. He confronted the intellectual leaders of the day. He knew the Greek culture. He read their own poets back to them. Then, of course, he told of creation, the resurrection, and the Good News. But he first got their attention. He let them know that he understood them and where they were.

There is a parallel for us today. Clearly we don't live in Jerusalem anymore where you could just say, "The Messiah has come; He has risen." That would have been all you had to say to the Jews for them to know exactly what you meant. Just like all someone had to say to the British people was "And if not," and they knew exactly what was meant.

We must make a connection with the "Athens" in which we live.

Today, if we want to engage the culture both for evangelism and to give a defense for the hope that is within us—but always with gentleness and reverence—we must make a connection with the "Athens" in which we live. And yes, making those cultural connections can make a difference.

Larry King invited me to lunch one day. He said, "Chuck, I have been watching you for years. Come talk to me about God." Well, that is one lunch invitation you don't turn down. He said, "Go ahead. Tell me about God." I told him my experience with Jesus Christ.

He said, "No, I know that story. That is a tremendous experience, and I am so glad your Jesus helped you. I have got a friend who is in exactly the same situation out in California. Someone came along with channels and crystals and helped her the same way your Jesus helped you."

I felt as if I'd hit a stone wall! He compared my experience with a New Age experience. I argued that Jesus was a real historical figure; he countered that so was his friend's guru.

So I switched gears and talked about the historicity of the Scriptures. He said, "Oh no. I grew up in an orthodox Jewish family. I know the Scriptures. And no thinking adult today believes that those are true."

Well, he is eating, enjoying his lunch, and I am picking at my food, talking, trying every approach I could try. I talked about what it means to have eternal life and the promises Jesus made. It wasn't registering. I worked pretty hard for about 45 minutes. Finally, for some reason, out of the blue, I said, "Larry, you enjoy movies, don't you?"

He said, "Oh, yes, I love them."

I said, "Larry, how do you deal with your conscience?"

I said, "Woody Allen. *Crimes and Misdemeanors*. Did you see it?"

"Ah, yes, great movie! Wonderful movie!"

And we started talking about *Crimes and Misdemeanors*. It is one of the greatest morality dramas you can see. It is about a Jewish ophthalmologist who is a pillar of the community. But he is having an affair with a mistress, and he is about to get caught. He doesn't know what to do, and so his brother suggests he hire a hit man. He has her killed. He sees her body, and his conscience is racked. He is thinking about what he has done, and with his orthodox Jewish background he is driven almost to the point of utter despair. He has only two choices, to commit suicide or kill his conscience. He kills his conscience. In the last scene of the movie, he says to Woody Allen, "Have you ever had something really terrible happen, and then you wake up one day and it is all gone away?" This is a story of a man who kills his conscience.

I said, "Larry, how do you deal with your conscience?" He dropped his fork. I said, "What do you do with the guilt that is in here inside?"

What do you do with what you know you have done wrong?" Then he was ready to listen to the Gospel. I don't know where he is spiritually today. We communicate. I send him materials. I pray for him regularly. He could at least hear the Gospel once I could engage him at some point with his—and my—understanding of contemporary culture.

Giving a Defense of What We Believe

We need to understand Athens and the culture in which we live—the post-Christian, postmodernist culture—both to make a defense of Christian truth as well as to evangelize. Why? Why do we contend for Christian truth? Is it to win the culture war? To re-Christianize America? To preserve religious freedom? To return to our religious roots and our heritage? No! The job of the church is not to win the culture. The job of the church is to be the people of God and be faithful; then God will use our faithfulness to win culture wars. But we make a defense of the hope that is within us with gentleness and reverence out of biblical obedience.

When you say, "Jesus is Lord"—the earliest baptismal confession—you aren't just saying, "Jesus is Lord of life. Thank You, Jesus, for saving me." You are saying, "He is the Lord of all creation." We are commanded to destroy speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God. We are taking every thought captive in obedience to Christ. "See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world rather than according to Christ" (Col. 2:8 NASB). Throughout the Scriptures we are told to develop a mind, to be transformed. "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind" (Rom. 12:2) so that we think and breathe the faith and so that

we are prepared to bring Christian truth into society not to win a culture war, but, as Puritan preacher Cotton Mather put it, so that the blessing of God might show forth in all areas of life.

To do that, you need a Christian world view. Odd, how seldom you even hear that talked about. I did a course, a Bible study of sorts, in my own church. A lot of people came from the outside, and one of the lectures was on the Christian world view and what it means. There were 300 people jammed in this room. I asked, "How many of you have ever heard of a Christian world view and what it means?" Three or four hands went up. I gave a clue: "I mean a view of all of life, informed by the Bible." Four or five more hands went up. We don't even think about this, but it is absolutely vital to have a Christian mind if we are going to make a defense for the hope that is within us.

Before I outline a few points that defend the Christian faith—Christian apologetics—let me say that I am a presuppositionalist. God is. He is not silent. He reigns. All discussion begins there. But it doesn't stop there. There is an antithesis, a clash of world views. Our job, as I see it, and the heart of apologetics today, is to show the post-Christian, postmodern world the impossibility of their position. This is exactly what Cornelius van Til argued for, that the Christian should show the impossibility of the contrary, that the secular world view cannot produce a rational or moral society.

This is a job for pastors and laypeople as well. Why? Because we have for all practical purposes lost the culture war. The gatekeepers have locked us out. We will see this culture change so that, as Mather said, the blessings of God show forth in all areas of life, as a Christian witness bubbles up from within, as people are equipped and empowered by the Holy Spirit to make a defense of their faith and

to show why the postmodern world creates an irrational, immoral, and impossible life.

Postmodern and Christian Views of Crime

For example, take crime, the area I have worked in. We have had a 560 percent increase in violent crime since the 1960s. We have quadrupled the number of prisons in America. Last year we crossed a dubious milestone, having more than a million people in prison. Since I got out of prison, we have quadrupled the number of prisoners. We increased the prison population last year by 70,000 people and violent crime went up 5.6 percent. Projections indicate that crime will soon skyrocket, as the children of baby boomers hit the crime-prone years: 14 to 17.

When I say crime is a moral problem, the postmodern man has no answer.

The liberals were dead wrong in the 1930s and 40s. They said crime is the result of poverty, bad environment, and racial oppression. They said they would build institutions where people could be reformed—reformatories—and resocialized. They were dead wrong. Rehabilitation didn't work. People came out of prisons, hardened and more crime-prone.

And the conservatives were wrong who said, "Lock them all up and throw away the key." Because you don't change behavior by fear. Punishment is necessary for justice, but it does not deter crime. The whole system has failed. So what does the postmodern man say about the biggest single social chaos in America today: crime? Postmodern man says, "Build more prisons and tougher laws and midnight basketball games and preventative programs and give us more government solutions, and we will solve the problem of crime." All these things have failed.

Nonsense. Crime is the result of people making wrong moral choices. When I was at Buckingham Palace for the Templeton Prize ceremonies, Prince Philip said to me, "What can we do about crime here in England?"

I said, "Send more young British kids to Sunday school."

He looked at me and thought I was being flippant.

I said, "No, Professor Christie Davies of the University of Reading did a study that showed that when Sunday school attendance was highest in England, crime was lowest. As Sunday school attendance has gone down, crime has gone up. Send kids back to Sunday school."

We are not just in an ethical collapse; we are in a free-fall.

He said, "Pretty good idea!"

But the postmodern man can't say that, because in his view there is no such thing as "moral." When I say crime is a moral problem, the postmodern man has no answer. It's amazing to me: The postmodern mentality, which ignores the moral dimensions of crime and the responsibility of the individual for his own individual behavior, has gotten us into the jam we are in with crime; that very same mentality denies the viability of the only answer to crime. Point it out to them. I do, and they sit there and say, "Wow!" You see it shows the utter bankruptcy of the postmodern view of life.

Postmodern and Christian Views of Ethics

Or take ethics. We are not just in an ethical collapse; we are in a free-fall. The week before last belongs in the *Guinness Book of Records*. Two former congressmen and a former cabinet member—three indicted in one week. Another cabinet member yesterday. Watergate was a great shock because so many of us close to the

president got in trouble. Now it is routine. The Department of Justice bragged a few years ago that they had prosecuted and convicted 1,150 state and local officials. They thought it was great. I think it is tragic.

And it is not just government; it is in business; it is in the academy. The president of Stanford University with \$7,000 bedsheets and millions that was cheated from government contracts. Forced out! I mean it is rampant throughout our society. We are in the midst of ethical chaos.

What does the postmodern man say? Ivan Boesky a few years before he went to prison spoke at the University of California Business School commencement. He said, "Greed is a good thing. Individuals are fine, just keep the system from getting in their way." But this is all the postmodern man can say. "No rules. Nothing to govern you by. No universal norms. Behavior is just the result of the social construct of the culture, and we can solve whatever problem by fixing up the culture and by having just policies in our society. If we have just policies, we will have just people." That is what the postmodern man says. They've got it absolutely backwards.

Christina Hoff Sommers teaches ethics at Clark University in Worcester, Massachusetts. She wrote an article, saying that ethics is private virtue and that virtue in society has come about as a result of private virtue. When she wrote this article one of her colleagues came to her and said, "Oh, this is such an antiquated, Victorian, prudish view of ethics. Ethics is social justice, and in my class we teach how to save the rain forest in Brazil and how to prevent Third World exploitation by multinational corporations, and protecting the environment and the like." Three months later that colleague came to Sommers and said, "I have just had a shocking experience in my ethics class."

Sommers asked, "What happened?"

The woman said half her students had plagiarized on a take-home test on ethics! Sommers reminded her of the article about private virtue. The woman said she'd like to read it again.

The postmodern man has it backwards. He says the society can make the individual just, and we know that it is the just individual who makes the society just. Their premise is hopelessly flawed, fatally so.

Postmodern and Christian Bases for Compassion

Third, where is the postmodern motive for compassion?

If we Christians aren't talking about our own history, shame on us! It was William Wilberforce, a committed Christian, who stood on the floor of the Parliament and denounced the barbaric practice of trading black men, women, and children as slaves. *Christians* stood against the entrenched power of the state when Lord Melbourne countered Wilberforce by saying, "Things have come to a pretty pass when religion is allowed to invade public life." Thank God it did.

Melbourne's words sound like those of some congressmen last fall who said religion ought not to be involved in political life in America. But it always has been. We Christians were in the vanguard of the abolition movement. We Christians brought hospitals and schools to this country. We ended abuses in the coal mines and in the factories in America. The history of Christian evangelical compassion with the poor and the suffering is one of the proudest traditions of our faith.

When I walk through prisons, why do I care about and hug guys dying of AIDS? I do this because of my love for Christ. It is my duty. It is certainly not in my own self-interest.

But where does the postmodern man produce compassion? How does he produce it

when he worships the autonomous self? The postmodern answer is evident in President Clinton's proposal that there be a national service corps so young people can learn public service and do, this is what he said, "voluntary works of compassion." So we pass a public statute on which we now spend a billion dollars; 47,000 kids enrolled; they're paid the minimum wage and a yearly \$4,725 tuition grant and all the overhead. How does the postmodern society produce compassion? By bribing people into being compassionate. It is irrational! There is no basis for compassion.

Postmodern and Christian Defenses against Tyranny

Or, fourthly, consider the defense against tyranny.

In Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, I have met so many beloved brothers and sisters of all denominations who stood against the communist tyrants. Why? The answer was most dramatically given on May Day 1990, as the tanks were parading through Red Square for Gorbachev's review. An Orthodox priest pushed through the crowd and thrust up into the sky an eight-foot crucifix and shouted, "Mikhail Sergeyevich! Christ has risen!" The crowd responded, "Christ has risen indeed." You may remember reading that Gorbachev walked off the platform. That was the day the death sentence was levied on communism. Because the cross was raised above the symbol of the state. *USA Today* ran a photo taken from an angle that shows the cross of Christ obscuring a large banner picturing Lenin. I have that picture on my office wall.

What great irony that now U.S. congressmen are saying that Christians don't belong in public life. They resent our involvement in political life because we worship a higher power, but it is our worship of the higher power that prevents the state from becoming a tyrant. Amazing!

The thing they resist most about us is the thing that most protects their liberty.

Benigno Aquino, who was converted in a prison cell reading *Born Again*, gave his life in the Philippines because he loved Christ more than his own life. He delivered that country from tyranny. The very thing they resist most about us—that we worship a King above the kings of this world—is the one thing that saves them from human tyranny.

Postmodern and Christian Sources of Hope

And finally, ask your postmodern, post-Christian secular neighbors “Where is your hope?”

I couldn’t help thinking about this while sitting at the Nixon funeral, a very poignant moment for me, because I had known Richard Nixon since I was 26 years old. I worked for him for four years and walked in and out of his office every day. We remained friends. After I got out of prison, I used to go visit him. I had continued to have a great personal friendship with him.

At the funeral there were four former presidents and the current president, the Congress, the diplomatic corps, the former White House staff, the present White House staff. The 1,500 most important people in the world, all sitting there staring at a coffin, knowing full well that in a very short period of time, they would be in that place as well.

Ask the postmodern man where his hope is. There is a great opportunity for an apologetic defense of our faith because in every single person is the *imago Dei*, the image of God. Our society is crying out today, the polls all show it, people are saying that we desperately want some spiritual answers. But the post-Christian world can’t give spiritual answers.

Never was this more graphically illustrated than when President Clinton went to the MTV news conference. You may remember the

question he was asked that got all the press, “boxers or briefs?” Well, a 17-year-old girl from Bethesda, Maryland, stood up and asked the president a serious question: “It seems to me that singer Kurt Cobain’s recent suicide exemplified the emptiness many of our generation feel. How do you propose to teach our youth how important life is?”

Wow! What a great question! But she asked the wrong person. It was not a question for the president; it is a question for us. Both the president and the *New York Times* missed it. The *Times* the next morning said, “President Clinton did not seem to have an immediate legislative solution at hand.” Can you imagine sending a “meaning of life” bill to Congress? President Clinton missed it as well. He gave the quintessential postmodernist answer: basically, you’ve got to think well of yourself and get in touch with your own feelings. Right out of the 1960s! Kurt Cobain felt great, he was pumped up on drugs, and he blew his brains out.

“How do you propose to teach our youth how important life is?”

That 17-year-old girl was asking, *Is there any meaning in life?* And the answer of the post-Christian is *Get in touch with your feelings.*

No. Know that there is truth! There is meaning! There is purpose! We serve the God of hope.

Defending Truth

I could go on and on. But let me give one more argument; the ultimate question.

Having had the opportunity to lecture at Harvard Business School and to the whole cadet corps at the Air Force Academy, I got a letter from Camp LeJeune, North Carolina, where I started as a marine infantry platoon commander. They asked if I would come back and address the Second Marine Division on ethics. I couldn’t

resist. It was a sentimental journey, a home coming. The place hadn’t changed much in 40 years.

Two thousand marines assembled, and I spoke for 45 minutes on ethics and took a half-hour of questions. By the way, these were the best questions I had been asked anywhere. A black noncommissioned officer stood up and said, “Which is more important, loyalty or integrity?” *Semper fidelis*, the Marine Corps motto; loyalty. But ultimately integrity is more important. These were great questions.

The best question of all, and one that sobered and shook me to my roots, was from a major who said, “Mr. Colson, you have made some marvelous arguments about the need for Christian truth for the survival of society, but they are all pragmatic, utilitarian arguments. How can I know there is truth?”

I stood before 2,000 marines feeling very naked for about 20 seconds while I thought about my answer. The answer I gave them was that something doesn’t come out of nothing. The major knew enough to ask that question. We see around us a well-ordered universe (see Rom. 1). There are known physical laws, and there must be known moral laws as well. “Nothing,” Jonathan Edwards said, “is what sleeping rocks dream about.” We are not nothing. We are something. And something has to come from something. I had earlier stated that I had experienced truth in my own life through Jesus Christ, but, I said, even if you haven’t experienced it, I think it is self-evident. It is there.

But that major asked the question we must address. And such questions undergird the reason I have formed an alliance—with some controversy and at some expense—with other Christians when I signed the Evangelicals and Catholics Together (ECT) document; I believe that all of us who can defend truth have got to defend it against the assault of the liberals and

the secularists who deny truth. As Francis Schaeffer said so magnificently, “When truth retreats, tyranny advances.”

What did he mean? Let me summarize. The crime problem is so bad in America today that people are willing, and the polls show this, to surrender their liberties to achieve order. The Germans did it in the 1930s. Friendly fascism; they welcomed it. Seventy-four percent of the people in Dade County, Florida, said they would waive their Fourth Amendment right against unreasonable search and seizure, if it would do something to stop crime. Eighteen months ago Puerto Rico called out the National Guard to protect the streets. A temporary measure, but they are still there. At a San Juan hotel you can see kids on the beach bouncing balls, and here come the troops in their camouflage uniforms with their M-16s over their shoulders. Moral chaos will create a vacuum into which the power of government will move.

Take away the restraints of the heart and polish up the bayonets. That is exactly the danger of a postmodern culture.

I call it Colson’s law: There are only two restraints on rebellious, sinful human behavior, one is in here—one’s own heart—and the other’s out there. The less of this inner restraint you have, the more of the “out there” you need. Take away the restraints of the heart and polish up the bayonets. That is exactly the danger of a postmodern culture. And the reason why our apologetic defense is so critical: that the blessings of God would show forth and that people would see the utter bankruptcy of their world view.

Why We Must Defend the Faith

Not only theologians, but ordinary laypeople have to make that defense in our society today.

Why do we do it? I am often asked. "Why do you bother with this, Chuck Colson?" The fight is overwhelming.

Let me offer three reasons.

First, I discovered in a flood of tears 22 years ago that what was in my heart, which was a whole lot worse than anything you read about in Watergate accounts, could be forgiven and wiped away by the historical fact that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, died on the cross for my sins. That was the greatest discovery of my life. Imagine you can be forgiven and free. But if Jesus did that for us, what do we owe him? Everything! Out of gratitude for what God has done for me I will serve Him. It is my duty. I have no choice.

"Oh no, pastor! I may have lost my leg, but I lighted the first candle."

Second, I am going to press on for another reason. Hebrew legend has it that there was an old man standing outside of the walls of Sodom. He was shaking his fists saying, "Stop! Stop! Stop!" Someone came along and said, "You can't stop them! You can't save them! Save your breath, old man." He said, "No, I am going to keep screaming, not because I can change them, but I don't want them to change me."

Keep screaming!

Third, it is amazing what one little light can do. I think of Timisoara when Laszlo Tokes's church was surrounded in 1989. Peter Dugulescu was the pastor of the local Baptist church. He was out there in the crowd around the church. Ceausescu's tanks surrounded them and the troops came into the square. The people started singing.

Peter Dugulescu told me the most marvelous story. A young Baptist lad named Daniel Gavra, 23 years old, came running up, and he had his coat closed obviously hiding something inside. Peter Dugulescu said, "No! No! No violence!" And Daniel Gavra said, "No, pastor, not violence. I've got candles." He pulled out not a gun but candles. And he started to light candles and passed them around. You may have seen it on television. It was a dramatic scene. That whole square in Timisoara was ablaze with lights. Ceausescu couldn't stand it, and he started firing on the crowd. Daniel Gavra grabbed a young girl with him, and they started running down the street. Suddenly he heard a shot, and he felt her fall. She was dead before she hit the pavement. Seconds later he felt his own right leg blown away. He woke up in the hospital two days later.

Peter Dugulescu came to see him in the hospital. His leg was gone. Peter Dugulescu said, "Daniel, that is tough. You have lost your leg." Daniel Gavra looked up to him and said, "Oh no, pastor! I may have lost my leg, but I lighted the first candle."

We do what we do out of duty because we are so grateful to God for what He has done. We do what we do because we don't want them to change us. And we do what we do because one light in the darkness can dispel evil. It is true: Good overcomes evil. Defend the faith with gentleness and reverence. Give a reason, an apology, for the hope which is within you.

God bless you.■

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They said it

"What we need in this state is a reverse inquisition. We burn the religious kooks at the stake. That's what we need. Clean up this society and get to a secular reality."

— Assisted suicide practitioner Jack Kevorkian, according to the Feb. 24 issue of *The Kansas City Star*.

Cloning "has the potential of giving women complete control over reproduction ... a stunning possibility that could, carried to its logical extreme, eliminate men altogether." — Ann Northrop, a columnist for *LGNY*, a New York homosexual newspaper, according to the March 6 issue of *USA Today*.

"Don't young people read newspapers? Don't they know that, thanks to President Clinton, they could have chosen to have a doctor suck their baby's brains out, and Delaware would not have chosen to charge them with murder?" — Columnist George Will in the Nov. 24, 1996, issue of *The Washington Post* on the two 18-year-olds who are charged with killing their newborn son.

KUDZU



THEOLOGY

DEFINITION

Theology comes from "theos" (God) and "logos" (speech/discourse, word, or message) -
"A discourse on one specific subject, namely, God."
"Thinking about God and expressing those thoughts."

HISTORICAL

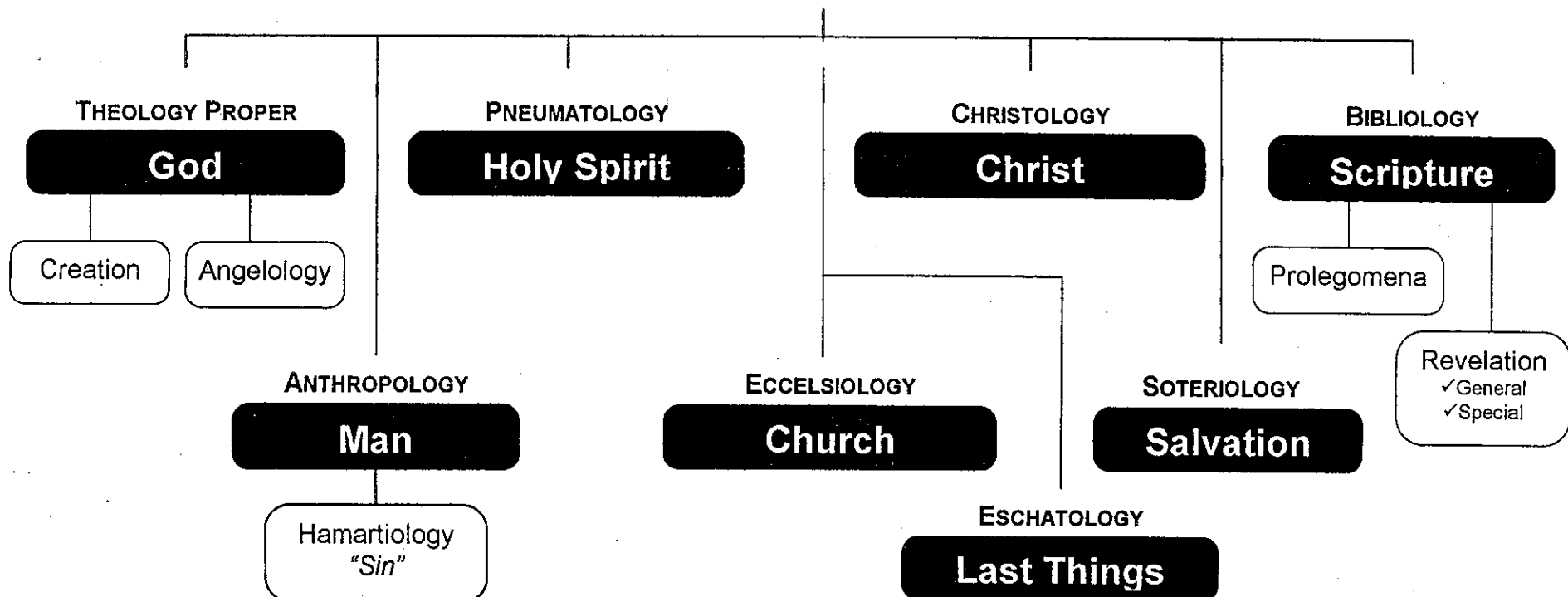
"Science which traces the historical development of doctrine as recorded in the writings of individuals and church councils."

SYSTEMATIC

"Science which follows a scheme of doctrinal development which incorporates into its system all the truth about God from any and every source."

BIBLICAL

"Science which investigates the truth about God and the universe as set forth in the Bible."



KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

36A

PROLEGOMENA - (*Pro* = before, *Logos* = to speak) the preliminary, foundational cornerstone to doing theology. It deals with the...

- ✓ Necessity of theology - to *define* and *defend* Christianity
- ✓ Possibility of theology - to discover the *revelation* of God, in light of the *nature* of man
- ✓ Presuppositions of theology - The Bible is true, understandable, must be interpreted naturally (plainly and literally), and is authoritative.

THEOLOGY - (*theos*=God, *logos*=to speak) a discourse on God. It is "*thinking about God and expressing those thoughts.*"

HISTORICAL THEOLOGY - the discipline which traces the historical development of doctrine as recorded in the writings of individuals and church councils, creeds and confessions.

SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY - the science which follows a scheme of doctrinal development which incorporates into its system all the truth about God from any and every source.

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY - the approach which investigates the truth about God and the universe as set forth in the Bible.

THEOLOGY PROPER - the doctrine of God. (Includes Trinitarianism)

PNEUMATOLOGY - the doctrine of the person and work of the Holy Spirit

ANGELOLOGY - the doctrine of angels

BIBLIOLOGY - the doctrine of scripture (revelation: both natural and special)

CHRISTOLOGY - the doctrine of the person and work of Christ

ANTHROPOLOGY - the doctrine of man

HAMARTIOLOGY - the doctrine of sin

SOTERIOLOGY - the doctrine of salvation

ECCELSIOLOGY - (*Ekklesia*) the doctrine of the church

ESCHATOLOGY - the doctrine of last things.

NEO-ORTHODOX THEOLOGY - Theology of "*ENCOUNTER*" between a wholly transcendent God and man. Not supportive of Propositional Truth, preferring to emphasize subjective religious experience. Revelation is something that *happens*, not something that *is*. (Karl Barth, Emil Brunner)

ARMINIAN THEOLOGY - stresses man's free will and universal (common) grace. (Jacob Arminius, John Wesley)

LIBERATION THEOLOGY - Begins with the oppressed. Theology initiates social change for the poor and oppressed. God is immanent in Creation. Christ is Messiah of political involvement. (Gustavo Gutiérrez)

FEMINIST THEOLOGY - Rejects the Bible's oppressive patriarchal structure. Seeks to empower women and liberate them from male domination (Mary Daley, Rosemary Ruether).

BLACK THEOLOGY - Jesus is "Black Messiah." A form of Liberation theology, it emphasizes white oppression and black power to liberate blacks from white domination (James Cone).

ROMAN CATHOLIC THEOLOGY - a constantly "evolving" understanding of the Christian Faith. Recognizes the Pope, the Bible and the Apocrypha as authoritative sources of authority, as well as tradition and church teaching. Saving grace comes through the SEVEN SACRAMENTS.

NATURAL THEOLOGY - attempts to understand God by means of rational reflection, without appealing to special revelation. He is the Creator of the universe.

LUTHERAN THEOLOGY - built around three fundamental doctrines.

- ✓ *sola scriptura* = Scripture alone
- ✓ *sola gratia* = grace alone
- ✓ *sola fide* = faith alone

Christ is the center of Scripture. His person, work, and substitutionary death are the basis of Christian faith and the message of salvation.

ANABAPTIST THEOLOGY - their doctrine was forged as it applied to life in the midst of horrible persecution. Therefore, it did not (could not!) stress systematic theological studies. Bible is fully true and is to be obeyed completely; it is the sole authority and guide. Affirmed the gathered believing community. Emphasis on obedience and discipline, on regeneration more than justification (Michael Sattler, Meno Simons, Felix Manz, Conrad Grebel).

REFORMED THEOLOGY - built on the sovereignty of God, the supreme rule of God.

- ✓ *Sola scriptura* = Scripture alone

God in eternity past *chose a number of fallen creatures to be reconciled to Himself*. The Holy Spirit enlightens the elect to believe the Gospel and receive salvation. Salvation can be summarized by the ...

FIVE POINTS OF CALVINISM (TULIP)

- T. Total Depravity of Man*
- U. Unconditional Election*
- L. Limited Atonment (Definite atonement)*
- I. Irresistible Grace (Effectual calling)*
- P. Perseverance of the saints*

WESLEYAN THEOLOGY - essentially Arminian, with a STRONGER sense of the reality of SIN and dependence on DIVINE GRACE. The Bible is Divine Revelation.

FOUR MEANS BY WHICH TRUTH IS MEDIATED - (The Wesleyan Quadrilateral)

- ✓ Scripture
- ✓ Reason
- ✓ Tradition
- ✓ experience

Scripture has supreme authority. Next to Scripture, *experience* stands as the best evidence of Christianity.

Salvation is a three step process of Grace -

1. **Prevenient Grace** - universal work of the Spirit between one's birth and salvation
2. **Justifying Grace** - produces salvation
3. **Sanctifying Grace** - process of achieving perfection

EXISTENTIAL THEOLOGY - attempts to "demythologize" Scripture. Must explain everything supernatural as myth. Christian faith then becomes subjective experience, without any objective truth. (Rudolf Bultmann, Paul Tillich)

LIBERAL THEOLOGY - seeks to articulate Christianity in terms of contemporary culture and thinking. Antisupernatural orientation and social focus drives this movement. Christ provides a moral example for humanity. Holy Spirit is the activity of God in the world. (Friedrich Schleiermacher, F.C. Baur, Herry Emerson Fosdick).

The doctrine of doctrine

To complain of being taught "too much doctrine" is to complain of being taught at all

I RECENTLY GAVE A DEVOTIONAL TALK before a Christian gathering. I thought I'd been well received, but later scuttlebutt revealed that some listeners had a different opinion, summed up in the complaint of one critic: "He was teaching doctrine!"

On one level at least, such a comment is utterly inane. Of course I was teaching doctrine—the word *doctrine* itself means teaching! Look it up. It is, in fact, quite impossible to teach anything at all without "teaching doctrine." Every teacher teaches doctrine.

Furthermore, every teacher teaches from some specific doctrinal position. It may not be biblical doctrine; it may be confused and self-contradictory doctrine. It may be evangelical and orthodox, or it may be liberal and even heretical doctrine. But it is, inescapably, doctrine. And since doctrine is inescapable, shouldn't we be sure our doctrine is correct and biblical? God gave us the Bible in the first place in order to instruct us, as 1 Timothy 6:3 (KJV) says, in "the doctrine which is according to godliness."

In this same passage, the apostle Paul uses rather strong language to describe those who reject correct doctrine: "If anyone teaches false doctrines and does not agree to the sound instruction of our Lord Jesus Christ and to godly teaching, he is conceited and understands nothing. He has an unhealthy interest in controversies and quarrels about words that result in envy, strife, malicious talk, evil suspicions, and constant friction between men of corrupt mind, who have been robbed of the truth and who think that godliness is a means to financial gain."

THE EARLY CHURCH understood the importance of correct doctrine. That is why they spent so much time constructing the great creeds of the faith, documents that set forth the essence of faith—their weekly "pledge of allegiance"—by reciting either the Apostles' Creed or the Nicene Creed every Sunday morning at worship. Yet many churches today are utterly ignorant of these doctrinal statements, and would even feel vaguely uncomfortable if creeds were introduced into the service.

G.K. Chesterton wrote, in his little classic *Orthodoxy*, of the

assertion in an evangelical weekly that "Christianity when stripped of its dogma (as who should speak of a man stripped of his armor of bones), turned out to be nothing more than the Quaker doctrine of the Inner Light." Chesterton responds, "Now, if I were to say that Christianity came into the world specially to destroy the doctrine of the Inner Light, that would be an exaggeration. But it would be very much nearer to the truth...."

"Of all conceivable forms of enlightenment the worst is what these people call the Inner Light. Of all horrible religions the most horrible is the worship of the god within. Anyone who knows anybody knows how it would work; anyone who knows anyone from the Higher Thought Center knows how it does work."

"That Jones shall worship the god within him turns out ultimately to mean that Jones shall worship Jones. Let Jones worship the sun or moon, anything rather than the Inner Light; let Jones worship cats or crocodiles, if he can find anything in his street, but

not the god within. Christianity came into the world firstly in order to assert with violence that a man had not only to look inwards, but to look outwards, to behold with astonishment and enthusiasm a divine company and a divine captain.

"The only fun of being a Christian was that a man was not left alone with the Inner Light, but definitely recognized an outer light, fair as the sun, clear as the moon, terrible as an army with banners."

A "creedless" Christianity is impossible. The word *creed* comes from the Latin word *credo*, and means simply: I believe. Every time anyone stands up and says, "I believe in ... (fill in the blanks)," he is stating his creed, his own personal statement of faith. Creeds are inescapable.

THE QUESTION IS NOT: SHALL WE HAVE A CREED? The question is, instead: Which creed shall we have? Shall our creed be a biblical declaration of unchanging Truth, or shall it be so-and-so's gush of his own personal feelings and attitudes? And if we choose Gush over Truth, can we be saved?

After all, Jesus claimed to be the Way, the Truth, and the Life, not the Mush, the Gush, and the Touchy-Feely. ☺



by DAVID CHILTON

CRITERIA FOR CONSTRUCTING A REASONABLE BELIEF SYSTEM

DEFINITION: A basic set of axioms (principles, beliefs) held by a community of believers which, for that community, gives meaning to life.

- They explain the manner and reason for things being as they are.
- They *influence* the community's actions.
- They determine the values the community holds as precious and worthy of defense.

FOUR ELEMENTS COMMON TO PRACTICALLY ALL SYSTEMS OF BELIEF:

A. A desire for knowledge

Central to philosophy, questions of epistemology, ontology and ultimate cause. Knowledge may be gained through empirical, rational, revelational, or other avenues.

B. A desire to belong

Central to sociology and anthropology (Doctrine of Man). Relationship and interaction are involved in this aspect.

C. A desire to be free from guilt (*Forgiveness*)

Central to sociology and anthropology (Doctrine of Man). A consuming, innate desire for acceptance, horizontal, vertical, or both.

D. A desire for eternal life (*Transcendence*)

Central to anthropology, philosophy, and theology, with a strong emphasis on *man's need to transcend (to go beyond) himself*. This transcendence may lead in any direction (backward, upward, outward, forward, inward, downward, and in a circle, etc)

(K,B,F,T = knowledge, belonging, forgiveness, transcendence)

A BELIEF SYSTEM MAY BE CATEGORIZED IN ONE OF FOUR CATEGORIES:

A. MYTHICAL - ahistorical, atemporal.

B. PHILOSOPHICAL

C. SCIENTIFIC/EMPIRICAL

D. *HISTORICAL - The Christian Approach

E. A COMBINATION OF TWO OR MORE.

*The traditional, orthodox Christianity has been characterized by history, and usually some aspects of a philosophical system.

ASSUMPTIONS/PRESUPPOSITIONS OF A BELIEF SYSTEM:

- Belief systems begin with certain assumed principles (world view or paradigm).
- More specifically, these assumed principles may be called presuppositional assumptions.
- Orthodox Christianity accepts GENERAL REVELATION and SPECIAL REVELATION.
- In accepting SPECIAL REVELATION, some principles may take the nature of SUPRA-RATIONAL/NATURAL statement. (Supra - natural = that which goes above or beyond the rational, but not against the rational. It is not irrational).
- Supra-Natural Revelation does not mean that these principles go against reason, but that they go BEYOND REASON.
- WE OPERATE FROM AN ALL ENCOMPASSING PREMISE (set forth by Arthur Holmes) that "ALL TRUTH IS GOD'S TRUTH."
- ALL BELIEF SYSTEMS CONTAIN FIRST PRINCIPLES

SEVEN CRITERIA FOR THE REASONABLENESS OF A BELIEF SYSTEM

- I. LOGICAL CONSISTENCY** - demands that our belief systems do not violate the principles of traditional logic - *A contradictory system cannot express a viable way of life.*

Three Laws of Traditional Logic

- a. **The law of identity** - If I have made a commitment, a commitment has been made.
 - b. **The law of Non-Contradiction** - I cannot simultaneously make *and retract* a premise.
($A \text{ and } \neg A$)
 - c. **The law of Excluded Middle** - I can either *make* or *retract* a promise, but nothing in between.
- II. UNITY** - there must be positive coherence between the various beliefs or doctrines of a system. This unity is required so that a belief system may provide a wholesome view of life. All of the various facets of life should be seen as an interrelated whole.
- III. EMPIRICAL ADEQUACY** - a belief system, where testable, must adequately verify its truthfulness. (i.e. it must prove itself true in testable areas).
- IV. RATIONAL COHERENCE** - requires evaluation of the belief system as a whole, demanding that it exhibit fully an inter-relatedness.
- V. PRACTICAL RELEVANCE** - the "pragmatic test" - a belief system must meet human needs. It must rationally, logically, and coherently provide purpose and direction for human life and solves problems common to all humanity.
- VI. UNIVERSALITY** - a belief system must not only be existentially meaningful, but it must also have *universal relevance to our way of life*. It must be able to determine our actions and our attitudes in **any** and **all** situations we encounter.
- VII. IMPRESSIVENESS** - (related to the "*test of explanatory power*") - any belief system must be able to refer to something or someone which impresses men as being more important than anything else. It further demands that a *belief system satisfactorily (if not in a superior manner) explain and answer the ultimate questions of life*. A belief system must be able to explain with *clarity* and *reasonableness* its own birth, growth, and maturity.

"Necessary Criteria For A Belief System"

Seeking to reasonably and rationally form and build a belief system is essential to any worldview. To do less than "turn our minds to understand, to investigate, and search out wisdom and the scheme of things" (Eccl. 7:25) in relation to one's own personal belief system is to fall short of fulfilling man's intellectual capabilities. Not only is it to fall short, but in all probability, there is a sense in which it is theologically and morally wrong, especially if one recognizes man's creation in God's image, cultural challenges, man's rational nature, and the social, ethical, individual, and even eternal consequences a belief system entails.

I. Definition and Content of a Belief System.

A belief system may be defined or described as a basic set of axioms held by a community of believers which, for that community, gives meaning to life. These axioms, often taking the form of a creed or confession, explain the manner and reason for things being as they are. These beliefs effect the community's actions and determine the values the community holds as precious and worthy of defense. Four elements are common to practically all systems in some form. These elements correspond in turn to a significant aspect of humanity. These elements are as follows:

- A. A desire for knowledge - Central to philosophy and questions of epistemology, ontology and ultimate cause. The criteria and process whereby this knowledge is attained may vary and proceed along several different paths (e.g., empirical, experiential, traditional, rational, and/or revelational).
- B. A desire to belong - Central to sociology and anthropology. The necessity for varied situations involving a community is key to the concept of belonging. Relationship and interaction are involved in this aspect of a belief system.
- C. A desire to be free from guilt - Central again to sociology, anthropology, and soteriology. Involved here is what could be described as a consuming, innate desire on the part of man for acceptance, whether it be horizontal, vertical in some sense, or both.
- D. A desire for eternal life - Central to anthropology, philosophy, and theology, with a strong emphasis on man's need to transcend himself. As Norman Geisler has pointed out in his Philosophy of Religion, this need to transcend may manifest itself in various ways. It may be that one's belief system leads him to transcend his particular situation toward the: (1) beginning; (2) highest; (3) outermost (circumference); (4) end; (5) innermost (center); (6) depth (ground); (7) circle. To summarize, man's desire for eternity, for transcending, may be backward, upward, outward, forward, inward, downward, and in a circle (i.e. in almost any direction) in order to attempt to go beyond human limitations.

A belief system may also be characterized in one of four categories. It may be mythical--ahistorical, atemporal. Secondly, it may be philosophical. Thirdly, it may be scientific/empirical. Finally, it may be historical. A belief system may also be a combination of two or more of the four categories listed. Traditional, orthodox Christianity has normally been characterized by history, and usually input from some philosophical systems.

With this foundation, we should look at assumptions and presuppositions of a belief system. All systems contain such assumptions.

II. Assumptions and Presuppositions of a Belief System.

All belief systems begin with certain assumed (first) principles. We may call these broadly a world view or paradigm, or more specifically presuppositional assumptions or principles. For some systems, logic provides the underlying assumptions. Others systems may appeal to the empirical, scientific testing of nature and experience. Still others would appeal to reason and rational thought processes, other some means of revelation. In Orthodox Christianity, we affirm, at least to some degree, special and natural revelation. It should be pointed out that in accepting special or propositional revelation, some principles may take the nature of an arational statement. This is due to the mysterious aspect of theology and the problem of seeking to describe the transcendent. This does not mean that these principles are "irrational", that they go "against" reason but that they go "beyond" reason, due to the nature of revelation. We further operate from a larger, all encompassing premise set for by Arthur Holmes that "all truth is God's truth." Such a premise is consistent with the traditional Christian belief system. With these thoughts in mind, the following assumptions or propositions are set forth in the Christian system:

A. GOD

1. He exists (known by means of revealed theology).
2. It is His character and desire to reveal Himself, and He has done so in both history and written record.
3. God's revelation is reliable and trustworthy because it has its source in Him.
4. God's revelation is comprehensive and satisfactory for sufficient knowledge to life's ultimate questions (Who am I? Why am I here? Where am I going?).
5. God's self-revelation has informed us that He is personal, infinite, Creator, sustainer, loving, holy, and a tri-unity.

B. MAN

1. He is a creature created in the image of God.
2. He is a rational being, responsible though flawed by sin and thus in rebellion against his Creator.
3. Being rational and in the image of God, he is capable of examination, interpretation, and systematization of God's revelation, with genuine knowledge being possible in spite of his "fallen state."

4. Man is dependent upon God.
5. Man can become a "child of God" and be forgiven.
6. Man can live forever.

C. The UNIVERSE

1. It was created by God. Its order and matter are not eternal.
2. The universe is sustained by God.
3. The universe serves a purpose in God's plan.

D. TRUTH and KNOWLEDGE

1. Truth and knowledge exist.
2. Truth and knowledge have been revealed (in various forms).
3. Truth and knowledge can be known and are open to points of testing and verification.
4. Truth and knowledge may be obtained by both reason and faith (cf. Heb. 11:3).
5. Truth is eternal (and absolute) rather than relative; it is unchanging and universally the same because it has its source in God.
6. Truth is absolute, not in or of itself, but because it derives ultimately from the one eternal God. It is grounded in His existence and reality.
7. All knowledge ultimately bears witness to the truth God reveals.

All belief systems contain first principles. It is necessary to determine whether or not these principles, as composing a belief system, can be supported in such a way as to be constituted as rational or reasonable. This is assuming, of course, that one holds that a belief system's rationality is important. Most in the Eastern religions and New Age systems decry any such rationality.

III. Criteria For The Reasonableness Of A Belief System.

Defending one's belief system as to its rationality can take many forms. S. Kierkegaard in his approach to Christianity would argue that rationality for their system does not exist. Some sort of irrational "leap of faith" is all one may hope for. However, many cannot live this way. For them, an irrational system is meaningless, even false. It could never provide real purpose for one's existence. Thus one should seek criteria whereby a belief system may be judged as to its rationality. The following seven criteria are set forth as reasonable principles for establishing the rationality of a belief system:

A. Logical Consistency - This standard demands that our systems not violate the principles of traditional logic, namely the Law of Identity (principium identitatis), the Law of Non-contradiction (principium contradictionis), and the Law of the Excluded Middle (principium tertii exclusi).

1. The Law of Identity says that if I have asserted an illocution, it is asserted.

For example, if I have made a commitment, a commitment has been made.
 $A=A$.

2. The Law of Non-contradiction states that I cannot simultaneously assert and deny an illocution (or a set of illocutions). For example, I cannot simultaneously make and retract a premise. $A \neq \neg A$.
3. The Law of Excluded Middle states that I can either assert or deny any illocution (or set of illocutions), but that there is no third possibility. An example would be that I can either make a promise or retract it, but nothing in between. I can only assert or deny something, but nothing in between. "A" cannot be true and false at the same time.

It is noted that a fourth principle of logic may be added, known as the principle of "sufficient reason." This principle asserts that an effect needs a proportionate cause. It should be noted that these laws do not deny the possibility and rationality of paradoxes, especially in the area of theology, but a paradox is only an apparent contradiction. Paradoxical statements can be extremely valuable. They may, for example, inspire greater thinking (as with a riddle) or insure that one does not become too narrow and see only one side of an issue without doing justice to the other side as well.

The first requirement, therefore of a belief system is logical consistency. A contradictory system cannot express a viable way of life. A contradiction, after all, asserts something but at the same time denies what it has asserted, thus asserting nothing.

- B. Unity - This criteria simply states that there must be positive coherence between the various beliefs or doctrines of a system. Lack of unity not only carries an internal risk to the system itself, but it cannot fulfill rationally the aim of a belief system, that being the goal of integrating or keeping whole one's way of life. Without unity and coherence, a belief system cannot provide a wholesome view of life. The demand for unity asks for a system that sees all the various areas of life as an interrelated whole, one that helps us keep the parts in meaningful relation to the whole.
- C. Empirical Adequacy - This principle holds that a belief system, where testable, must be adequately verifiable as to its truthfulness. It may verify or validate events from which the system is birthed (i.e. passion, resurrection, and incarnation of Jesus the Christ). This adequacy does not imply conclusive proof or logically final guarantees. Christianity, for example, as to the events which support it, cannot be subjected to an empiricism of the degree of scientific methodology and the laboratory. It should be noted that when we seek verification, we realize there are different degrees or levels which one may pursue. We may state, concerning the reliability of an event, that it is certain, probable, possible, or improbable. In relation to a belief system, probable knowledge is what we are after, especially as it relates to historical occurrences. Absolute knowledge is not possible in this discipline. This, however, does not devalue historical investigation. It simply places it in its proper position. Such methodology usually takes the form of

something like the following:

1. Just as the historian asks questions about events, in like manner we can and must ask questions about the events recorded in the Bible.
2. Just as the historian is concerned about the interpretation of events and asks such questions as "What were the causes of World War II," so in the same way we can and should ask such questions as "How are we to account for the origin and growth of Christianity?"
3. Just as in any attempt to answer questions of the past, the historian can never be completely objective but is inevitably influenced by his presuppositions, so in like manner in considering the biblical documents, we are bound to be influenced by our presuppositions.
4. Just as the historian realizes that he cannot arrive at one hundred percent certainty about the past but must be content to accept lesser degrees of certainty, we too may never be one hundred percent certain about the events in the Bible. However, this need not lead to complete skepticism and discounting the possibility of knowing anything about what happened.
5. Just as historical events and theories are open to falsification (i.e., they can be shown to be highly unlikely or improbable), in the same manner, events recorded in the Bible, the Christian revelation, are open to falsification; they are not immune from historical inquiry.

Empirical adequacy can be formulated, therefore, in the following manner: 1) I believe that "p"; 2) "p" is true; 3) I have adequate evidence for "p". Adequacy, therefore, means there is sufficient scope of evidence to bear witness to the whole. "Good fit" may be another way of stating it, according to Dr. Arthur Holmes. The system fits the facts well as the facts are known and perceived by us. A fourth feature that can strengthen empirical adequacy, based on our scheme above, is if the evidence is open to repeated examination or at least public examination. Public evidence recognizes that the case for a said belief is strengthened if it can be investigated by other people, at other times, and in other situations. It seems that the concept of "bearing witness" to one's knowledge and experience is relevant at this point. Christianity, for example, appeals for much of its support to the testimony of reliable, trustworthy eyewitnesses who experienced certain events and recorded those events verbally and in written form. This type of empirical evidence is on the same level and is of the same type as that which would be admitted as testimony in a court of law. Such testimony is open, likewise, to inspection, falsification, criticism, and evaluation as to its reliability and admission.

How might one sum up the empirical data supporting a belief system such as Christianity? If we were to simply make a list for the empirically verifiable evidence as it relates to the events from which this particular belief system has its roots, it might appear as follows:

1. Reliable historical documents of the highest preservation, integrity and consistency.

2. Eyewitness testimony of reliable, trustworthy individuals of varied backgrounds and disciplines.
3. Numerous archeological confirmations of the written record.
4. Explanatory ability of historical events (i.e., resurrection, birth of the church, change from the Sabbath to Sunday worship).
5. Prophecy and miracles.

D. Rational Coherence - This criteria is related to logical consistency and unity but perhaps with a different emphasis. This test calls for the logical scrutiny of our system as a whole, demanding that it exhibit fully an interrelatedness. The test of rational coherence says that one can maintain a belief that "p" (e.g., Jesus of Nazareth rose bodily from the dead) as long as: 1) I do not have a stronger belief "q" (e.g., The disciples had visions or hallucinations such that believing "p" is inconsistent with believing "q", and 2) I do not come across further evidence which gives rise to my believing such a proposition "q". Being rational about my belief system and desiring its coherence means being open to the possibility of falsification (see Karl Popper). This sort of rationality is not only possible, but it is also an intellectual and moral duty. Because our beliefs are never infallible, we must as rationally, objectively, and consistently as possible continually test and retest them in order to find out if they can maintain consistency with each other and with the evidence which gives rise to further beliefs. We never have the right in relation to our belief system to "close our case." However, sooner or later we have to decide to act on our beliefs and in this sense stop testing them. At some point, we must stop testing the strength of the chair and decide to sit in it. This becomes a pragmatic decision depending on the practical circumstances in which we find ourselves (from a human perspective).

By way of summary we see that our beliefs can be divided into two classes, those which need testing and analysis and those which have been tested and considered certain enough in order that we may act upon them.

- E. Practical Relevance - This test, also called the pragmatic test, states that a belief system must meet human needs. This test should never stand in isolation from other tests. In and of itself, it is probably the weakest of our tests, yet a necessary one in light of practical, everyday living. This principle says that a belief system must rationally, logically, and coherently provide purpose and direction for human life and that it solves problems common to all humanity. Such problems are a need for knowledge, a need to belong, a need to be forgiven, and a need to transcend, to hope for eternity. This principle of practical relevance recognizes that a belief system has the capacity and function of determining and integrating one's way of life.
- F. Universally - This test says that a belief system must not only be existentially meaningful, but that it must also have universal relevance to our way of life. It must be able to determine our actions and our attitudes in any and all situations we encounter. A view of life becomes untenable if situations arise for which it has no

practical implication or in which the attitudes or actions that seem correct in terms of that belief system prove to be impracticable.

- G. Impressiveness - This test may also be identified or related to the test of explanatory power. Any viable belief system must be able to refer to something or someone which impresses individuals as being more important (more determinant of meaning) than anything else. This principle further demands that a belief system satisfactorily, and probably even in a superior manner to its opponent, explain and answer the ultimate questions of life in relation to this determinant. It is expected of a belief system that it be able to explain with clarity and reasonableness its own birth, growth, and maturity. Only within these parameters can the basic convictions of a belief system become evident for those who commit themselves to this belief system. Christianity, for example, is inspired by the person of Jesus of Nazareth, and it is evident to them that a Christian way of life is the only appropriate one.

IV. Choosing a Belief System in Light of a Rational Approach.

Logical consistency, unity, empirical adequacy, rational coherence, practical relevance, universality, and impressiveness/explanatory power are external criteria we have established for a belief system's rationality and functionability. The question remains, however, whether these criteria offer a sufficient basis for determining conclusively which belief system is the one and only appropriate one, excluding all others. It is my perspective and that of others that they do not, and the following considerations suggest why.

First, in order to determine which belief system is the only correct one, it would be necessary to compare all views of life in the light of our established criteria. However, we do not know all belief systems of the past, probably even of the present, and certainly of the future.

Secondly, our established criteria might possibly be met in a satisfactory manner by more than one belief system.

Thirdly, the demand for universality implies that a view of life must be relevant to every situation in life. We do not know, however, whether this will always be the case in the future. Anyone may trust and operate from the premise that his belief system will remain relevant in the future; however, this cannot be empirically demonstrated in advance.

Finally, the seventh criterion (impressiveness) is not efficient for comparing differing belief systems. What inspired one person and explains for him the way things are may leave another unaffected.

Therefore, though there are external criteria that any belief system has to meet if it is to be classified as both rational and functional, these criteria are not an adequate and sufficient basis for determining which view is correct to the exclusion of all others. We are left, therefore, with the question as to whether commitment to a view of life is not arbitrary and irrational. Several observations are noted in light of this.

First, it is unrealistic to ask whether or not people are justified in committing themselves to a belief system or certain view of life. We must all live in some way or other. Whether one desires to or not, he practices a specific way of life and thereby excludes others. The question is not whether one should adopt a certain way of life but which way of life one finds most rational, acceptable, and persuasive.

Second, it is incorrect to call such a commitment to a belief system arbitrary. It is unrealistic and irrational to think that we could line up all possible belief systems in a neat row which meet our criteria and then objectively set about making a choice; everyone of us operates out of certain paradigmatic scheme(s). Everyone of us is already in the position of having been inspired by something or someone or by a group of things that are to us all important. A commitment to a view of life is never an arbitrary choice between equal possibilities. It involves responding to whatever inspires one as being more important than anything else.

Third, our criteria do enable us to narrow down which belief systems can be considered within the realm of rationality, if one considers rationality a worthy goal and criteria.

Fourth, The degree to which a belief system meets our criteria naturally, without large adjustments, can lead us to move from possibly accepted belief systems within rational parameters to a more probable belief system within the same limits.

Fifth, a commitment to a belief system is not irrational in the sense that there can be no discussion or dialogue about it. On the contrary, our external criteria provide the basis for such discussion and interaction. If opponents challenge someone for accepting a belief system that is contradictory, disjointed, empirically inadequate, incoherent, irrelevant, not universally applicable, and unimpressive, lacking in explanatory power, he cannot on rational grounds ignore such critique and criticism. As Vincent Brummer notes, "If we accept Karl Popper's definition of rationality as openness to criticism, every view of life, every belief system is in principle open to such outside criticism and is therefore a rational matter."

CONCLUSION

One can rationally hold a belief system if he avoids the extremes of irrational existentialism (mysticism) on one hand and strict empirical skepticism (agnosticism) on the other. To be constituted as rational, a system should be able to meet the criteria we have established with reasonableness, that is without excessive reshaping and redefining which would force it to be irrational or abandoned. It is recognized that all belief systems involve a degree of circular reasoning; however, as Dr. Arlie J. Hoover, Professor of History at Pepperdine University, has stated:

Building a worldview is like proving a case in court--the whole point is to prove what you originally assumed...You are given a thesis to defend, to see it unites and explains a complex web of data. Thus, to end up with the thing you started is certainly not fallacious; in fact, it is a basic rule of the game.

*"A worldview is a way of viewing or interpreting all of reality.
It is an interpretive framework through which or by which
one makes sense of the data of life and the world."*

*-Norman Geisler,
William Watkins*

*"Christianity is a world and life view and not simply a series of unrelated doctrines.
Christianity includes all of life. Every realm of knowledge, every aspect of life and every
facet of the universe find their place and their answer within Christianity.
It is a system of truth enveloping the entire world in its grasp."*

-Edwin H. Rian

*"All the branches of knowledge are connected together,
because the subject matter of knowledge is intimately united in itself,
as being the acts and the work of the Creator."*

- John H. Newman

The triumph of truth

"It is better to be divided by truth than to be united in error. It is better to speak the truth that hurts and then heals, than falsehood that comforts and then kills. It is not love and it is not friendship if we fail to declare the whole counsel of God. It is better to be hated for telling the truth than to be loved for telling a lie. It is impossible to find anyone in the Bible who was a power for God who did not have enemies and was not hated. It's better to stand alone with the truth than to be wrong with a multitude. It is better to ultimately succeed with the truth than to temporarily succeed with a lie."

—Pastor ADRIAN ROGERS (quoted in The Berean Call, Dec 1996, page 3)

THE ESSENCE OF A WORLDVIEW

DEFINITION: refers to any

- ideology,
- philosophy,
- theology,
- movement,
- or religion

that provides an overarching approach to understanding

- God,
- the world,
- and man's relation to God and the world.

It deals with understanding life's ultimate questions. Who am I? Why am I here? Where am I going?

A worldview should contain a particular perspective regarding each of the following ten disciplines.

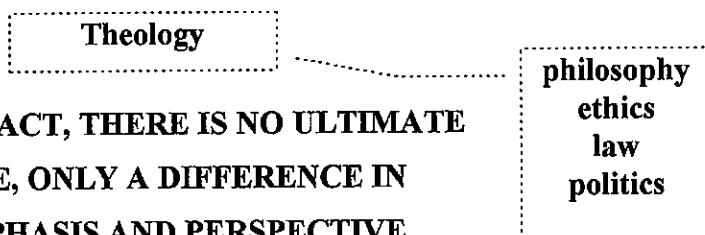
- 1) theology
- 2) philosophy
- 3) ethics
- 4) biology
- 5) psychology
- 6) sociology
- 7) law
- 8) politics
- 9) economics
- 10) history

BIBLICAL CHRISTIANITY MUST (AND DOES) CONTAIN A SPECIFIC ATTITUDE TOWARD ALL TEN DISCIPLINES IN ORDER TO BE CONSIDERED A RELIGIOUS WORLDVIEW.

The line separating theology and philosophy is fragile.



The line separating theology, philosophy, ethics, law, and politics - is more so.



IN FACT, THERE IS NO ULTIMATE LINE, ONLY A DIFFERENCE IN EMPHASIS AND PERSPECTIVE.

THE ESSENCE OF A WORLDVIEW

The term *worldview* refers to any ideology, philosophy, theology, movement, or religion that provides an overarching approach to understanding God, the world, and man's relations to God and the world. It deals with our understanding of life's ultimate questions. A worldview should contain a particular perspective regarding each of the following ten disciplines: theology, philosophy, ethics, science, psychology, sociology, law, politics, economics, and history.

If Biblical Christianity contains a specific attitude toward all ten disciplines it is, by our definition, a worldview. And, since it contains a theology, it is by implication a religious worldview.

The New Age Movement (Cosmic Humanism) is an emerging worldview, because it has something to say about some of the categories (e.g., theology, politics, and biology), but little to say about others (e.g., law and sociology), at least at the present.

Christians must understand that various disciplines are not value free. Each discipline demands basic assumptions about the nature of reality in order to grant meaning to specific approaches to it.

The line separating theology and philosophy is fragile; the line separating theology, philosophy, ethics, law, and politics is more so. In fact, there is no ultimate line, only a difference in emphasis and perspective.

It is clear that theological and philosophical assumptions color every aspect of one's worldview and that disciplines such as sociology and psychology are related; but other relations and distinctions are less recognizable.

A CHRISTIAN WORLDVIEW

One who says he believes with his whole heart that Jesus is the Son of God will affirm a Christian worldview and is thereby committed to much else besides. What else? "He is committed," says James Orr, "to a view of God, to a view of sin, to a view of redemption, to a view of the purpose of God in creation and history, to a view of human destiny, found only in Christianity."

Orr has summarized nine specific areas covered by "the Christian view of the world." He states that this view affirms:

1. the existence of a personal, ethical, self-revealing all powerful, all knowing, everywhere present God;
2. the creation of the world by God, involving His holy and wise government of it for moral ends;
3. the spiritual nature and dignity of man as created in the image of God;
4. the fall of man into sin and his resultant depravity;
5. the historical self-revelation of God to the patriarchs and in the line of Israel;
6. the incarnation of Jesus Christ as the eternal Son of God, yes, as God manifest in flesh;
7. the redemption of the world through the atoning death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ;
8. the founding of the Kingdom of God on earth, which includes the spiritual salvation of individuals and a new order of society ("the result of the action of the spiritual forces set in motion through Christ"); and
9. history has a goal, including resurrection, judgment, and separation of the righteous to eternity with God and the wicked to eternal suffering excluded from His presence.

Orr goes on to state,

"I recognize therefore to the full the need of growth and progress in history. Bit by bit, as the years go on, we see more clearly the essential lineaments of the truth as it is in Jesus; we learn to disengage the genuine truths of Christ's gospel from human additions and corruptions; we apprehend their bearings and relations with one another, and with new truths, more distinctly; we see them in new points of view, develop, and apply them in new ways."

Notre Dame professor Alvin Plantinga also defends the existence of a Christian worldview. He insists that there is a Christian philosophy as well as a Christian biology, psychology, sociology, and economics. He declares, "All these areas need to be thought anew from an explicitly Christian and theistic perspective. They're typically not done that way at all, of course, and the results are usually antithetical or irrelevant to Christianity."

Joining Plantinga and Orr in their call for a Christian worldview is theologian Carl F. H. Henry. In his six-volume *God, Revelation and Authority*, he wrote,

The task of Christian leadership is to confront modern man with the Christian world-life view as the revealed conceptuality for understanding reality and experience, and to recall reason once again from the vagabondage or irrationalism and the arrogance of autonomy to the service of true faith. That does not imply modern man's return to the medieval mind. It implies, rather, a reaching for the eternal mind, for the mind of Christ, for the truth of revelation, for the Logos as transcendent source of orders and structures of being, for the Logos-incarnate in Jesus Christ, for the Logos as divine agent in creation, redemption and judgment, for the Logos who stands invisibly but identifiably as the true center of nature, history, ethics, philosophy and religion.

Clearly, we recognize the need for every Christian to embrace a Christ-centered, common-sense, rationally defensible and experimentally meaningful worldview.

World Views

"You see, it really does matter very much, how we think about the cosmos."
- George Roche

Definition:

"The framework through which you see and the basis on which you decide"

- *A Way Of Seeing Or Interpreting All Of Reality*
- *A Perceptual Framework*
- *Determines Our Values*

'The Christian ideal,' it is said,
has not been tried and found wanting;
it has been found difficult and left
untried.

What's Wrong with the World
-G. K. Chesterton

EDITORIALS

WHY WE BELIEVE IN HERESY

*Can the church have a center
without a circumference?*

As this issue goes to press, the Episcopal Church is reluctantly trying one of its bishops (who flagrantly ordained a practicing homosexual) for heresy. Already, the trial has been delayed by procedural moves, including changes of venue and a call for a preliminary hearing on whether the Episcopal Church even has a doctrine that addresses the bishop's alleged misconduct and the false teaching on which it was based. If the court decides there is no such doctrine, the heresy trial will be aborted.

Excesses elicit correctives. Each new imbalanced approach to the faith gives the church the fresh opportunity to demonstrate the fine, subtle equilibrium of faith that makes it beautiful. Heresy occurs where some legitimate dimension of faith is so weighted out of equilibrium as to become a principle of interpretation for all other aspects, thus denying the unity and proportionality of the ancient always-everywhere-and-by-everyone consensus.

God allows heresies to challenge the church in order to bring us to a fuller understanding of the truth. We hope the Episcopal Church will discover that.

HUNTING FOR HERESY

The Greek word behind *heresy* means the act of choosing: the self-willing choice that departs from apostolic teaching. Marcion, Montanus, and Arius were all convinced they had a clearer picture. The current error does not proclaim a better truth, but that all truths are equal and none is superior. The old-time heretic had excessive regard for his own "truth." Nevertheless, the modern relativist may be every bit as willful in considering all truths "valid." Thus the difficulty for someone who wants to discuss heresy.

I have had the dubious honor of being tagged a heresy-hunter. I first considered calling myself a victim, an abused truth-seeker. Instead I have embraced *heresy-hunter* in an ironic sense: I am looking for some church discussion, even a bull session, in which heresy exists, at least in theory.



Today, the archheresiarch is the one who hints that some distinction might be needed between truth and falsehood, right and wrong. This is often treated incredulously by a relativist majority.

Oldline Protestantism at its tolerant and vulnerable zenith finally achieved what inquisitors and crusaders could not: the eradication of heresy. No heresy of any kind any longer exists within this pliable, smiling ecclesial ethos—except, perhaps, for offenses against inclusivism.

After centuries of struggle with the truth, heresy has finally been banished from the doctrinally experimental inclusive church. This unprecedented accomplishment is an ironic twist on the conservative search for the purity of the church: Rather than separate itself from the sinful and heterodox, the church now simply excludes sin and heresy from consideration.

Sadly, there is no way even to raise the question of where the boundaries of legitimate Christian belief lie when absolute relativism holds sway.

ABSOLUTE RELATIVISM

To proclaim generously that anyone's truth is as valid as anyone else's truth is to deny the existence of truth altogether. The early church could not proclaim its message without distinguishing that message from other messages. It is only when we begin to have the courage to specify the things that are not the faith clearly that our affirmations can be taken seriously.

It was not until Athanasius ruled out Arian excesses that he became a serviceable theologian. It was only

when Luther said no to indulgences that he became a Reformer. Today the confession that Jesus Christ is Lord requires a decisive repudiation of views that demean the atoning work of God the Son. The worshiping community cannot in the name of inclusiveness honestly allow the implication that the salvation accomplished once for all on the cross is one among many salvations.

There is a fantasy abroad that the Christian community can have a center without a circumference. Since we gather around Jesus, it is argued, it is our center, not our boundaries, that matter. But this is the persistent illusion of compulsive hypertolerance. A community with no boundaries can neither have a center nor be a community.

A center without a circumference is a dot, nothing more. Without boundaries, a circle is not a circle. The circle of faith cannot identify its center without recognizing its margins. The debate about whether heresy can be defined is a struggle to specify margins, the legitimate boundaries of the worshiping community.

The rediscovery of boundaries will be the preoccupation of twenty-first century theology. Some cannot imagine any boundary-making work without becoming anxious. They recount the sins of the last five centuries: a history that left many dead and wounded. Rather than fixate on these *last* five centuries, we should instead reexamine the *first* five centuries, a time of flourishing consensus, as evidenced in the seven Ecumenical Councils and the most widely regarded Doctors of the Church venerated East and West.

Some think that specifying boundaries at all will be tainted by hubris and splattered with blood. The apostolic faith has learned under the guidance of the Spirit that when the boundaries are accurately stated, conflict and hubris are tamed and purified. ❧

By Thomas C. Oden, professor of theology and ethics, Drew University. Oden is the author of Requiem: A Lament in Three Movements (Abingdon).

The Christian religion . . . teaches men these two truths; that there is a God whom men can know, and that there is a corruption in their nature which renders them unworthy of Him. It is equally important to men to know both these points; and it is equally dangerous for man to know God without knowing his own wretchedness, and to know his own wretchedness without knowing the Redeemer who can free him from it. The knowledge of only one of these points gives rise either to the pride of philosophers, who have known God, and not their own wretchedness, or to the despair of atheists, who know their own wretchedness, but not the Redeemer.

—Pascal, *Pensées*, IX

It is easy to be a madman: it is easy to be a heretic. It is always easy to let the age have its head; the difficult thing is to keep one's own. . . It is always simple to fall; there are an infinity of angles at which one falls, only one at which one stands. . . But to have avoided them all has been one whirling adventure; and in my vision the heavenly chariot files thundering through the ages, the dull heresies sprawling and prostrate, the wild truth reeling but erect.

—G.K. Chesterton, *Orthodoxy: The Romance of the Faith* (New York: Image Books, 1990), 101

KEY ISSUES IN APOLOGETICS

Apologetics can be classified in 3 senses:

- ☛ POSITIVE APOLOGETICS -- The attempt to demonstrate the rationality or reasonableness of Christian theism, and to explain the worldview of the Christian faith. (Romans 1: 18-23; 2: 12-16)
- ☛ NEGATIVE APOLOGETICS -- The effort to defend the rationality and reasonableness of the Christian faith, and to clarify misconceptions about the Christian worldview to those who would attack it. Negative apologetics especially deals with theodicy. (1 Peter 3:15)
- ☛ CONTEXTUAL APOLOGETICS -- The attempt to express the Christian faith in terms meaningful to the contemporary mindset without sacrificing essential elements of the Faith. One's position on relevant apologetics presupposes a particular view on the church/world question: how involved can a Christian get in the world without becoming of the world? Contextual apologetics is expressed in many ways: contemporary Christian music, theological emphasis, worship styles, acceptable Christian lifestyles, and relation to the worldview of the culture. (Galatians 1: 6-9, 1 Cor. 15: 1-4, Jude 3, 1 Cor. 9: 19-23)

H. Richard Niebuhr in his classic Christ and Culture identified five models of the relation of the church to its culture:

- * Christ Against Culture (Tertullian, Bill Gothard)
- * Christ in Paradox with Culture (Martin Luther)
- * Christ Transforming Culture (John Calvin, Richard Niebuhr)
- * Christ Above Culture (Thomas Aquinas)
- * Christ of Culture (Abrecht Ritschl)

It is my conviction that the "Christ Transforming Culture" is the more desirable model to follow. Each of the other approaches contain elements of truth, however, our Lord's challenge that we be salt and light (Matt. 5: 13-16) is followed best via the transforming model.

Thus, though apologetics is more naturally a subset of philosophy, it is nonetheless true that it also related to the discipline of theology, especially the area of prolegomena.

Modern Methods In Philosophical Apologetics

Presuppositionalism

- * Deductive Presuppositionalism (Gordon Clark)
Presuppose that all Scripture is true, then infer all other truths from Scriptural truths.
- * Inductive Presuppositionalism (Ronald Nash)
Experiential evidence and reason leads you to believe in the Bible. Then you come to take Biblical truth to be authoritative as your confessional stance.

Evidentialism

- * Atheistic Evidentialism (W.K. Clifford)
The evidence is stronger against Christian theism.
- * Theistic Evidentialism (Josh McDowell, R.C. Sproul, John Gertsner, Arthur Lindsley)
The evidence is stronger for Christian theism. The evidence is sufficient for Christianity that any fair minded person who investigates it will opt for the Christian faith.

Foundationalism

- * Narrow Foundationalism (Rene Descartes, Immanuel Kant)
Accepts only three types of beliefs as true (properly basic): sense experience, self-evident definitional truths, and incorrigible personal statements ("I feel that....").
- * Broad Foundationalism (Thomas Reid, John Calvin, Alvin Plantinga, Scottish Common Sense Realism, Certain Reformed Epistemology)
Many types of beliefs may be properly basic, without needing rational evidence. We simply believe these things naturally or intuitively. Belief in theism is one of these basic beliefs. One can be an atheist only by suppressing the intuition of God that is within us.

Experientialism

- * Pragmatism (William James)
Faith is valuable if it works to better a person's life. There are no ultimate religious truths; just useful experiences.

* Existentialism (Søren Kierkegaard)

True Christianity can be known only by a leap of faith, not by reason. God is transcendent, not immanent. Each individual must take his/her own leap of faith, which transcends all rational or conventional wisdom.

* Revivalism (E.Y. Mullins)

Christianity is confirmed in our own personal experience with Jesus Christ. This is close to inductive presuppositionalism.

Your professor tends to combine aspects both of Evidentialism and Foundationalism in his approach to this issue. Certain spiritual truths do seem to be intuitive to humanity and naturally embraced (Foundationalism). Further, when one begins a quest for truth and the gathering of evidence, the case for Christian theism is discovered to be the best (Evidentialism). Foundational evidentialism would reflect my own conviction in this area.

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“How They Started”

In the United States the earliest universities were founded by church denominations, the first being Harvard (1636). They pursued Christian theology as the context for dealing with all the major disciplines and sought thereby to educate the clergy for effective ministry. William and Mary was established for similar purposes in 1693, Yale in 1701, Princeton in 1746, Pennsylvania in 1749, Columbia in 1754, Brown in 1763, Duke in 1838.

A Historical Survey Of Apologetics

Apologetists In The Early Church

Justin Martyr (c.100-165) -- In his apologetic works such as Dialogue with Trypho, Justin defends Christianity against slander and misunderstanding. He presented Christianity as the fulfillment of Greek philosophy, not its adversary.

Origen (185-c.254) -- In Contra Celsus, Origen defends Christianity against the charges of Celsus. Like his predecessor Clement of Alexandria, Origen understood Christianity in a modified Platonic worldview.

Tertullian (155-235) -- Tertullian also wrote an Apology to defend the faith against various charges. Unlike Justin, Clement, and Origen, however, he saw greater danger in expressing Christianity in the worldview of Greek philosophy. He asked, "What has Athens to do with Jerusalem?"

Augustine (354-430) -- Augustine was one of the first systematizers of Christian doctrine, expressing the Christian faith also in a modified Platonism. He could be called a verificationist, affirming that "if you will not believe, you cannot understand." In City of God, he defended Christianity against the charge that the Roman empire had fallen because it adopted Christianity as its official religion. The earthly city is temporal and based on the self; the heavenly city is eternal and based on self-denial.

Apologetists In The Age Of Scholasticism

Anselm (1033-1109) -- Anselm retained the worldview of Platonism. He was also a verificationist, (cf. Augustine) coining the phrase "faith seeking understanding." His development of the ontological argument illustrates both his Platonic rationalism and his verificationism.

Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) -- In part to help in the evangelization of Muslims in North Africa, whose faith was expressed in Aristotelian terms, Aquinas led in shifting the conceptual framework of Christianity from Platonism to Aristotelianism. His Summa Contra Gentiles is a missionary manual for that purpose. His celebrated "Five Ways" to knowing God are outlined in Summa Theologiae, including the teleological and cosmological arguments for God's existence.

Meister Eckhart (1260-1327) -- A medieval mystic, Eckhart was a fideist. Like Julian of Norwich and other well-known mystics, Eckhart was accused of so emphasizing mystical union with God as to be a pantheist.

Apologists In The Age of The Reformation and Rationalism

Martin Luther (1483-1586) -- A strong fideist, this Reformation leader affirmed that justification came by grace through faith alone. He spoke against Aristotelianism and rationalism, not because reason was inherently evil, but that it was under the control of a fallen will. Luther's strong emphasis on faith was within a wholesome biblical framework, but later Lutheran thinkers tended to express faith as mere subjectivity.

John Calvin (1509-1564) -- Trained as a humanist thinker, Calvin never was quite as negative toward reason as was Luther. Reason could lead to a natural knowledge of God, but only faith could lead to a saving knowledge of God.

John Locke (1632-1704) -- Lock argued that some religious matter is "according to reason" (monotheism); some is "contrary to reason" (polytheism); and some is "above reason" (the incarnation). Locke affirmed that the certainty of faith is higher than reason and the senses, but later empiricists did not follow him in this. Locke's high view of Scripture is reflected in his statement that is included in the Baptist Faith and Message affirmation about Scripture: "It has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter."

Blaise Pascal (1623-1662) -- A famous scientist in his own right, Pascal was active in Jansenist Catholicism. He saw no conflict between science and religion. Empiricism was the appropriate epistemology in science; fideism was the appropriate epistemology in religion. "The heart has its reason that reason does not know." Pascal's famous Wager argument challenges unbelievers to consider their alternatives in terms of loss or gain in the context of Christianity's truthfulness or falsity.

Joseph Butler (1692-1752) -- Butler's Analogy of Religion was a classic defense of Christianity against the rationalism and deism of his day.

William Paley (1743-1805) -- Paley's watch illustration popularized the teleological argument in a day Christianity was increasingly being viewed as unscientific. A watch does demand a watchmaker. Creation does demand a Creator.

Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1864) -- Fearful that modern science would threaten the Christian worldview, Schleiermacher presented a very subjective fideism in which God was experienced as "a sense of ultimate dependence." In his On Religion: Speeches to Its Cultural Despisers, Schleiermacher attempted to provide an apologetic to the intelligentsia of his day. Most evangelicals would feel that he compromised too much of the essentials of Christianity in this effort.

Søren Kierkegaard (1813-1855) -- Rejecting state religion and the rationalism of Hegel and Kant, Kierkegaard called for a return to the fideism of New Testament Christianity.

Apologists In The Modern Era

Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889-1951)? -- Early Wittgenstein (in Tractatus Logicophilosophicus) advocated a logical positivism that left little room for Christianity and religious language. Later Wittgenstein (in Philosophical Investigations) allowed religion to have its own "language game." Though not himself an active Christian, Wittgensteinian fideism gave some intellectual credence to Christian belief in a science dominated era.

Paul Tillich (1886-1965)? -- Tillich, like Rudolf Bultmann, attempted to express the Christian faith in terms acceptable to modern existentialism (especially that of Heidegger). It is doubtful he accomplished this apologetic effort, and many evangelicals would claim that he compromised the Faith in doing so.

Cornelius Van Til (1895 - 1987) -- A Reformed theologian and a foremost exponent of presuppositionalism, whose adherents include Gordon Clark, Rousas Rushdoony, and Herman Dooyeweerd. Presuppositionalism would presuppose the Christian faith, with little regard for evidence.

C.S. Lewis (1898-1963) -- Converted from atheism, Lewis was an effective Christian apologist to both the intelligentsia and a wider public audience through his writings and radio broadcasts. His works such as Miracles and Mere Christianity remain Christian classics.

Francis Schaeffer (1912-1984) -- Ministered to intellectuals, addressing the philosophical presuppositions of their views. His widely read books introduced the generation of conservative Christians in the 60's and 70's to philosophy and apologetics, although his arguments are not always convincing to specialists.

John P. Newport (1917 - Present) -- A Southern Baptist professor at SWBTS, Newport has written and spoken on a number of issues confronting contemporary Christianity (the demonic, eastern mysticism, the arts, etc.). His main contribution in Life's Ultimate Questions is the articulation of a distinctively biblical worldview.

Jose Miguez-Bonino (1924- Present)? -- A liberationist, his Doing Theology In A Revolutionary Setting affirms that to be a Christian in the third world requires a radical change from traditional Christianity. To be contextual in the third world, Christians should help in revolution against oppression.

Kosuke Koyama (1929 - Present)? -- His Watterbuffalo Theology explores the issues of contextualization. Just how "western" or "Amercian" must Christianity be? Koyama explores just how Christianity might be contextualized into eastern cultures.

Norman Geisler (1932 - Present) -- A prolific author, Geisler has popularized philosophy and apologetics among conservative and fundamentalist Christians in the 70's, 80's, and 90's. He writes primarily on a readable, popular level, and hence has not usually been

Yandall Woodfin (1932 - Present) -- This Baptist philosopher/theologian at SWBTS is known through his book With All Your Mind, which expresses a personalistic Christian philosophy.

Alvin Plantinga (1932 - Present)-- This Reformed epistemologist is a well respected apologist among intellectuals. His closely-reasoned writing is usually too technical for popular audiences, but more convincing to specialists. He has defended the ontological argument and the argument from mind (or intuition).

Richard Swineburne (1934 - Present) -- Swinburne has provided a strong apologetic defense in his published works. His Concept of Miracle is a good defense of miracles against the classic attack of David Hume.

Josh McDowell (1939- Present) -- A popular apologist associated with Campus Crusade for Christ, his best-selling Evidence That Demands A Verdict and More Evidence.... provides an evidentialist case for Christian truth claims. His work (and that of John Warwick Montgomery) tends to be unpersuasive to intellectuals, but impressive to the average person.

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Application In Ministry

☞ The Early Church faced the apologetic task of expressing their faith to people who thought in terms of the Platonic worldview. In so doing, the Christians struggled with the question of what was and was not negotiable in the gospel. (They also had to decide early in the Jerusalem Council of Acts 15 just what was and was not negotiable regarding Judaism.) In some ways they could express Christianity in Platonic terms; at other points there could be no compromise. What may or may not be compromised in Christianity? The Gospel?

☞ What worldviews will you confront in your ministry? How can you express your faith in terms that modern culture will understand without compromising some key element of the gospel? How has (or could) the gospel be presented to people with the following worldviews? What would be going too far and compromising the gospel?

- * scientific naturalism
- * secular humanism
- * American materialism
- * American pragmatism
- * Islamic culture
- * the love of contemporary music
- * New Ageism

☞ We can see in other eras examples of people who, in trying to reach the world of their day appear to have compromised key elements of the faith (like Scheleiermacher and his apologetic to the "cultured despisers" of the faith). What might subsequent generations accuse our own generation of compromising?

☞ What do you think is the greatest apologetic challenge in the area to which you believe God has called you to minister? What is the greatest apologetic issue of our day?

☞ How much difference does the worldview of the people to whom you are ministering make in determining your method of approaching them? What questions are they asking? What apologetic method would best meet their needs and provide answers to their questions?

"The religions themselves are no longer essential: they have served their purpose in catering for the spiritual needs of infant humanity. Their disciplines and their myths contributed importantly to the education of the race at the nursery stage. They will continue to be useful to the backward and immature."

Hugh J. Schonfield - THE POLITICS OF GOD, 1970.

Glossary of Terms

- Agnostic*- A person who does not know, or who thinks it is impossible to know, whether there is a God.
- Atheist*- A person who believes there is no God, or that there is insufficient evidence to affirm God.
- Apologetics*- That branch of philosophy having to do with the defense and communication of Christianity.
- Antinomianism*- Holding that, under the Gospel dispensation, the moral law is of no use or obligation. Literally the word means "against the law."
- Anti-philosophy*- Many of the modern forms of philosophy which have given up any attempt to find a rational unity to the whole of thought and life.
- Antithesis*- Direct opposition of contrast between two things (as in "joy" which is the antithesis of "sorrow").
- Absolute*- A concept of which is not modifiable by factors such as time, culture, individual psychology or circumstances; but which is perfect and unchangeable. Used as an antithesis of relativism.
- Anthropology*- That which deals with only with man, his relationship with himself and with other men, such as the studies of psychology, and sociology, and nothing beyond man.
- Authenticate oneself*- A term used by existentialists whereby man validates the genuineness of his existence by an act of the will or a feeling of dread.
- Being*- A term denoting existence or the essence of a thing.
- Communication*- The transmitting of ideas and information.
- Connotation*- The implication of meanings to words other than the definition of the word.
- Cosmology*- Theory of the nature and principles of the universe.
- Dada*- The name given to the modern art movement originating in Zürich in 1916. The name, chosen at random from a French dictionary, means 'rocking horse'.
- Determinism*- The doctrine that human action is not free but results from such causes as psychological and chemical make-up which render free-will an illusion.
- Dialectic*- The principle of change which takes place by means of triadic movement. A thesis has its opposite, an antithesis. The two opposites are resolved in a synthesis which in turn becomes a thesis and the process goes on. This is part and parcel to Hegelianism.
- Dichotomy*- Division into two totally separate parts. Used for the total separation of the rational and logical in man from both meaning and faith.
- Epistemology*- That part of philosophy concerned with the theory of knowledge, its nature, limits and validity. It asks, "How do we come to know?"
- Existential*- Relating to and dealing with moment by moment human existence. Empirical reality as opposed to mere theory is deemed important.
- Existentialism*- A modern philosophical theory of man that holds that human experience is not describable in scientific or rational terms. Existentialism stresses the need to make vital choices by using man's freedom in a contingent and apparently purposeless world.
- Final Experience*- Term used by Karl Jaspers to denote a crucial experience which is great enough to give hope of meaning.
- Humanism*- There are two meanings: (1) Any philosophy or system of thought that begins

with man alone, in order to try to find a unified meaning to life; (2) that part of humanistic thinking in the above wider sense that stresses the hope of an optimistic future for mankind.

Impressionism- Movement in the visual arts in which the classical tendencies of 19th century French painting culminated and from which modern art has sprung. Its aim was to reproduce, by means of a careful analysis of color, the effect of light upon objects in nature.

Logic- The science of correct reasoning. The predictable and inevitable consequence of rational analysis. In classical logic it could be asserted that "A" cannot equal "non-A."

Logical Positivism- Name given to an analytic trend in modern philosophy which holds that all metaphysical theories are strictly meaningless because, in the nature of the case, they are unverifiable by reference to empirical facts. This verification principle itself is non-verifiable and hence self-defeating.

Linguistic Analysis- Branch of philosophy which desires to preserve philosophy from confusion of concepts by showing the use of these concepts in their natural language context. It sees the task of philosophy as clarifying what lies on the surface rather than offering explanations.

Mannishness of Man- Those aspects of man, such as significance, love, rationality and the fear of non-being, which mark him off from animals and machines and give evidence of his being created in the image of a personal God.

Methodology- Study of the procedures and principles whereby the question of truth and knowledge is approached.

Monolithic- Constituting one indifferentiated whole. In terms of modern culture, giving a unified message.

Mysticism- There are at least two meanings: (1) a tendency to seek direct communion with ultimate reality of "the divine" by immediate intuition, insight or illumination; (2) a vague speculation without foundation.

Nihilism- A denial of all objective grounds for truth. A belief that existence is basically senseless and useless, leading often to destructive tendencies in society or in the individual.

Neo-orthodoxy- Name given to the theology of men like Karl Barth and Emil Brunner, who have particularly applied the dialectical methodology of Hegel and Kierkegaard's "leap" to the Christian faith.

Pantheism- Doctrine that God and Nature are identical. The universe is an extension of God's essence rather than a special creation.

Presupposition- A belief or theory which is assumed before the next step in logic is developed. Such a prior postulates often consciously or unconsciously affect the way a person subsequently reasons.

Propositional Truth- Truth which can be communicated in the form of a statement in which a predicate or object is affirmed or denied regarding a subject.

Pragmatism- A system of thought which makes practical consequences of a belief the sole test of truth.

Rational- Whatever is related to or based upon man's power to reason consistently.

Rationalism- cf. Humanism - first meaning.

Romantic- A view of life that has no base in fact, being the product of an exaggerated optimism.

Surrealism- An art-form which produces fantastic or incongruous imagery by means of

unnatural juxta-positions and combinations, related to data plus the subconscious.

Semantics- (1) Science of the study of the development of the meaning and uses of words and language; (2) the exploitation of the connotations and ambiguities in words.

Substantial- A term sometimes used to denote the extent of healing in the relationships of man with God, with his fellow man and within himself which should be seen in the life of a Christian--not perfect and yet visible in reality.

Synthesis- The combination of the partial truths of a thesis and its antithesis into a higher stage of truth, cf. dialectic.

'Upper Story' - Term used to denote that which, in modern thinking, deals with significance or meaning, but which is not open to contact with verification by the world of facts which constitute the 'Lower story'.

Validity- Something which has been authenticated by reference to well-grounded and sufficient evidence.

Verbalization- The putting of a proposition into words.

Verification- The procedure required for the establishment of the truth or falsity of a statement.

	Atheism	Pantheism	Theism
God	Non-existent	Impersonal	Personal
World's Origin	Evolution (Ex Materia)	Emanation (Ex Deo)	Creation (Ex Nihilo)
World's Destiny	Destruction or Higher Reality	Absorption	Perfection
Man's Origin	Evolution	Evolution	Creation
Man's Nature	Animal	Divine	God's Image
Man's Destiny	No Immortality (Annihilation)	Immortality (Reincarnation)	Immortality (Resurrection)
Source of Authority	Human Reason Personal Experience	Spiritual and Personal Experience	Divine Revelation
Truth	Relative	Personal	Absolute
History's Goal	Human Utopia	Endless Reincarnation	Divine Kingdom
Jesus Christ	A [Good] Man	Enlightened	Eternal Son of God
Means of Salvation	Human Effort (Education)	Human Effort (Meditation)	Divine Action (Redemption)
Power of Salvation	Natural (Physical)	Natural (Mystical)	Supernatural (Spiritual)

Major Areas of Concern In Philosophy / Theology

ONTOLOGY/METAPHYSICS -- What is reality? What is the focus or clue in interpreting reality? Two important subdivisions of ontology are **Cosmology** (the view of the physical world) and **Worldview** (the approach to reality dictated by your ontology). For modern Christians, ontology involves explicating the Biblical supernatural worldview against the predominant naturalistic worldview.

EPISTEMOLOGY -- How do I know? What counts as evidence, and what evidence is given more weight, in what is true? For Christians, a major task of epistemology is showing reasonable and persuasive grounds for belief in God. Epistemology involves the use of LOGIC, but is not limited to logic.

APOLOGETICS -- What can be said to provide a reasonable defense of the Christian faith? Apologetics comes from the Greek word apologia, as in I Peter 3:15: "Be ready always in meekness and fear to give an answer to anyone who asks you for the hope that is within you." Modern apologetics especially concerns THEODICY, the defense of God's existence in light of the reality of evil and suffering.

AXIOLOGY -- What should I value? For the Christian, this involves defending Christian values in a world hostile to Christian Values. Axiology has two major subdivisions, ETHICS, which applies values to judge human behavior, and AESTHETICS, which applies values to judge what is beautiful.

ANTHROPOLOGY -- What is human life? Are humans free or determined? Is human nature essentially evil, good, or neutral? Are humans just a physical organism, or do they have a soul or spirit? Do we have a mind or merely a brain? For Christian thinkers, this area concerns articulating a Biblical anthropology.

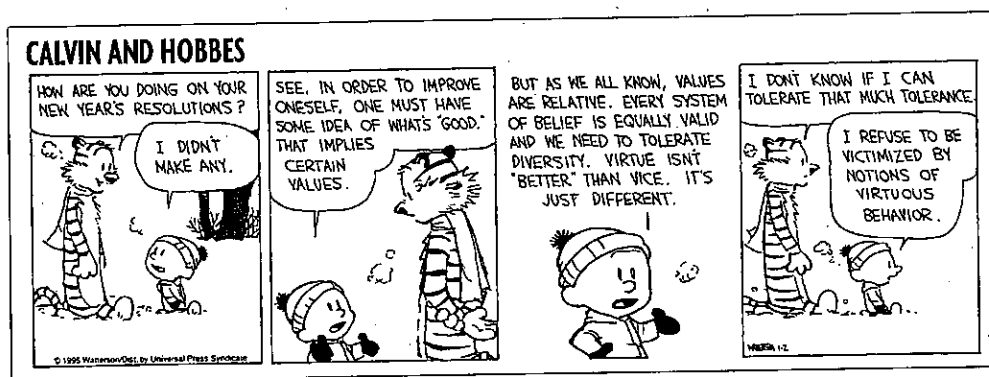
PHILOSOPHY OF LANGUAGE -- What is appropriate use of language? How can I speak meaningfully? For Christians, philosophy of language especially concerns speaking meaningfully about God, especially the use of language in the Bible. Biblical interpretation concerns HERMENEUTICS.

PHILOSOPHY OF HISTORY -- What is the appropriate view of history? Is history going anywhere (linear and/or spiral) or is it cyclical and meaningless? How can I know what actually happened and what didn't? For philosophers of religion, philosophy of history concerns the historicity of God's intervention in human history, especially the incarnation and resurrection.

PHILOSOPHY OF SCIENCE -- What are the proper methods of approach and limitations of science? What is the proper scientific COSMOLOGY (the natural world) and COSMOGONY (view of the origin of the world)? For Christian philosophers, this area includes the examination of how the modern scientific cosmology may or may not conflict with the Biblical cosmology, especially the Biblical doctrines of creation and miracles.

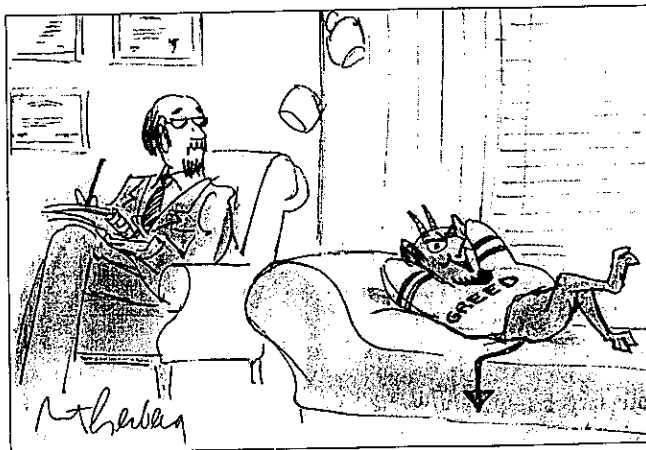
PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION -- What is the best way to teach? What pedagogy is consistent with your ontological, epistemological, and anthropological beliefs? For Christians, this involves finding the best and most appropriate pedagogy to teach religious truth.

"All Truth Is God's Truth"
- Arthur Holmes



CHRISTIANITY TODAY: MARCH 6, 1995

OH WELL ... THAT'S LIFE ...



"The truth be told, I no longer think of myself as a sin at all."

CHRISTIANITY TODAY: APRIL 24, 1995

EPISTEMOLOGY

(How we come to know what we know)

Epistemology may involve the use of LOGIC in showing Rational Grounds for Belief in God.

Epistemology seeks to interrelate Faith and Reason.

THREE BROAD APPROACHES:

RATIONALISM- Rational Evidentialism - emphasizes the role of reason. REASON precedes FAITH. One must become a theist by reason before becoming a Christian by faith. (I must KNOW in order to BELIEVE)

FIDEISM - Presuppositionalism - FAITH precedes REASON. Often uses an intuitive theory of truth. Reason cannot be trusted because of human fallenness.

VERIFICATIONISM - Faith seeks Understanding - FAITH must precede REASON, but reason assists in filling out the worldview. Reason provides verification of the faith and defense of the faith.

FOUR CLASSIC THEORIES (TESTS) OF TRUTH:

1. **CORRESPONDENCE THEORY** - must be observable. Uses the five senses to prove truth. Truth is that which corresponds to reality.
2. **COHERENCE THEORY** - Uses reason and logic to see if this truth FITS with, or MAKES SENSE with other things I believe.
3. **PRAGMATIC THEORY**- Does this work for me? Is it beneficial for me?
4. **INTUITIVE THEORY**- Do I feel like this is true?

FOUR FORMS OF NON - BELIEF:

1. **ATHEISM** - There is no God.
2. **NATURALISM** - Only nature exists. All things must be proven in a scientific fashion. Matter has always existed, and the world continues *in its process*.
3. **SECULARISM** - The popular expression of life lived without God.
4. **HUMANISM** - arose uniquely in Christian cultures. Arose out of Christianity about the time of the Reformation (e.g. in the Renaissance).
 - Classic Humanists = see value and worth in studying the humanities.
 - Christian Humanists = focus is Classic Humanism, and recognizes the humanities in relation to God. A long line of Christian Humanists - Erasmus, Calvin, Luther, Zwingli and C.S. Lewis

- **Secular Humanism - Humanism cut loose from a trust/commitment to God.**
"There is NO God!"
- **FIVE VIEWS COMMON TO CLASSIC HUMANISTS:**
 1. OPTIMISTIC ANTHROPOLOGY - all persons have worth and dignity.
 2. THIS-WORLDLY SELF-FULFILLMENT - fulfillment should come in this present world as there is no other.
 3. VOLUNTARISM - Human freedom and responsibility (existentialism) play an important role.
 4. MELIORISM/FUTURISM: Optimistic that humans, using science and reason, can solve many (eventually all!!) of this world's problems.
 5. HUMANISTIC AXIOLOGY AND ETHICS: Values and morality are based on what is *best* for persons (i.e. human rights) - a Pragmatic, Utilitarian view of life. (The BEST for the MOST) (Experience is our guide).
- **FIVE VIEWS UNIQUE TO SECULAR HUMANISM**
 1. NATURALISTIC ANTISUPERNATURALISM = Only the natural world exists.
 2. EVOLUTIONISM = Human origin can be explained exclusively by naturalistic evolution (time plus chance; natural selection/random mutations)
 3. ANNIHILATIONISM = There is no personal survival after death.
 4. ANTHROPOLOGICAL OPTIMISM = Humans are masters of their own fate through science and reason. There is no concept of personal sin.
 5. MORAL RELATIVISM = All ethics are emotive and therefore subjective.

Either I determine the place in which I will find God, or I allow God to determine the place where he will be found. If it is I who say where God will be, I will always find there a God who in some way corresponds to me, is agreeable to me, fits with my nature. But if it is God who says where He will be, then that will truly be a place which at first is not agreeable to me at all, which does not fit so well with me. That place is the cross of Christ. And whoever will find God there must draw near to the cross in the manner which the sermon on the Mount requires. This does not correspond to our nature at all.

--Deitrich Bonhoeffer, Meditating on the Word, as quoted by Anthony C. Thiselton, New Horizons in Hermeneutics (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1992), 35.

EPISTEMOLOGY

Relating Faith and Reason

THREE BROAD APPROACHES TO FAITH AND REASON

☛ Rationalism (Rational Evidentialism)

Emphasizes the role of reason; reason precedes faith. Reason leads one to know what to believe. One must become a theist by reason before becoming a Christian by faith. Committed to both rationalism and empiricism; uses both coherence and correspondence theories of truth.

☛ Fideism (Presuppositionalism)

Emphasizes the role of faith; faith precedes reason. Reason cannot be trusted because of human fallenness. Committed to intuitionism; uses intuitive theory of truth.

☛ Verificationism (Faith Seeking Understanding)

Agrees with fideism that faith must precede reason, but agrees with rationalism that reason should not be denigrated. Once one comes to see things through the eyes of faith, reason can help fill out the Christian worldview. Reason can be used to provide evidence to verify the faith (to assure the faith of the believer) and to defend the faith (to witness to the unbeliever). This was the method of Augustine (354-430), Anselm (1033-1109), and John Calvin (1509-1564). This method utilizes the strengths of both Rationalism and Fideism, and therefore is a more holistic approach.

EPISTEMOLOGY: FOUR TESTS FOR TRUTH

✓ Correspondence Theory of Truth -- (Empiricism, Naturalism)

Asks, "Is this something I can observe to be true?"

Uses the five senses a posteriori to test if synthetic statements are true.

Christian application - Show the truth of Biblical Accounts with archeological and historical evidence, etc.

✓ Coherence Theory of Truth -- (Rationalism, Idealism)

Asks, "Does this fit in or make sense with other things I believe to be true?"

Uses reason a priori to test analytic statements.

Christian application - Show the truth of Christianity is rational or reasonable.

✓ Pragmatic Theory of Truth -- (Pragmatism, Experientialism)

Asks, "Does this work for me? Does it give me good benefits?"

Christian application - Show that Christianity pays benefits and meets needs.

✓ Intuitive Theory of Truth -- (Existentialism, Mysticism, Fideism)

Asks, "Do I feel like this is true?"

Christian application - Invite people to have their own experience with God.

*All four approaches contain truth, though the Correspondence and Coherence test should be foundational.

TRUTH: Two Opposing & Distinct Views

TRUTH		Correspondence	Non-Correspondence
	Basis of	Factual	Practical
	Nature of	Propositional	Personal
	Referent of	Reality	Results
	Medium of	Expressions (Language)	Experience (Life)
	Location	Affirmation	Intention
ERROR	Nature	Falsehood Mistake	Lie Deceit
	Implication	All Mistakes Are Errors	Not All Mistakes Are Errors

	IDEALISM	REALISM	NATURALISM	PRAGMATISM	EXISTENTIALISM
Ontology	Ideas, forms, essences, universals-- the supersensible world	Both universals and particulars, emphasis on particulars	Only the natural / sensible world exists	Views essential ontology as unnecessary; reality is what works in empirical experience	Views essential ontology as misguided; reality is chosen by the individual
Epistemology	Rationalism, coherence test, truth is objective	Mostly empiricism, coherence & corres. tests, truth is objective	Empiricism, corres. test, truth is objective	Pragmatism, pragmatic test, truth is relative to what works	Fideism, intuitive test, truth is subjective
Anthropology	Humans are essential beings with a rational soul	Humans have both rational and physical aspects	Humans are highly evolved animals	Humans are pragmatic problem solvers	Humans are deciders, emphasizing freedom (self-determinism)
Ethic	Moral law standard, deontological ethics	Self-fulfillment standard, eudaemonia, golden mean	Survival standard, emotivist ethics	Pleasure standard, utilitarian, teleological ethics	Subjective decision standard, subjective ethics
Aesthetic	Classicism; beauty is order and symmetry, imitation of the ideal	Romanticism & Renaissance realism; beauty is representation of real world	Impressionism; beauty is in human empirical perception	Functionalism and popular art; beauty is what has cash value	Expressionism, the theatre of the absurd; post modernism; beauty is an expression of how I feel

What Is Truth?

Correspondence An apple is an apple	Functional An apple may be an orange	Relative Your apple may be my orange	Dialectic An apple to be an apple must not be an apple
For a statement to be true it must correspond with reality.	For a statement to be true it must function to accomplish its purpose.	For a statement to be true it must only seem true to you. It is dependent only upon the individual and circumstances.	For a statement to be true it must be a contradiction.
Example: This is an apple. If upon examination it is in fact an apple, then the statement is said to be true.	Example: You must eat the apple to stay alive. If you eat an orange, which you believe to be an apple and live, the statement is said to be true because it accomplishes its purpose.	Example: I say this is an orange, you say it is an apple. Both can be true.	Example: This is both an apple and not an apple.
Application: Christ is reported to have risen from the dead. This was verified by witnesses to be true--it corresponds with reality.	Application: Christ is risen from the dead. If this statement gives you hope it is true, regardless of whether or not it happened, for it has accomplished its purpose--to give hope.	Application: I say Christ rose from the dead. You say He has not. Both can be true.	Application: God is alive. Also implies God is dead.
This is the view held by classical Christianity, ICBI, and the natural sciences. Most people in ordinary life, as well as most social sciences, hold this view.	This view is held by non-orthodox and some who hold to limited inerrancy as well as some schools of social science.	This theory is popular in the arts, humanities, social science, and in many liberal non-orthodox circles.	This theory is found among some non-orthodox secular philosophies (existentialism, eastern mysticism, and some schools of psychology).

REALISM

☛ Aristotle (384-322 BC) -- Classical Realism

Sought to bring the idealism of his teacher Plato down to earth, on the one hand, while avoiding the pure materialism of the Pre-Socratic Materialists. He put more emphasis on particulars than universals, but not going so far as nominalism. The Forms are present in the particulars as substance. The First Cause has structured all things teleologically, bringing actuality out of potentiality. The First Cause works through the formal cause, material cause, and efficient cause, to produce the final cause.

☛ Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) -- Christian Realism

Applied Aristotle's principles to Christianity, making God the First Cause.

EXISTENTIALISM

☛ Søren Kierkegaard (1813-1855) -- Theistic Existentialism

Revolting against the rational religion of Kant and Hegel, his central concern was to discover "what it means to be a Christian," to find "something I can cling to, something for which I can live and die." He felt idealism and organized religion was the enemy of New Testament Christianity. He called for living by faith, not reason. Jesus must be "Lord of all, or not Lord at all." Rather than the objective, rational truth of Hegelian and Kantian idealism, true Christianity requires a subjective leap of faith. Kierkegaard's own life became a pattern of going through stages: aesthetic (hedonistic), ethical, religiousness A (pantheism), and religiousness B (Christianity).

☛ Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) -- Atheistic Existentialism

Since the people of Europe for all practical purposes lived as though God were dead, Nietzsche made atheism the cornerstone of his philosophy. But his was a somber atheism, recognizing that Western culture has been built around a belief in God. In its place, Nietzsche offered a superman who would "will to power" and impose his will on others. The superman was "beyond good and evil," and would transvalue all ethics, replacing the charity of the Christian ethic with an ethic of survival of the fittest.

☛ Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-1980) -- Atheistic Existentialism

Accepting atheism as true, Sartre argued for the total rejection of Christian values. Conflict underlies all human relations, because "hell is other people." There is "No Exit" from this life, but we must take responsibility for all our choices. Not to do so would be bad faith (mauvaise foi). Sartre, Albert Camus, and Franz Kafka wrote out of this framework or paradigm in the "Theater of The Absurd."

☛ William James (1842-1910) -- Pragmatism

Rejecting traditional philosophical notions, James was not concerned with theoretical absolutes, but with practical consequences, outcomes, and results. He viewed all truth as relative or pluralistic: "truth happens to an idea." His epistemology was both voluntaristic (will to believe) and empirical ("radical empiricism"). Axiology is determined by demand, its "cash value." James' classic in psychology of religion The Varieties of Religious Experience, found the many different religious expressions he surveyed to be commendable if they met needs of particular persons.

☛ John Dewey (1859-1952) -- Instrumentalism

Rejecting supernaturalism, Dewey was one of the authors of the original Humanist Manifesto. His instrumental theory of ideas suggested that intelligence is a method, not a static entity. His progressive education advocated the use of problem solving as a teaching method, rather than simply learning facts.

Dewey On The Humanist Movement

by: Warren Allen Smith

In 1948 I started a philosophy club at Columbia University. Like the one I previously had started at my undergraduate school, the University of Northern Iowa, I called it the "Humanist Club." Dues were one dollar and meetings were held irregularly. Dewey, then eighty-nine, had heard about our group, as well as another at Harvard, and he sat down to his typewriter and wrote as follows:

The drift away from religious institutions founded on supernaturalism is marked among the intellectually minded well informed persons in every modern country. Even among those who remain nominally connected with institutions professing doctrines of the supernatural sort, there is a growing spirit of indifference to the kind of devotion to ideals which once marked these institutions. The enduring element in religion is genuine and ardent devotion to the cause of promoting the knowledge and

practice of the highest moralisms of which man is possible. It is my firm belief that the Humanist Movement is based upon acknowledgement of the important beliefs and movements ardently concerned with this aim. It is particularly important that university men and women, who should influence popular sentiment and ideas in the future, realize the increasing inability of doctrines and institutions that in the past have been carriers of inspiring ideals to meet the demands of the modern world, and should be active in furtherance of a substitute that possesses the required vitality.

Yours truly and with best wishes for success of the proposed group.

From time to time I wrote Dewey news of our activities, and on September 11, 1950, he sent me a check for our membership fee.

While at Columbia, I joined Charles Francis Potter's First

Humanist Society of New York, which he had founded in 1929: Dewey was a member of his advisory board, as were Harry Elmer Barnes, L.M. Birkhead, John H. Dietrich, Will Durant, William Floyd, Helen Keller, James H. Leuba, Robert Morss Lovett, John Randall, Jr., Oliver L. Reiser, and Roy Wood Sellars.

Dewey spoke one afternoon at a Columbia University meeting, and he was surrounded by so many well-wishers that I only had the chance to say, "Thanks for joining our Humanist Club, but may I hold on to your check as a souvenir?" What I remember as a "nonagenarian" with slightly tossed hair, one of the oldest humans my young eyes had ever before seen. His kindly eyes glistened through his spectacles, and he firmly grasped my hands with a special unforgettable warmth.

-Warren Allen Smith, head of the Secular Humanist Society of New York.

Truth

The Nature of Truth

1. Truth may be descriptive, applying to statements, propositions, or beliefs that are (a) necessarily, i.e., analytically true, as, e.g. "If p implies q and p is the case, then q is the case," or (b) contingently, i.e., empirically, true, as, e.g., "The earth is round." "Truth" functions as an adjective, e.g., true beliefs.
2. Truth may be instrumental, applying to beliefs that guide thought or actions successfully, as, e.g., acting on the belief that fire burns helps one to avoid getting burned. "Truth" functions as an adverb, e.g., one believes truly.
3. Truth may be substantive or ontological, referring to the real, as, e.g., "God is Truth." "Truth" functions as a noun.
4. Truth may be existential, referring to one's way of life or ultimate commitment. One lives rather than knows the truth. "Truth" functions as a verb.

The Criteria of Truth (classic categories)

1. Correspondence theory. That approach to truth which says idea or proposition is true which accurately and adequately resembles or represents the reality it is supposed to describe; e.g., "It is raining now" is true if as a matter of fact rain is now falling. This theory is usually that of *epistemological realism*, as, e.g., in Aristotle, Locke, and Russell. An objection is that it may be impossible to establish correspondence; "How can I know that my idea corresponds to its object even if in fact it does?" Ideas are radically different from objects. Austin modifies the theory to hold that the correspondence is in the nature of the appropriate correlation rather than congruity or resemblance. "The truth of a statement [is] a matter...of the words used being the ones conventionally appointed for situation of the type to which that referred to belongs" (Austin).
2. Coherence theory. That method which states that an idea or proposition is true which "fits in" or is consistent with or is necessitated by the totality of truth for which it is a part. This theory is usually, although not necessarily, held by idealists, as, e.g., Hegel, Bradley, and Blanshard. It is also held by non-idealists, like Carnap and Neurath. An objection is that this theory assumes a metaphysical unity which may not exist. Also, as Russell points out, coherence may be a test or even necessary condition of truth but it is not what is meant by truth.
3. Pragmatic theory. That theory of truth which says an idea or proposition is true which worked or satisfies or is capable of doing so. More specifically:
 - (a) James gives a personal interpretation: "We cannot reject any hypothesis if consequences useful to life flow from it...If the hypothesis God works [for the individual]...it is true." Initially James defined truth as that which works. Later he

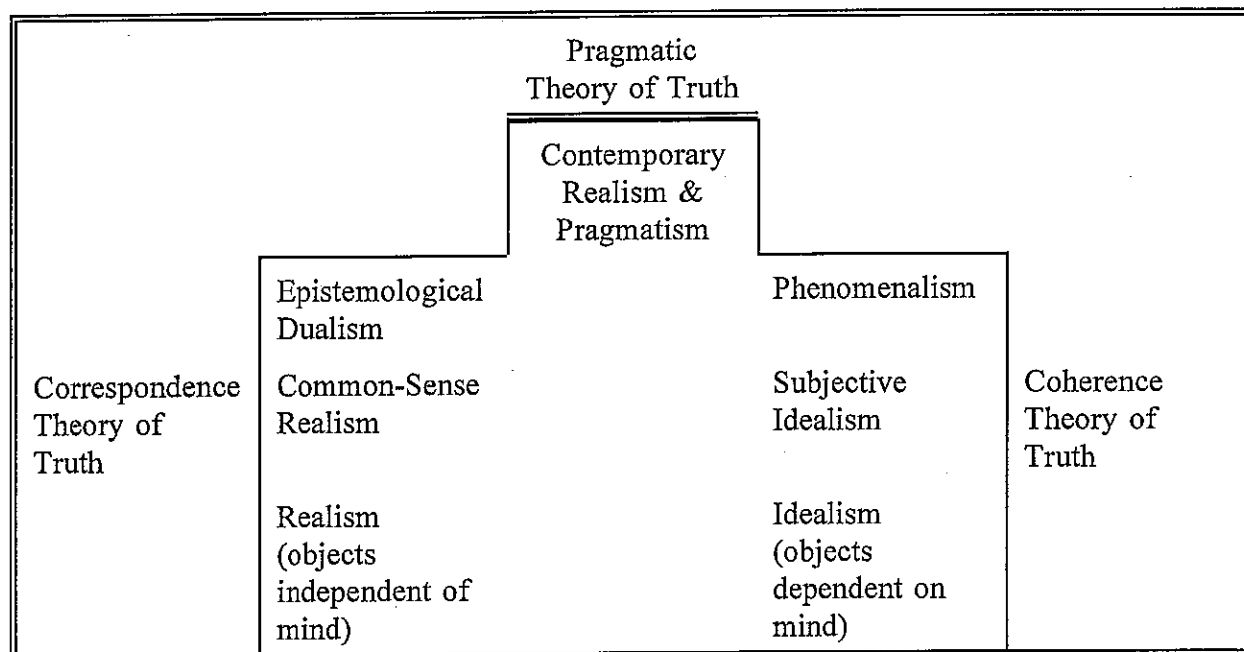
defined it as:

1. that which has "cash value," i.e., is verifiable in principle;
2. that which has *coherence*, i.e., fits present or anticipated facts; and
3. that which *favors higher values*, i.e., encourages progress.

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(b) Peirce and Dewey give a social interpretation in terms of predictive power. Truth must be socially as well as experimentally verifiable-- not just privately useful. Truth is public, not private. "The opinion which is fated to be ultimately agreed to by all who investigate is what we mean by truth" (Peirce).

Theories of Truth and Knowledge adapted from *Invitation to Philosophy: An Introductory Handbook* by Stanley M. Honer and Thomas C. Hunt. 1968 by Wadsworth Publishing Company, Inc. Belmont, California.



Truth is a "thing done" (pragmatism), a function of practical value, *made to happen*, i.e., brought about rather than discovered to be the case, as in correspondence theory. An objection is that something other than what is made to happen or could be made to happen, or works or could be made to work, is what is meant by truth and that, in any event, truth should refer to what is now or was the case, as well as to what will be or could be the case.

Theories of The Nature of Ultimate Reality

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Idealism, Realism, and Pragmatism

Speculation about the nature of reality develops more or less in terms of the opposites of dualism, the pluralities of pluralism, or the oneness of monism. Furthermore, speculation about reality has emphasized either the role of the mental in describing or interpreting reality or, on the other hand, elements other than mind or consciousness, such as matter. As a result, certain traditional metaphysical distinctions arose, such as idealism and realism.

The idealist stresses the role of mind. He tends to argue: "The world is my world or the world of some mind." He insists that only a knowable reality can concern the philosopher and that this reality must therefore relate to ideas, to consciousness, or to the processes of thought. In other words, a material reality, e.g., could be known only through ideas, and one could never know whether his ideas about that reality accurately portrayed it.

His realist opponent answers, however: "I am in the world; the world is not in me." Or, with Whitehead, he might say: "I am in the world, and the world is in me." In any event, he would insist that reality does not depend in mind, that knowing has for its object a world dependent on mind, and that reality presents itself to minds.

Realists tend to separate the world and its objects from knowers or minds. Idealists stress the intimate relationship which holds between knowers and things known. Pragmatists, differing with both, rejected the traditional knower and thing-known distinction altogether and as in James, e.g., held for a reality of "pure experience" in which all relations are found but in which there is no duality of consciousness and content, thought and thing.

Critical or Representative Realism

Critical or representative realism (epistemological dualism) ascribes a critical role to mind in the formulation of knowledge. Unlike pure objectivism, it distinguishes between sense data and the objects they represent (epistemological dualism). But the objects or things known are independent of mind or the knower in the sense that thought refers to them--not merely to sense data or to the ideas of the knower. Ideas represent objects.

Forms of Critical or Representative Realism

1. Representative realism. Ideas represent or correspond to the objects of an independent world. Objective or primary qualities of objects elicit subjective or secondary qualities. Together they comprise knowledge (Democritus, Galileo, Kepler, Descartes, Locke, Macintosh, et al.). Descarte's argument for representative realism:

- (a) God exists; i.e., the clear and distinct idea we have a God implies his existence just as the idea of a triangle implies three-sidedness.
- (b) God by definition is perfect, i.e., benevolent.
- (c) A benevolent God would not leave us without a way to know the world.
- (d) This way is reason, i.e., intuition and deduction.
- (e) If ideas are clear and distinct, they are true.
- (f) If ideas are true, they are about what exists.
- (g) An external world having none but primary qualities is amenable to mathematical analysis and can be clearly and distinctly understood.
- (h) Therefore the external world has nothing but primary qualities.

2. Critical realism. Material objects are known via sense data. In Santayana, e.g., knowledge of independently real material things is possible through the joint participation of the knower and things known in the essences. Material things are known indirectly by the act of animal faith (Santayana, Lovejoy, Sellars, et al).

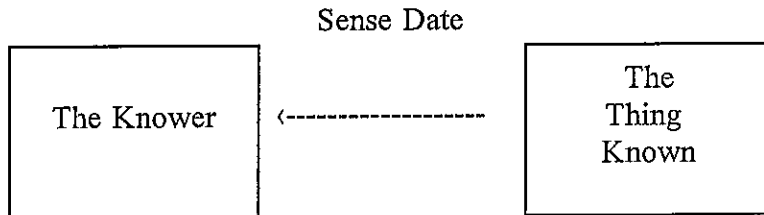
Realism

Realistic philosophies of education hold that:

1. *Ultimate reality*, though independent of mind, is nonetheless known by minds, as, e.g.,
 - (a) Descartes, for whom both mind and matter are created by a theistic God, who is Substance;
 - (b) Spinoza, for whom both mind and matter are aspects of God, who is Substance (pantheism); and
 - (c) Whitehead, for whom both mind and matter are aspects of a creative process in which God is the principle of concretion (panentheism).
2. The goal of education is the transmission of:
 - (a) universal truths that are independent of minds or points of view--the intellectual emphasis;
 - (b) knowledge of God as well as knowledge of man and the natural order if there is a God as in St. Thomas Aquinas or Maritain; or
 - (c) cultural values or excellences. "Education should make one aware of the real world including values and potentialities of life" (Broudy).
3. Truth is objective and discovered.
4. The rational man is the discoverer of objective truth. According to realism, idealism is correct in its emphasis on the intellectual but incorrect in believing that the world is dependent on the intellect or mind.

Past realists in educational theory are Aristotle, St. Thomas Aquinas, Comenius, Descartes, Spinoza, Locke, Rousseau (qualified), Hobbes, and Pestalozzi. Recent realists in educational theory are Newman, Whitehead, Hutchins, Adler, Wild, Herbart, Broudy, and Maritain.

Objectivism believes that objects are independent of mind and present their properties directly to the knower through sense data. Things known and sense data are one (epistemological realism as epistemological monism).

OBJECTIVISM

Epistemological realism:

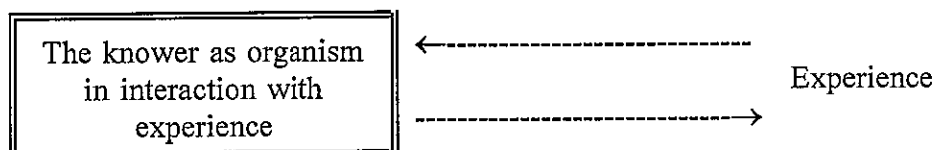
- (a) ascribes varying roles to the mind in knowing;
- (b) believes that the mind knows independent things not ideas alone;
- (c) believes that knower and things known are distinct;
- (d) believes that the knower is in the world; and
- (e) teaches that "things known...continue to exist unaltered when they are not known" (Montague).
- (f) "Even though no one can observe any physical object existing unobserved, we have no good reason to believe that they don't exist unobserved" (Russell).

Pragmatism

Pragmatism is primarily a theory of meaning and truth. It stresses the genetic and instrumental character of knowledge. Pragmatism approaches knowledge in terms of an organism that:

- (a) adapts to and interacts with its environment;
- (b) uses ideas as instruments or plans of action; and
- (c) retains ideas that work as true and discards those that fail as false.

Pragmatists emphasize the experimental method. Peirce spoke of it as the method of knowledge that is "open to the test of criticism of others." "Knowing is literally something which we do," Dewey argued. It is not something which we come to possess. Pragmatism (i.e., also instrumentalism or experimentalism) is "a behaviorist theory of thinking and knowing" (Dewey).

PRAGMATISM

Knowledge is the successful determination or reorganization of experience through what Dewey called a "transaction." Pragmatism pictures an organism developing knowledge from a successful encounter with experience. What is claimed as knowledge must be capable of public confirmation (in Peirce and Dewey). 72

Forms of Pragmatism

1. Radical empiricism. This form links William James to the tradition of British empiricism and in particular to the pure phenomenism of David Hume.
2. Pragmaticism. This form is associated with Charles Sanders Peirce and by him contrasted with that of James. Whereas James interpreted knowledge and truth in terms of personal needs, verification, or consequences, Peirce emphasized the social and objective nature of knowledge and truth, i.e., the "tough-minded" version of pragmatism.
3. Experimentalism or instrumentalism. John Dewey's form, wherein knowledge is described as funded experience. Experimental method, the method of inquiry, is stressed. Like Peirce, Dewey rejected James' individual interpretation for a more socially and scientifically oriented or "tough-minded" pragmatism.

Pragmatic Philosophies of education hold that:

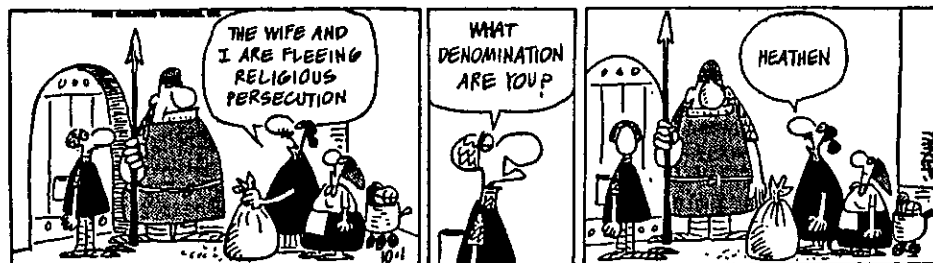
1. Ultimate reality is the general process of experience from which subject (mind) and object (matter) are differentiated as explicit factors. Thought, e.g., is intelligent behavior. There is no spiritual or transempirical reality as such.
2. The goal of education is:
 - (a) the successful organization and reorganization of experience as adaption to life, i.e., science as an end in itself;
 - (b) The promotion of the growth of "a life which is fruitful and inherently significant" (Dewey); or
 - (c) "the process through which the needed [social] transformation may be accomplished" (Dewey) or "that reconstruction or reorganization of experience which adds to the meaning of experience, and which increases ability to direct the course of subsequent experience" (Dewey), i.e., practical adaptation to present needs rather than intellectual excellence alone.
3. Knowledge is:
 - (a) relative and instrumental rather than universal or representational. "The only use of a knowledge of the past is to equip us for the present" (Dewey);
 - (b) experimental problem solving inquiry, a practical activity, knowing how, rather than knowing that or correct intellectual judgment or idea as such; or
 - (c) initiated in an indeterminate situation which is transformed into a problematic situation with a specific problem that is resolved through scientific or experimental method.
4. Truth is a "thing done" (pragmatism), a function of practical value, made to happen, i.e., brought about rather than discovered to be the case.

Although historical precursors of the pragmatic philosophy of education are philosophers like Protagoras, Bacon, and Comte, the pragmatic philosophy of education is relatively recent and perhaps the dominant philosophy of education today. It is found explicitly in the writings of Dewey, for whom pragmatism is primarily a theory of meaning and truth (instrumentalism or experimentalism) and in Kilpatrick, Childs, Counts, Raup, Brubaker, Neff, Bode, Axtelle, Thomas, Bayles, Stanley, Benne, Rugg, Hook, and Brameld, who identified his theory as reconstructionism.

Brameld's categories of educational philosophy are:

1. essentialism, in which education is seen as the transmission of cultural essentials, as in idealism and realism;
2. perennialism, in which education is seen as the transmission of perennial or absolute and universal truths, as, e.g., in realists like Maritain or Adler or in those holding for religious absolutes;
3. progressivism, in which education is seen as the process of intelligent problem solving, with emphasis on method, as in Dewey's theory; and
4. reconstructionism (Brameld's own view), in which education is seen to be the source and implementation of new social ends for social reconstruction. Emphasis is on goals as well as on method.

WIZARD OF ID



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Kant and The Emergence of Fact-Value Dichotomy

Two Realms	Realm of Fact	Realm of Value (spiritual)
REALITY	Appearance	Reality
PHENOMENA/NOUMENA	Phenomena	Noumena
THINGS	Things-to-me (in experience)	Things-in-themselves
SCIENCE/ETHICS	Science	Ethics (& metaphysics)
WORLD/GOD	World	God
KNOWABILITY	Knowable	Unknowable
OBJECTIVE/SUBJECTIVE	Objective	Subjective
MIND/WILL	Mind	Will
MOOD	Indicative	Imperative
TESTABILITY	Falsifiable	Unfalsifiable
KIERKEGAARD	Ethical Realm (rational)	Religious Realm (super-rational)
SCHAEFFER	Lower Storey	Upper Storey
BULTMANN	Historie (factual)	Geschichte (mythical)
EARLY BARTH	Bible	Word of God
BRUNNER	Propositional Revelation	Personal Revelation
EARLY WITTGENSTEIN	Speakable	Unspeakable

Adapted from N.L. Geisler

Analyzing And Attacking Arguments

Deductive Arguments

Reasons from general axioms, usually true by definition, to a specific instance of this truth. If its premises are true and its forms valid, a deductive argument guarantees the truth of its conclusion. So, to attack a deductive argument, you must show that either it is invalid in form or that one or more of the premises are not true. Also be careful to watch for semantics and for hidden premises. Works best in mathematics and geometry.

Categorical Syllogisms

Valid Form:

All A's are B.
C is an A.
So, C is a B.

Example:

All people are mortal.
Socrates is a person.
So, Socrates is mortal.

Invalid Forms: (Fallacy of Affirming the Consequent)

All A's are B.
C is a B.
So, C is an A.

All people are mortal.
Socrates is a mortal.
So, Socrates is a person.

(Fallacy of Denying the Antecedent)

All A's are B.
C is not an A.
So, C is not a B.

All people are mortal.
Socrates is not a person.
So, Socrates is not mortal.

Mixed Hypothetical Syllogisms

Valid Forms: (modus ponens)

If A, then B.
A is true.
So, B is true.

Example:

If the Bible is true, God exists.
The Bible is true.
So, God exists.

(Modus tollens)

If A, then B.
B is not true.
So, A is not true.

If the Koran is true, Allah exists.
Allah does not exist.
So, the Koran is not true.

Invalid Forms: (Fallacy of Affirming the Consequent)

If A, then B.
B is true.
So, A is true.

If the Bible is true, God exists.
God exists.
So, the Bible is true.

If A, then B.
A is not true.
So, B is not true.

If the Koran is true, Allah exists.
The Koran is not true.
So, Allah does not exist.

Disjunctive Syllogisms

Valid Form:

Either A or B is true.
B is not true.
So, A is true.

Example:

Either Jehovah or Allah exists.
Allah does not exist.
So, Jehovah does exist.

Invalid Form: (Fallacy of False Alternatives)

Either A or B is true.
(C could be true).

Either Jehovah or Allah exists.
Buddha or Brahman might exist.

Inductive Arguments

Reasons from several or many specific observations to a general law which encompasses all the observations. It can never guarantee the truth of its conclusion unless all the possible occurrences have been observed. Can only be judged as strong or weak, according to the proportion of the possible occurrences observed. So, to attack an inductive argument, you point out the weakness of the observations, and that even the best-case inductive argument is not guaranteed. Inductive logic is the primary method used in modern science. Form: Some A's were observed being B. So, all A's must be a B.

Weak Inductive Argument -- prejudice, hasty generalization, spot testing

The three Arabs I know are argumentative. Therefore, all 50 million Arabs are argumentative.

Strong Inductive Argument -- scientific sampling, scientific polling

This drug worked on 998 out of 1,000 patients. Therefore, it will work (generally) on the population as a whole.

These fallacies are often used in normal discourse, particularly in politics (secular and sacred). They do not contribute to clear reasoning, though sometimes they have been known to sway or persuade a crowd. These are just a few of the most frequently used fallacies:

- ✓ Tautology -- a trivial truth that provides no new information.
 - * A rose is a rose.
 - * Become what you are.
 - * It's not over till it's over.
- ✓ Ad hominem -- Attacks a person's character rather than the question at issue.
 - * Can anything good come out of Nazareth?
 - * We can't believe his interpretation because he's (liberal, fundy, gay, etc).
- ✓ Reducion ad absurdum -- Exaggerates the opponent's stance into an extreme position. (similar to the Domino Theory or the Slippery Slope)
 - * If you ever make one exception, you might as well through out all the rules.
 - * Barth is more liberal than Geisler, so he's virtually an atheist.
- ✓ Red Herring -- Raising an irrelevant issue to divert attention away from the issue at hand.
 - * I won't become a Christian because it's not scientific.
- ✓ Beg the Question or Circular Reasoning -- Assumes without proof from the very beginning (first premise) the very thing you're trying to prove in the end.
 - * God exists because He says so in the Bible.
 - * John is telling the truth because he says so.
 - * I'm an idealist because I'm a rationalist, and I'm a rationalist because I'm an idealist.
- ✓ Non Sequitur -- The conclusion does not follow from (is not entailed in) the premises. It often involves sneaking in an undefended hidden premise.
 - * John is in town, so he must be drunk.
- ✓ Appeal to (Unqualified) Authority -- Cites some well-known authority in defense of your position. This can be good evidence, but only if this is something in the area of that person's expertise, and if it is something that the expert has specifically addressed.
 - * Nolan Ryan says we should vote for the Republicans.
 - * Four out of five school teachers say you should use this brand of aspirin.
 - * Shirley McLaine said the Bible should not be taken seriously.

✓ Guilt by Association -- Equates socializing with someone as advocating their views.

- * Jesus ate with publicans and sinners, so He could not be the Messiah.
- * Bob attended this (liberal/fundy) meeting, so he's a (liberal/fundy).

✓ Paradox -- Driven to a position that appears contradictory or equivocal, but the person insists is true. A paradox may not be wrong or fallacious, but it is least puzzling and in need of further explanation. In the case of some Christian doctrines, it may be necessary to hold two apparently contradictory truths in paradox, tension, or antinomy.

- * A Cretian says, "All Cretians are liars."
- * Jesus is divine and human.
- * This sentence is false.
- * We are free, but God has predestined us.

Using Logic in Biblical Exegesis

Logic is very useful in understanding what is being said in a passage (and in explaining it with clarity in a message). Analyze the logic used in the following scriptural examples. Can you think of other examples?

"All (adult humans) have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God." (Rom.3:23) I am an adult human. Therefore, I have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.

"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins." (I Jn 1:9) I am confessing my sin. Therefore, He will forgive me.

"Choose ye this day whom ye will serve, [either pagan gods or JHWH]. But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" (Josh 24:15).

*"You're playing God."
"Somebody has to!"*

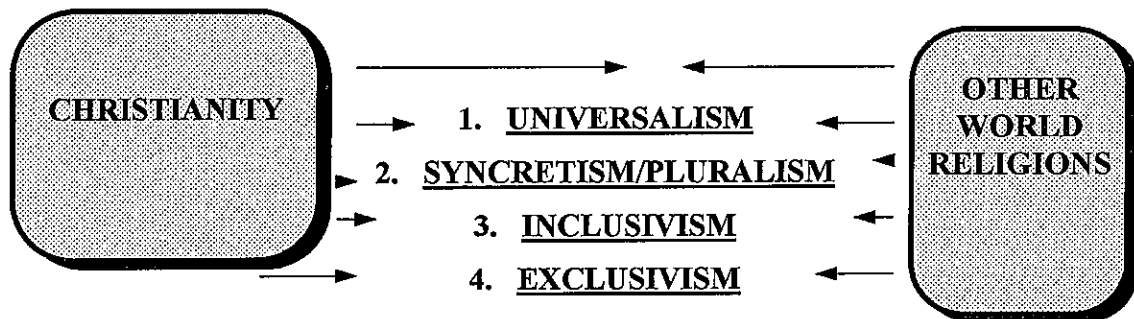
—Steve Martin,
The Man with Two Brains

*I teach you the overman. Man is
something that is to be overcome.
What have you done to overcome
him?*

—Friedrich Nietzsche,
Thus Spake Zarathustra,
I prologue, p. 3.

↔

FOUR VIEWS OF THE INTERRELATIONSHIP OF CHRISTIANITY
AND OTHER RELIGIONS



1. **UNIVERSALISM** - all people will ultimately be saved by [the one true] God.
2. **SYNCRETISM/PLURALISM** - all world religions have their truth and accomplish basically the same thing- thus all ultimately will be saved by their own faith.
3. **INCLUSIVISM** - Christ's work of salvation is essential and universal in application, and it will be applied even to those not aware of its benefits, but who have lived morally and upright.
4. **EXCLUSIVISM** - Christianity (and Christ) is the ***ONLY WAY OF SALVATION*** (*John 14:6; Acts 4:12; 1 Timothy 2:5*). Other world religions may have partial religious insights (all truth is God's truth,) but only Christianity is *sufficient for salvation*.

↔

SIX POINTS OF DIVERGENCE (↔) BETWEEN CHRISTIANITY AND OTHER WORLD RELIGIONS

- 1) The Christian God is Personal
- 2) Christ alone is Savior for mankind
- 3) All persons are of **GREAT VALUE** as image bearers of God
- 4) A Christian philosophy of history is purposive and spiral/linear
- 5) Christian soteriology offers salvation by **GRACE** through faith alone to all
- 6) Christian Eschatology is based on the hope of the **RESURRECTION**,
of which Jesus is the first (fruit)

Four Views of The Interrelationship of Christianity and Other World Religions

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- ♦ **Universalism** -- All people will be saved by the one true God; God is too good and loving to send anyone to hell for eternity (especially those who have not heard the gospel).
- ♦ **Syncretism/Pluralism** -- All the world religions are basically the same; all people will be saved through their own faith.
- ♦ **Inclusivism** -- Christ's work of salvation is essential and universal in application and it will apply even to those not aware of its benefits (e.g. Karl Rahner's "anonymous Christianity").
- ♦ **Exclusivism** -- Christianity is the only way of salvation. Other world religions may have partial religious insights (all truth is God's truth), but only Christianity is sufficient for salvation. Other religions may be seen as either having partial insights of which Christianity is the fulfillment, and/or as demonic and totally in darkness.

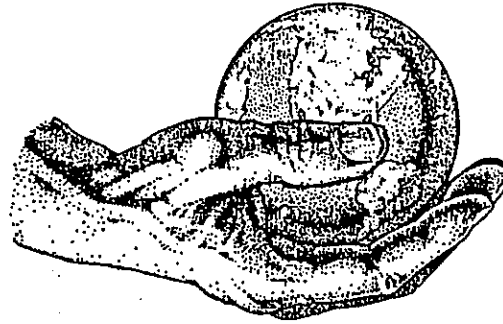
Six Points of Divergence Between Christianity and Other World Religions

- ♥ The Christian God is personal; other religions have a more impersonal picture of God. (Brahman, Buddhism, Allah).
- ♥ Christ is Savior; other religions merely offer great teachers. (Muhammad, gurus, bodhisattvas).
- ♥ All persons are of great value in a Christian anthropology as image bearers of God; Other religions place much less value on personhood and the individual. (Atman, Anatta, Islam).
- ♥ A Christian Philosophy of history is purposive and linear (with spiral aspects); the Eastern religions have a cyclical view of history. (cycle of Samsara).
- ♥ Christian soteriology offers salvation by grace; other religions offer salvation by works. (Torah, Five Pillars, Yoga, Noble Eightfold Path).
- ♥ Christian eschatology is based upon the hope of the resurrection; other religions offer immortality of the soul, nirvana, or reincarnation. The body is basically deemed evil (or "inferior") in these systems.

SEVEN MAJOR WORLD VIEWS

Theism: A World Plus
an Infinite God

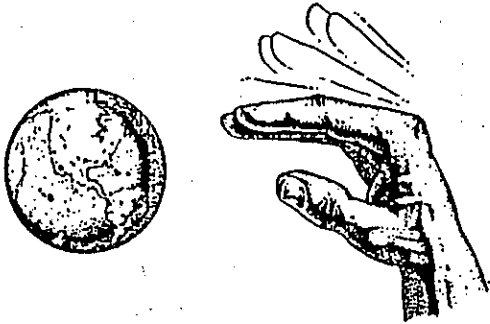
Atheism: A World
Without God



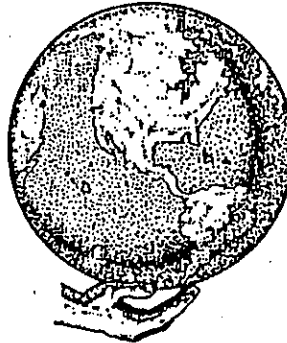
Pantheism:
A World That Is God



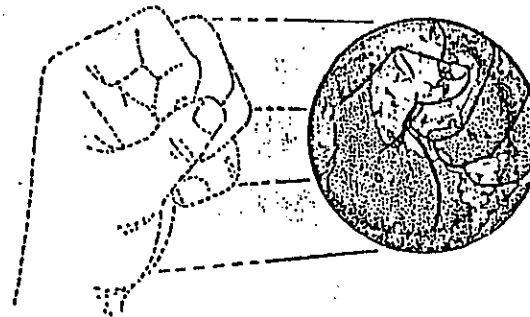
Deism: A World On
Its Own Made by God



Finite Godism:
A World With
a Finite God



Panentheism:
A World In
God



Polytheism:
A World With
Many Gods



BASIC THEISTIC WORLD VIEWS

1. **ATHEISM** - No god exists **beyond** (transcendence) **and in** (immanence) **the universe**. Marxism, Hinayana Buddhism, and Secular Humanism are examples.
2. **POLYTHEISM** - **There are many gods in the universe**. Examples include the ancient Greek and Roman gods, Shintoism, and Mormonism. Mormonism states, "*As man now is, God once was, as God now is, man may become.*" (The "John 3:16" of the Mormon religion)
3. **PANTHEISM** - **God IS the universe**. God is equal to all that there is, and all that there is is equal to God. Examples include Hinduism, Zen Buddhism, star wars, Christian Science, and new age religions.
 1. God is All or All is God. (God is the universe)
 2. Attack especially on the atonement of Christ.
 3. Attack on traditional orthodox Christianity.
 4. Belief that modern man needs a new message (New Age Pantheism)
 5. Christian Science and New Age Ideas are major pantheistic systems.
4. **PAN-EN-THEISM** - **God is IN the universe**. God is the director of the world, the world is the same as God's body. God cooperates with, and is interdependent with the world. He is actually finite, temporal, continually changing, constantly being perfected, and has two natures (bi-polar). Examples include Liberal theologians, Alfred North Whitehead (1861-1947 - the Father of Process Philosophy), Shubert Ogden, and John Cobb.
5. **FINITE THEISM** - **A Finite God exists beyond and in the universe**. God is actually beyond the universe, but acts within it in limited ways. Examples of major thinkers include Plato, and Rabbi Kushner, author of When Bad Things Happen to Good People, and freewill theist like Chlark Pinnock.
6. **DEISM** - **God exists beyond the universe, but not in it supernaturally**. God exists in total transcendence to the universe. He created it, but does not care about it, nor intervene in it.
7. **THEISM** - **A personal, infinite God is beyond the universe, but also acts within it**. Provides a balance between transcendence and immanence.

There are **THREE GREAT MONO - THEISTIC WORLD VIEW SYSTEMS:**

1. JUDAISM

2. CHRISTIANITY

3. ISLAM

"NOW LET ME BURN OUT FOR GOD!" exclaimed Henry Martyn when he arrived in Calcutta in April, 1806. But he probably had little idea how fast the blaze would consume him. He died six years later at the age of 31. Eager to devote his life to the Lord's work in India, with an incredible determination and unselfish dedication, Martyn compressed a lifetime of service into those six years.

*Expect Great Things From God,
Attempt Great Things For God.*

From: William Carey's "Deathless Sermon"
When: May 31, 1792

Christianity Under Attack

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The Christian World View Under Siege

*Everyone Worships Something. Humanity is incurably religious.

Different God's People Worship

1. Theism: An infinite God exists beyond but is involved with the universe.

Examples: Judaism **The three**
 Christianity ----- **great mono-**
 Islam **theistic faiths**

"the task of Christian leadership is to confront modern man with the Christian world life view..."

--Carl F.H. Henry

2. Atheism: No God exists beyond the universe or in it.

Examples: Marxism
 Hinayana Buddhism
 Secular Humanism

God's of the atheist: Cosmos - Carl Sagan
 Dialectical Process - Karl Marx
 The Human Race - Erich Fromm
 Individual Ego (I) - Ayn Rand

Christianity is a "religion for losers."

--Ted Turner

3. Pantheism: God is the universe (all).

Examples: Hinduism (many types)
 Zen Buddhism
 Star Wars
 Christian Science
 New Age Religions

"It is clear as the sun and evident as the day that there is no God; and still more, that there can be no God."

--Ludwig Feuerbach

4. Panentheism: God is in the universe.

Examples: Liberal Theology (theologians)
 Alfred North Whitehead (Process Philosophy)
 Charles Hartshorne (Process Theology)
 Shubert Ogden (SMU Professor)
 John Cobb (New Hermeneutic/Process God)

5. Finite Godism: A finite God exists beyond and in the universe.

Examples: No major religion, but numerous major thinkers

Plato

John Stuart Mill

William James

Rabbi Kushner (Author of When Bad Things Happen To Good People)

6. Deism: God exists beyond the universe, but not in it (supernaturally).

Examples: Voltaire
Thomas Jefferson
Benjamin Franklin
Thomas Paine

7. Polytheism: There are many gods in the universe (finite gods).

Examples: Ancient Greek gods
Ancient Roman gods
Shintoism
Mormonism

Animism

The belief in the existence of spiritual beings that are separable or separate from bodies. ²

Humanism

Way of life based on the belief that what is good for human beings is the highest good. ³

Mysticism

The search for direct personal experience of the divine. ³

Paganism

The religion and worship of those who are neither Christians, Jews nor Muslims. ³

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² Copyright © 1996 by Houghton Mifflin Company. Reproduced by permission from *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, Third Edition*.

³ From *Eerdmans' Handbook to the World's Religions*, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., © 1982, 1994. Used by permission.

Polytheism

The belief in and worship of a variety of gods, who rule over various aspects of the world and life. ³

Primal Religions

Religious systems of tribal groups having no literary tradition. Characterized by belief in spiritual forces behind natural phenomena, a reverence for ancestors and a tight-knit social system. ³

Spiritualism

Any religious system or practice which has the object of establishing communication with the dead. ³

Syncretism

The growing together of two or more religions making a new development in religion which contains some of the beliefs and practices of both. ³

Christianity Under Attack

Humanism on the Attack

Western Atheism: God does not exist (there is not sufficient evidence to affirm the existence of a deity). The Universe is all there is (materialism).

I. The General Attack on the Existence of God

Atheism: There is no God (at least none like the personal monotheistic God as found in the Bible). No God is involved in the world we know.

Agnosticism: God's existence cannot be known.
The world/universe can be explained without God.

Basic Premises

- * Theism is irrational.
- * Theism is to be ignored or attacked.
- * Theism is dangerous and harmful.
- * God (reasonable talk about Him) is dead.

II. Alleged Grounds for Rejecting God's Existence

Belief in God lacks sufficient rational grounds.

A. Atheists charge that it is irrational to say God is self-caused.

Christian Response: God is not a self-caused but an uncaused being. By definition, an uncaused being would be a supernatural being.

B. Atheists charge it is not rational to believe the whole universe is caused (i.e. by God) just because the parts are. (Called the fallacy of composition).

Christian Response:

1. If the "whole" universe is presently being caused, then there must be a cause of the whole present universe.

2. If the "whole" universe is an independent, uncaused cause of everything that exists in the universe, then it is just another name for the Creator of the universe.
3. Both ways lead to a theistic conclusion, namely, to a Creator or Cause of the entire universe.

So while the atheist's argument is reasonable, it actually turns out to be an argument for theism.

- C. Atheists charge it is irrational to believe in an uncaused cause (a first or primal cause), that is that God is uncaused.

* The Atheist Argument:

1. Everything that exists has a cause.
2. God exist.
3. Therefore God has a cause.

Christian Response:

1. Everything that begins has a cause.
2. The universe had a beginning (not its Creator).
3. Therefore the universe had a cause (Creator).

- * Either the universe is the uncaused cause or God is the uncaused cause.
- * Either matter is eternal or God is eternal.
- * Or nothing produced something (but this is irrational).

- D. Atheist charge there need not be a First Cause; Causes can go on forever (i.e. there can be infinite regression in the past).

Christian Response: The argument confuses abstract and actual infinite possibilities.

Mathematical (Abstract)

Abstract
Exist in thought
Countable
Possible

Actual

Concrete
Exist in things
Not Countable
Impossible

Again:

1. Everything that begins has a cause.
2. The universe had a beginning (it does not go back forever).

3. Therefore the universe had a cause (Creator).

E. Atheist claim there is no reason to believe the cause of the universe is an intelligent Being (i.e. it could be some unknown, impersonal force).

* Intelligence could be the result of mere chance, evolutionary progress via natural selection.

Christian Response:

1. The argument fails to show the unreasonableness of belief in an intelligent Creator, but only the possibility of another explanation.
2. It is more reasonable to believe in an intelligent Creator of the universe we know and observe (design in the universe argues for a designer, i.e. the teleological argument).
3. The argument fails to show how rationality evolved or developed out of irrationality.

F. Atheist claim evil eliminates God.

* The atheist argument:

1. If God is all-powerful He could destroy evil.
2. If God is all-good He would destroy evil.
3. But evil exists and is not destroyed.
4. Therefore no God (of the Christian type) exist.

Christian Response:

--Destroyed can be understood in various ways:

1. To annihilate completely:
 - (a) the only way to destroy all evil is to destroy all free thought and choice (and persons!).
 - (b) even atheists do not really want their freedom of thought and choice destroyed (nor their person!).
 - (c) therefore, even atheists do not really want God to destroy all evil (for He then would destroy all!).

2. To defeat evil entirely (without destroying free creatures):

(a) an all-good God would defeat evil.

(b) an all-powerful God could defeat evil.

(c) but evil is not yet defeated (but time has not stopped yet either).

(d) therefore, evil will be defeated in the future by this good and powerful God (Christian revelation affirms this in the book of Revelation).

Evil (and for that matter good) is basically nondefinable apart from God. At best it is arbitrarily assigned and hence there is no rational basis for characterizing any action as evil or good (e.g., Hitler's Holocaust can only be arbitrarily described as evil. It cannot be called evil in a morally absolute sense).

III. The Real Grounds For Rejecting God Are Not Rational

A. The heart, not the head (moral) is the problem.

B. The will, not the intellect (volitional) is the issue.

- P R I D E -

"Atheism does not result from the lack of evidence that God is there, but rather from a reaction to the evidence that God is there."

- Norman Geisler (cf. Psalm 14:1, Romans 1:18-20)

To live in the world of the absurd, and to salvage meaning from such a world, one must live with the belief that absurdity, in the sense of recognizing and accepting the fact that there are no metaphysically guaranteed directives for conduct, can by itself generate a positive ethic. Only by this recognition and this acceptance of the world's absurdity (the lack of order, the lack of guarantees) in contradiction to the anguished demand of our innate need of order and purpose, and only by the conscious espousal of human purpose and action can we transform nihilism from a passive despair into a way of revolting against and of transcending the world's indifference to the human being.

I tried to discover as a child what was right and wrong
since no one around could tell me.
And now I recognize that everything abandoned me,
that I needed someone to show me the way. . . .
I need my father.

Art, in a sense, is a revolt against everything fleeting and unfinished in the world.

—Albert Camus
(1913-1960)

SUMMARY

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The theological foundation of Secular Humanism is atheism. The present head of the American Humanist Association, Isaac Asimov, said, "I am an atheist, out and out." The Humanists' major publications, *The Humanist* and *Free Inquiry* magazines, are atheistic. Paul Kurtz, editor of *Free Inquiry*, argues that the term *Humanism* cannot apply to one who believes in God. Corliss Lamont, author of *The Philosophy of Humanism*, insists that atheism is the cornerstone of the Secular Humanist worldview. According to Lamont, the science of biology has conclusively shown that life, including man, is the result of a long process of evolution stretching out over three billion years. Such a scenario makes supernatural creation by God superfluous. Humanists view God as the creation of man. "It is said that men may not be the dreams of the gods," said Carl Sagan in *Cosmos*, "but rather that the gods are the dreams of men." Other spoken Humanists, including John Dewey, Bertrand Russell, Julian Huxley, and Erich Fromm, are published atheists. The major *Humanist Manifestoes* are atheistic. The major Humanist publishing arm -- Prometheus Books-- is a publisher of atheistic literature. Humanists argue that science and the scientific process have rendered God obsolete. They believe that only nature exists, that it has always existed, that man is a conscious speck of nature, and that nature requires neither supernatural explanation nor God.

	Secular Humanism	Marxism/Leninism	Biblical Christianity
SOURCE	HUMANIST MANIFESTO I & II	WRITINGS OF MARX & LENIN	BIBLE
THEOLOGY	Atheism	Atheism	Theism
PHILOSOPHY	Naturalism	Dialectical Materialism	Supernaturalism
ETHICS	Ethical Relativism	Proletariat Morality	Ethical Absolutes
BIOLOGY	Darwinian Evolution	Darwinian/Punctuated Evolution	Special Creationism
PSYCHOLOGY	Monistic Self- Actualization	Monistic Pavlovian Behaviorism	Dualism
SOCIOLOGY	Non-traditional World State Ethical Society	Abolition of Home, Church, and State	Home, Church & State
LAW	Positive Law	Positive Law	Biblical/Natural Law
POLITICS	World Government (Globalism)	New World Order	Justice, Freedom, Order
ECONOMICS	Socialism	Socialism/Communism	Stewardship of Property
HISTORY	Historical Evolution	Historical Materialism	Historical Resurrection

Confronting Rival Worldviews

Confronting Atheism, Naturalism, and Secular Humanism

Confronting Atheism

Types of Atheism:

- ✓ Conceptual/Conclusive Atheism -- rejects theism on intellectual grounds, arguing that the evidence is conclusive that there is no God.
- ✓ Practical/Presumptive Atheism -- living as if God did not exist, though adherents may not be able to articulate reasons for their disbelief in God.
- ✓ Agnosticism -- believing one can never know for sure whether or not God exists.

Five popular atheistic arguments against belief in God:

- ⊗ Belief in God is unscientific. The church has always resisted science.
--[Scientific Positivism]
- ⊙ Reply: Modern science arose only in Western "Christian" culture. Many of the best scientists have been theists.
- ⊗ The concept of "God" is meaningless. It has no empirical referent in the real world.
--[Logical Positivism]
- ⊙ Reply: Although we can't talk about God with univocal language, we can use analogical language without equivocating. Wittgensteinian fideism shows us that religious language can be an appropriate language game.
- ⊗ God is merely a psychological neurosis. He is an anthropomorphic projection of our own minds in order to meet our psychological needs for a perfect father figure.
--[Sigmund Freud, Ludwig Feuerbach]
- ⊙ Reply: This commits the genetic fallacy; just to explain how we may have come up with the idea does not prove whether it is true or not. Further, just because something meets a need doesn't mean it isn't true.
- ⊗ Belief on God is used to encourage social injustice. Christianity is used by the upper classes to keep lower classes down, such as in South Africa, etc.
--[Karl Marx]

© Reply: Historically the church has been on the forefront of changing social policy regarding slavery, the rights of women, civil rights, and apartheid. All you have to do is look at non-Christian cultures to see the difference.

⊕ Belief in God is inconsistent with the existence of evil.

--[David Hume]

© Reply: Answered via positive theodicy arguments with freewill, soul-making, and eschatological defenses.

Four senses of atheism may be identified:

1. Classical atheism. This is not a general denial of God's existence but the rejection of the god of a particular nation. Christians were repeatedly called atheists in this sense because they refused to acknowledge heathen gods. It was also in this sense that Cicero called Socrates and Diagoras of Athens atheists.
 2. Philosophical atheism. This position may be contrasted with theism, which affirms a personal, self-conscious deity (not a principle, first cause, or force).
 3. Dogmatic atheism. This is the absolute denial of God's existence. This position is more rare than one might think, as people have more often declared themselves agnostics or secularists. There have, however, been those who claimed to hold this view (the eighteenth century French atheists).
 4. Practical atheism. While God is not denied, life is lived as if there is no God. There is complete indifference to his claims, and often there is outspoken and defiant wickedness (Psalm 14:1). This form of atheism is widely prevalent, as can be seen from the Scriptures.
-

God was a primitive notion invented by superstitious people, people only just beginning to step out of ignorance and unconsciousness. The concept of God has been oppressive: a being more powerful than we, but made in the image of our crude self-conceptions. Our own process of endless progression into higher forms should and will replace this religious idea. Humanity is a temporary stage along the evolutionary pathway. We are not the zenith of nature's development. It is time for us to consciously take charge of ourselves and to accelerate our transhuman progress.

No more gods, no more faith, no more timid holding back. Let us blast out of our old forms, our ignorance, our weakness, and our mortality. The future belongs to posthumanity.

Max More is president of the Extropy Institute, editor of Extropy: The Journal of Transhumanist Thought, and is completing his Ph.D. dissertation on the philosophy of the self. He lives in California.

Confronting Naturalism

A Comparison of the Worldviews of Naturalism and Supernaturalism

	NATURALISM	SUPERNATURALISM
ONTOLOGY	Only nature exists	God transcends nature
EPISTEMOLOGY	Almost exclusive use of the scientific/empirical method; correspondence theory of truth	Holistic epistemology
COSMOLOGY	Pre-existence of matter; Self-sufficiency of nature; Nature functions with regularity according to the laws of nature	Creation ex nihilo; Contingency of nature; Nature functions with regularity, but God can interrupt the regularity with a miracle
THEOLOGY	Pantheistic, process, or deistic view of God, if any	Theistic God
ANTHROPOLOGY	Principle of Continuity (humans differ from subhuman only quantitatively)	Persons are created in God's image (humans differ from subhuman qualitatively)
AXIOLOGY	Meliorism (the world is neutral, but can be improved)	Creationism (the world is created good)
ETHICS	Emotivist ethics, survival ethics, Subjectivist ethics	Objective ethics, based on doing God's will for one's life
HISTORY	Indeterminism or Determinism	Linear, Purposive, Redemptive

NATURALISM

- Thales (624-546 BC) --Pre-Socratic Materialism
Water is the underlying reality behind appearances.
- Anaximander (610-546 BC) -- Pre-Socratic Materialism
A basic substance (apeiron) is the source of all things.
- Anaximenes (585-528 BC) -- Pre-Socratic Materialism
Air is the ultimate source of all things.
- Heraclitus (536-470 BC) -- Pre-Socratic Materialism
Fire is the source of all things.
- Democritus (460-371 BC) -- Atomism
Tiny, indestructible particles called atoms are foundational for all of reality.
- Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) -- Materialistic Monism
All conscious life can be explained by the brain and central nervous system; all emotions can be explained by glandular activity.
- Sir Isaac Newton (1642-1727) -- Mechanistic Materialism
His followers developed Newtonian physics, which pictured the world as a machine governed by the laws of nature. Although Newton himself was a theist, the Newtonian physics led to Deism in religion.
- Karl Marx (1818-1883) -- Dialectical Materialism
Adapted Hegel's dialectical method without the idealist presuppositions. Applied a materialist interpretation to history, based on economic systems (primitive communism, slave society, feudal society, bourgeois capitalism, and a classless society after the revolution of the proletariat).
- Alfred North Whitehead (1861-1947) -- Process Theology
In an effort to avoid the problems raised for traditional Christianity by modern science and by the problem of evil, Whitehead redefined Christianity. He viewed God in a pantheistic way. His dipolar theism portrayed God as evolving from an imperfect, primordial being to a perfect consequent being.
- Carl Sagan (1934-1996) -- Secular Humanism
A non-theist who believes "the Cosmos is all that is or ever was or ever will be." Accepts the theory of evolution as the explanation of human life. Makes aiding humankind the goal of science. Accepts some Christian values without accepting the Christian faith on which those values are based.

Some Objections to Naturalism

- Ontology: It begs the question because you cannot prove only Nature is real without presupposing it.
- Epistemology: It is self-referentially incoherent because any reason that naturalists might give for their position cannot be taken seriously if our minds are just a mindless force.
- Cosmology: Rigid use of the inductive method proves to be a self-fulfilling prophecy; anything that does not fit the previous pattern is ruled out by definition. A purposive, personal God is a better explanation of the cause of the universe than a blindly evolving energy mass.
- Theology: Why should we worship a pantheistic God who is just as trapped by Nature as are we? The reductionistic explanations of religious experience offered by naturalism are inadequate.
- Anthropology: How did mind evolve from the mindless? Reason from randomness and irrationality?
- Axiology: Most of the issues addressed by naturalism have little or nothing to offer in answering the major questions we face as human beings.
- Ethics: No naturalistic ethic can offer an objective right and wrong; ethics are merely a matter of preference or power. It is the naturalistic fallacy to derive "ought" judgements from "is" statements.
- History: Both the indeterminist and determinist views prove self-defeating. If everything is up to chance, then we have no way of knowing whether we chance to be right or not. IF everything is determined, we are trapped in the circularity of the anthropic principle. We were predetermined to think the way we did, so we would never know whether we had objective truth or not.

Confronting Secular Humanism

Humanism arose out of Christianity about the time of the Reformation (e.g., the Renaissance). In fact, humanism arose uniquely in Christian cultures. The Hindu, Buddhist, and Islamic anthropologies have a rather low view of the value of persons. There is a long line of Christian humanists, including Erasmus, Calvin, Luther, Zwingli, and C.S. Lewis. But when humanism is cut loose from a Christian commitment and a Christian worldview, it becomes secular humanism. This is an important distinction which is essential to maintain.

Five Views Common to All Humanists

1. An optimistic anthropology: All persons have worth and dignity.
2. This worldly self-fulfillment: One should seek fulfillment in this present world. One should not neglect the present age with an other-worldly pacifism / unrealism.
3. Voluntarism: Human freedom and responsibility play an important role.
4. Meliorism / futurism: Optimistic that humans (using science and reason) can solve many of the problems in the world; human potential is great.
5. Humanistic axiology and ethics: Values and morality flow from what would be in the best interest of persons, especially human rights. This is basically pure pragmatism.

Five Views Unique to Secular Humanism

1. Naturalistic antisupernaturalism: Only the material world exists. There is an attitude of indifference, bias, or hostility against traditional theism.
2. Evolutionism: Human origin can be explained exclusively by naturalistic evolution.
3. Annihilationism: There is no personal survival after death. Death equals cessation.
4. Extreme anthropological optimism: Humans are masters of their own fate through science and reason. There is no concept of personal sin.
5. Moral relativism: All ethics are subjective.

Christianity Under Attack

Pantheism - Threat From the East (now invading the West!)

I. Pantheism Defined and Described

- A. God is all or all is God (God is the cosmos or universe).
- B. The atonement of Christ is an absurd hangover from tribal religion.
- C. Traditional orthodox Christianity is no longer a viable religious option.
- D. Modern man needs a new message (New Age Pantheism).
- E. Christian Science and New Age Ideologies are major pantheistic systems.

II. Pantheistic Arguments Against Christian Theism

- A. Theism and Pantheism contrasted.

THEISM	PANTHEISM
God is beyond universe	God is the universe
God is distinct from universe	God is the same as universe
God made universe out of nothing (<u>ex nihilo</u>)	God made the universe out of himself
God created all that is	God is all that is
Supernatural is above the natural	Supernatural is within the natural
Universe had a beginning	Universe is eternal
Man is like God (image bearer)	Man is God
God is to universe as a painter is to his painting	God / universe as ocean is to drops of water in it

B. Pantheistic View of God

1. God is all and all is God.
2. God is the sum total of all that exists in whole of the manifested and unmanifested universe.
3. God is not a being or a person.
4. God is good (Christ) and evil (Satan) light and dark, i.e., God is the combination of all that is.

C. The Basis of the Pantheistic Attack on the Christian God

1. Rejection of the teaching of Scripture concerning God.
2. Belief in the unity and harmony of contradiction(s) / opposites.
3. Adoption of a different epistemology (theory of how to arrive at truth).

HOW TO ARRIVE AT THE TRUTH	
Christian Theism	Pantheism
Know it	Feel it
Be rational	Be mystical
Opposites cannot both be true	Opposites can both be true
Trust your senses	Distrust your senses
Objectively	Subjectively
For a pantheist, reason cannot be trusted	

D. Pantheistic view of the physical world

1. For some, it (the physical world) is an illusion. For others, it is God.
2. Energy is all there is.

E. Pantheistic View of Evil

Pantheists are diametrically opposed to the Christian view of evil. The two views can be contrasted in the following ways:	
Christian View	Pantheistic View
Evil is real	Evil is unreal
Evil springs from free choice	Evil springs from ignorance
Evil is opposed to God	Evil is not opposed to God
Evil is located in persons	Evil is located in a principle
Evil is opposite of good	Evil is identical with good

An example: Christian Science (Mary Baker Eddy) and Evil:

1. God is All-in-all.
2. God is good. Good is mind.
3. God, Spirit, being all; nothing is matter.

- * Disease is an illusion.
- * Death is an illusion.
- * Evil is an illusion.

F. A Pantheistic view of right and wrong (ethics)

1. Develop yourself.
2. Work with nature's resources.
3. Be self-reliant but cooperative.
4. Be non-violent.

- * These ethical guidelines however are not absolute.
- * Ultimately there is no difference between right and wrong.
- * Our aim is to go beyond good and evil all together.

III. A Christian Response to Pantheism

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Pantheism is in direct opposite of Christian theism on almost every major point. Note the following contrast:

Christian Theism	Pantheism
God is beyond universe	God is the universe
Matter is real	Matter is not real
Senses can be trusted (though examined)	Senses cannot be trusted at all
Reality is rational	Reality is not rational
Evil is real	Evil is an illusion
Good and evil are opposites	Good and evil are not opposites
Right and wrong are absolute	Right and wrong are relative
Life is lived only once	Life is lived many times (reincarnation)

- A. Pantheism is not rational. It is mystical, subjective and nontestable or verifiable.
- B. The pantheist's claims are self-defeating.
- C. Pantheists cannot avoid making a claim to truth.
- D. Pantheism has no good explanation for human error.
- E. Pantheism has no sufficient explanation of evil (e.g., suffering and death).
- F. Pantheism ultimately destroys the distinction between good and evil.
- G. Pantheism leads to detachment from human needs.
- H. Pantheism has no way to distinguish God and illusion.
- I. Pantheism has an inconsistent view of how man comes to know he is God, and how God (man) forgot he was/is God!

Worldviews of Traditional Theism and Process Theology

	TRADITIONAL THEISM	PROCESS THEOLOGY
THEOLOGY	Personalistic theism; Theistic worldview	Dipolar theism; Pantheistic worldview
GOD'S RELATION TO THE WORLD	Ruler/kingdom, clockmaker/clock, workman/tool, parent/child, agent/action	Head/body, leader/community
FREEDOM OR DETERMINISM	Both Calvinism and Arminianism; God foreordains on the basis of His foreknowledge	Emphasis on human freedom; God persuades through love, but does not predestine or foreordain
ATTRIBUTES OF GOD	Omniscient, omnipresent, omnipotent, personal, holy, unchanging, patriarchal/Father	Mostly omniscient, omnipresent, not omnipotent, somewhat personal, ethical(?), becoming, both matriarchal (mother) and patriarchal (father)
DIVINE KENOSIS (emptying)	God's self-limitation in the incarnation in order to respect human freedom	God's self-limitation is a metaphysical reality, not something He chooses
THEODICY (problems of evil)	God is omnipotent and all-loving, freewill defense, soul-building model, eschatological model	God is all-loving but not omnipotent; soul-making model
ESCHATOLOGY	Resurrection, judgment, dualistic eschatology	Subjective immortality "live" in God's experience or continued opportunity for becoming

Summarizing New Age thinking, Process Theology, and Liberation Theology based on Process Theology: An Introductory.

I. Process Thinking Described

- A. All of reality is interdependent, interrelated evolution (BECOMING rather than BEING) in which human and divine experiences reciprocally synthesize (mutually affecting, creatively flowing together) in higher opportunities for greater enjoyment.
- B. Method: develops philosophy/theology from "below" = from the observable cosmos (world) = from the animate and inanimate (environmental) experiences of life.
- C. Major proponents: Alfred North Whitehead, Charles Hartshorne, Shubert Ogden, and John Cobb

II. Process Thinking Defined

- A. Affirms "Dipolar Theism:" God is actually changing and evolving and potentially (primordially) creative (62).
 - 1. God is the persuasive (not coercive), primordial lure (or attractive field of force) to higher enjoyment, "the divine Eros urging the world to new heights of enjoyment (26, cf. 43,60,98)," the adventurous ground of novelty (28,57), the source of novel order and ordered novelty (59,98). In summary, God is creative love.
 - 2. God is also responsive love(43 ff) - evolvingly interdependently on worldly actualities (47).
 - 3. God is not to be understood Thomistically (8-9, 45). The process God is viewed as more biblical than the Thomistic God (22,42).
- B. "Process:" (14) = the only absolute is the evolving process of life. Everything is essentially related (not necessarily after its kind) and interdependent, dynamically evolving (or creatively transforming, 100) in participation with everything else (15, 154-55).
- C. "Enjoyment" (16) is the goal and purpose of life's creative novelties (16-17), the present actuality when any element achieves interrelated unity (26) of self expression and contribution (27) towards social harmony (71, 24-27).
- D. "Incarnation" can be described as the ecological (environmental) actuality of past "possibilities" creatively entering into (influencing) present novelties which will creatively flow into future novelties (22-24).
- E. "Christ" is the primordial Logos (creative love) actualized as creative transformation (106), Christ ≠ Jesus, who was only one exemplar of the ideal which is nevertheless universally present. Acceptance of Jesus = personal openness to (or responsiveness to) creative transformation (102-3).

III. General Observations:

- A. There is the redefinition of the attributes of God; this is a different God than the God of the Bible.
- B. P.T. attempts to deal with theodicy (God and the problem of evil), esp. 20th century nightmares like wars and holocaust, by incorporating evil into the character of God (53,56,60,74,75,157-158).
- C. P.T. is situational in ethics and standards (56-7, 99-100).
- D. There is the establishment of a hierarchy of ecological values (79), which is in some sense a self-defeating admission since all is viewed as equally divinized.
- E. The Trinity is to be understood modalistically - not personally (108-10).
- F. The redefinition of special revelation is such that it really no longer exists (159-61, app. A).

IV. Some connections of process thinking

- A. With "new age thinking" (62, 136-42)
 - 1) Emphasis upon the syncretizing-harmonizing of all aspects of the interrelated global village (political, ecological, religious, etc) for its survival (chap. 9).
 - 2) Separation of "Christ" and "Jesus" to break down His uniqueness (98-100, 104-5). New Age Thinkers - David Spangler, Fritzshof Capra (Popularizers John Denver, Shirley MacLaine).
- B. With "liberation thinking:" it pervades the minorities, the inner city, and the 2/3 world.
 - 1. Liberation Theology, 48-49, 147 (Evolution process by revolution)
James Cone, God of the Oppressed.
G. Gutierrez, Liberation Theology.
 - 2. Feminist Theology, Daley, Fiorenza, Molenknott;
Ruether in JAAR, Dec. 1985, 703-13

V. Refutation:

- A. New Age views truth as survival, what is, and all of theology is transposed and redefined. Process is new age. God is finite and mutable, the entire system is convoluted and irrational.
- B. Liberation: the same thing may be said of these movements and theologies, but they have the distinctive problem of reductionism (reducing all of theology to the one problem of oppression and the one solution of social liberation/freedom). There is a greater use of Scripture in some of their writing, but once one gets beyond their

redefinitions, any Marxist system would fit and apply.

VI. Summary Conclusion

Process theology is radical evolution and the most pervasive aspect of "new age" thinking. Liberation theology is militant process thinking (evolution by revolution).

David S. Dockery (Former Dean of Faculty, Southern Seminary)

Process Theology: Outline and Summary

Background: Philosophical thought of Alfred North Whitehead (1861-1947) and Charles Hartshorne (1897 -)

Present

Advocates: Schubert Ogden, John Cobb, Norman Pittenger

Description:

1. Emphasis upon God as becoming not being. God is not static nor impassive. God and the world are interdependent and in process.
2. God is not the independent Creator but an interdependent cooperator. God and his creation are mutually dependent. God is the head, the world is the body. God is not controller of the world so much as he is its director working in the world.
3. An immutable God is replaced by a changing, developing God.
4. Reject totally the idea of timelessness---with God there is always a "before and after". He functions in time and is developing in process.
5. God is perfect, but it is an immature or incomplete perfection. Perfection is being attained successively, through the upward evolutionary process.
6. God is not absolute---Godself (their term) cannot exist or have meaning apart from Godself's world. God needs the world to enrich Godself's everlasting existence and to give it stimulus and meaning as well as embodiment.
7. God knows all things in the past and present, but not the future. The future is open and indeterminate and not even God can know it.
8. God is the final cause of the universe, but not its initial or efficient cause.
9. Theologians must talk of God's perfections in terms of potential.
10. The possible triumph of good over evil is not certain. There is no guarantee of victory over suffering or death.

The pan-en-theistic God differs from the God of Christian theism in the following ways:

Christian Theism	Pan-en-theism
God is creator of the world	God is director of the world
World is different from God	World is same as God's body
God is in control of world	God cooperates with world
God is independent of world	God is interdependent with world
God is unchanging in nature	God is continually changing
God is absolutely perfect	God is constantly being perfected
God is infinite and eternal	God is finite and temporal
God is absolutely one	God has two poles (natures)

There are also some significant differences between pantheism and pan-en-theism:

Pantheism	Pan-en-theism
God is the universe	God is <u>in</u> the universe
God is not personal	God is somewhat personal
God is infinite (universal)	God is actually finite
God is eternal (matter)	God is actually temporal
God is unchanging	God is actually changing
God and creatures are identical	God & creatures are not identical

Since God is always in the process of becoming, He never perfectly achieves His aims.

THE NEW AGE -- What Is It?

I. The New Age Reality

A. God is the Universe

"In J.D. Salinger's short story, 'Teddy', a spiritually precocious youngster recalls his experience of immanent God while watching his little sister drink her milk...'All of a sudden I saw that she was God and the milk was God. I mean, all she was doing was pouring God into God.'" (Marilyn Ferguson, *The Aquarian Conspiracy*, p. 382)

B. All things are one

"...all boundaries and dualism have been transcended and all individuality dissolves into universal, undifferentiated oneness." (Fritjof Capra, *The Turning Point*, p. 371)

C. Man is God

Shirley MacLaine's spirit guide, her Higher Self, explains, "Each soul is its own God. You must never worship anyone or anything other than self. For you are God. To love self is to love God." (Shirley MacLaine, *Dancing In The Light*, p. 358)

II. The New Age Problem (Ignorance / lack of correct information.)

"The tragedy of the human race was that we had forgotten we were each divine."
(Shirley MacLaine, *Out on a Limb*, p. 352)

III. The New Age Solution

A. Seek Higher Consciousness

"Spiritual disciplines are designed to attune the brain to...wider sensory realm and the mystical dimension. Meditation, breathing exercises, and fasting are among the common technologies for shifting brain function." (Ferguson, *The Aquarian Conspiracy*, p. 374)

B. Awaken the God in Us

The goal is "to awaken to the god who sleeps at the root of the human being."
(Theodore Roszak, *Unfinished Animal*, p. 225)

C. Cultivate Questions

"A teacher in the traditions of direct knowing encourages questions, even doubts. This spirituality asks the seeker to drop beliefs, not add them." (Ferguson, *The Aquarian Conspiracy*, p. 376)

D. Use Spirit Guides

-Demons!?

-Inner Psychological machinations.

Man is God

*"We are wondrous beings. Made in the image and likeness of our Creator.
But it's the literal interpretation of that truth that keeps us groveling
on our knees, begging a gray-bearded, all powerful God in the sky to answer our needs. The
best kept secret in the world is that god is not up in the sky
arbitrarily answering our rote incantations. The Godmind -the energy that created us--is
imbred in us. It is our power within. This inner intelligence is the mind power
at the core of our being...You are as a child of the universe, part of a
Divine Process. The degree to which you accept your divinity
determines how much it can work for you. Get busy practicing the Presence
within. Be still and know you are God."*

-Susan L. Taylor, Editor in Chief Essence Magazine, April 1984.

*"I and the Father are one, and all the Father has is mine.
In truth I am the Christ of God."*

-John Randolph Price, The Planetary Commission

*"I know that I exist, therefore I AM. I know the God-source exists. Therefore
IT IS. Since I am part of that force, then I AM that I AM."*

-Shirley MacLaine, Dancing In The Light

*"Kneel to your own self. Honor and worship your own being. God dwells
within you as you!"*

-Swami Muktanada

New Age

ASC (Altered States of Consciousness)
Gateway To God

*"Once we begin to see that we are all God, that we all have the attributes of God,
then I think the whole purpose of human life is to reown the Godlikeness within us;
the perfect love, the perfect wisdom, the perfect understanding, the perfect intelligence,
and when we do that, we create back to that old, that essential oneness
which is consciousness."*

-Dr. Beverly Galyean

A CHRISTIAN RESPONSE TO THE NEW AGE MOVEMENT

Concerns Shared By Both

Christianity and The New Age Movement

- ☞ Holistic Medicine -- Christians may share with New Agers the concern that medical treatment should go beyond mere physical treatment of the body to treat the whole person. There is a place for the believing community to intervene in the therapeutic process with prayer for healing and emotional support.

- ☞ Healthy Self-image -- Christians share with New Agers the conviction that one should have a healthy self image as we are made in the likeness of God. What the image is and how one arrives at it, however, vary greatly between Christianity and New Age.

- ☞ Rejection of Scientific Positivism -- New Age has brought a revival of interest in the supernatural in business and academic communities, an openness long sought by Christians. Scientism which simply ignore the supernatural is being called into question.

- ☞ Concern For The Environment -- New Age concern for ecology matches well with the Christian doctrine of creation, though for different reasons. We worship Father God. New Agers worship Mother Earth.

- ☞ Intuitive Epistemology -- The New Age Movement has brought a return of interest in intuitive thinking; in fact, right brain thinking is viewed as superior in many ways to the constraints of left brain thinking. This provides an openness to faith that has been missing for many years.

POINTS OF CONFLICT BETWEEN CHRISTIANITY
AND
NEW AGE THOUGHT

	NEW AGE MOVEMENT	CHRISTIANITY
ONTOLOGY	Pantheistic monism	Theistic limited dualism
EPISTEMOLOGY	Nature mysticism, panpsychism, gnostic optimism, mental determinism, right brain intuitionism	Experiential fideism which is reasonable and defensible
AESTHETICS	Meditative eclecticism, mystical naturalism, escapism	Purposive, orderly, symmetrical, classicism
ETHICS	Self-realization standard, emphasis on societal sins, values clarification	Moral law standard (doing God's will), emphasis on personal sins, submission to authority
PHILOSOPHY OF HISTORY	Cyclical or Chaotic, Utopian Optimism, Indeterminism, Shamanism, magic, occult	Linear (w/ spiral aspects), Conditional Optimism, Predestination, Divine providence
PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION	Doctrine of Recollection (visualization, guided imagery) confluent education	Doctrine of Revelation
PHILOSOPHY OF GOVERNMENT	Mystical Utopianism, Green Politics, One world government	Theocracy, respect for government
PHILOSOPHY OF SCIENCE	Chaos theory and evolutionary progress	Purposive creation
COSMOLOGY	Holistic transmateralism, Deep ecology, Ecofeminism	Doctrine of Creation
ANTHROPOLOGY	Self-divinization, very optimistic	Created in God's image, fallen realism
PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION	Syncretistic, pluralistic, universalistic	Exclusivistic or Fulfillment
SOTERIOLOGY	Self-help, Paradigm Shift	Saved by grace, conversion
ESCHATOLOGY	Age of Aquarius, Paradigm Shift from the 100th Monkey Theory	Second Coming of Christ

NEW AGE MOVEMENT: A Summary

The New Age substitutes its monistic idea of "at-one-ment" for the Bible's revelation of Christ's atonement for sin. The New Ager should be shown that the difference spans the gap between heaven and hell.

BIBLICAL/ETHICAL ATONEMENT	NEW AGE/MONISTIC AT-ONE-MENT
1. Assumes sin problem	1. Assumes no sin problem, but ignorance
2. Assumes holy/personal God	2. Assumes impersonal God
3. Evidences love/justice of God	3. Evidences divinity of self
4. Offered freely by God's grace	4. Achieved through mystical techniques
5. Saves from hell	5. Saves from illusionary consciousness
6. Offers heaven	6. Offers self-realization
7. Received by faith in God	7. Experienced through self

Salvation requires faith in Christ and His work. The Christian gospel is only "good news" for those who understand the "bad news" of sin and human depravity. And the "good" part is that the gospel is one of grace, not of human achievement. The New Age sells an experience of self through mystical works wherein we discover our forgotten divinity. (Just how God forgot that God was God--the problem of "metaphysical amnesia"--goes unexplained.) Christianity offers eternal life through faith in the Savior. The New Age promises infinite potential through self-discovery. Christ promises eternal life through self-abandonment. Kurt Koch has said, "We do not need to search deeply into ourselves, but rather into Him who died for us on the cross. We have no need to discover the deep self, but rather to discover our Lord and Savior."

In March 1985, Evangelical Ministries to New Religions released this "Statement on the New Age Movement":

"The New Age Movement is a spiritual, social, and political movement to transform individuals and society through mystical enlightenment, hoping to bring about a utopian era, a 'new age' of harmony and progress. While it has no central headquarters or agencies, it includes loosely affiliated individuals, activist groups, businesses, professional groups, and spiritual leaders and their followers. It produces countless books, magazines, and tapes reflecting a shared world view and vision. How that world view is expressed, what implications are drawn, and what applications are made differ from group to group."

The basic assumptions of the New Age philosophy are:

The Godhead is impersonal.

The Divine is within self.

There is no death but reincarnation instead.

Good and evil are illusions.

All paths lead to God.

And when we are all able to relate to the world in the oneness of Eastern thought, human health will be restored and the earth will be restore to a New Age millennium.

However, the theology of the New Age has been around since the Garden of Eden. Ancient religions fostered its tenets; and the Eastern religions, especially Hinduism, have incorporated this theology down through the ages to contemporary days. The lie is as old as Genesis 3, and as prevalent as the daily news.

THEOLOGICAL METHOD

In the preface to What Are They Saying about Theological Method, J. J. Mueller says, "A method is a tool...[it] extends our abilities, improves upon our limitations, reminds us of forgotten procedures, and allows others to see how we arrived at our conclusions" (p. 1).

Mueller points out that the number of theologians who discuss theological method is small, but that the issue is crucial and worthy of our attention. In his book Mueller examines 4 models via 8 theologians. All 4 models are philosophically existential and therefore anthropologically centered. Indeed man is judged to be the correct starting point for doing theology. Theology has become anthropology, and anthropology is basically reduced to psychological and sociological analysis. Mueller's study, while providing a starting point, must be viewed as too narrow and restricted. It must be expanded.

I. TRANSCENDENTAL METHOD: How do I encounter God today?

A. Karl Rahner (1904-1984), German Jesuit; theological anthropology

1. The starting point for theology is the human person
2. Theology is to be Christocentric (the human has become divine?!)
3. Theology is evolutionary and hopeful (a utopic perspective)

B. Bernard Lonergan (1904-), Canadian Jesuit; human knowing is our starting point as we heighten our consciousness by objectifying it. This is "conversion," the center of his method. Conversion takes place on 4 levels related to the four levels of the act of understanding:

1. affective (experience)
2. intellectual (understanding)
3. moral (judging)
4. religious (deciding)

These 4 conversions are interconnected and dynamically related.

The Christian life is one of ongoing conversion, dynamically lived and developing.

Summarizing this method Mueller says,

"Lonergan, like Rahner, is a theologian who centers his theology on the human person's dynamic openness and orientation to God in Christ. Whereas Rahner prefers religious experience to be tested and illumined by the revelation of Christ, Lonergan prefers to start with the dynamic act of knowing as the starting point. If Rahner's vision of the believer is a hearer of God's word, then Lonergan's is the one who undergoes constant conversion to love. For both theologians, love of God in Christ as found in humanity remains the fundamental teaching of Christ and gives identity to human persons" (p. 19 underlining mine).

II. EXISTENTIAL METHOD: Does the world around me matter?

A. John Macquarrie - existential - ontological method, bring together in intersubjective

dialogue contemporary experience and the Christian traditions of the past, and relates it to the present believing community through an existential-ontological method.

- * move from beings (existential) to being itself (ontological)
- * the role of the traditional teaching community as interpreter is crucial
- * theology interprets human experience and responds to it as well

B. Paul Tillich (1886-1965) - theology must speak to the modern world via a method of correlation. Existential questions and Christian answers are correlated through a dialectical movement. This is Heideggarian (existential) and Hegelian (dialectical).

- * God is the "Ground of our being"; our "Ultimate Concern"
- * His (Tillich's) starting point is in the situation - "the question"
- * Christianity answers, illuminates existence today

Tillich's contribution is his method of correlation. With it he addresses the modern world and brings theology into dialogue with it. He finds a unity between the world and grace through symbol. Theology addresses this symbol reality. He has also opened his method to answers by other religions and prepared a more ecumenical theological method.

Both Tillich and Macquarrie are existentialist oriented theologians in their methods. Both resist Christian theology as having any outside-this-world starting point. Existential questions determine where Christianity responds. That the world around me matters is the existential starting point. Theologians then discover their starting point in human life today rather than determining it ahead of time. In this view theology is a ready responder for dialogue with the world.

Both theologians tend to be philosophically based in existentialism. God is often treated metaphysically as the Ground of Being or Being itself. This is certainly a different God than that of traditional orthodoxy. It is certainly a different God than the one of the Bible.

III. EMPIRICAL METHOD: Do my experiences count?

A. David Tracy - common human experience is the starting point for his theological vision (an anthropological starting point)

- * we are constrained by the limits of language (Language speaks man?!)
- * Christian texts are central. There is a close cooperation between thinking and action
- * Human experience is the realm of God's involvement with humanity and the beginning of theological reflection. God discloses himself through the common human experiences of love, joy, suffering, death, birth, reconciliation, and trust
- * retrieval of tradition is crucial
- * phenomenological analysis of the religious dimension of human experience is preferred
- * all religious experience points to and is summed up by Christ even if people do not know him

- B. Bernard Meland (1899 -), process theologian: symbols are the expression of reality that we experience. He draws on William James (1842-1910) the pragmatist and A. N. Whitehead (1861-1947) the process philosopher.

- * The context of doing theology is more important than many theologians realize
- * Theology interacts with the dynamics of culture which is organic, processive, and relational in perspective
- * The human person is the key that unlocks the world
- * Reality is deeper, richer, and fuller than any concept or expression and cannot be reduced to a concept

Method:

1. Meland introduces appreciative awareness as a necessary skill in examining the empirical data of religious experience
2. Identification via empathy with the whole about me
3. Discrimination - ask what is going on

Theology cannot overstep the data provided by faith in the feeling-dimension of living. Love, therefore, can never become a proposition but must be kept alive in the feelings. Meland is a theologian of the entire experience and the entire person.

Meland and Tracy represent two theologians who emphasize the meaningfulness of religious experience along with its meaning. They have widened the notion of experience and have taken its demands seriously. For Tracy the clarification of theological truths depends upon the interpretation of common human experience and language critically correlated with Christian texts. For Meland theological truth remains wider than narrow explanations and rests in the richness of cultural symbols which are experienced and grasped by the feeling-dimension. Meland challenges any theological method which works out concepts while neglecting the data of the feelings.

While Tracy works on a hermeneutics of experience and text which is linguistically oriented, Meland works on a hermeneutic of contextual feelings and symbolic forms.

IV. SOCIO-PHENOMENOLOGICAL METHOD: Can I find God in suffering?

- A. Edward Schillebeeckx - important contributor to Vatican II (Catholic Council, 1962-65); Hindu, Buddhist or atheist may (are encouraged to) dialogue with him

- * theology is founded on the experience of suffering
- * salvation is not just a concept, but a commitment to act and transform the unjust structures that dehumanize us
- * begin with the absurdity of suffering and the result will be a commitment to do something about it. This is the starting point of Christology as well.

His method:

1. suffering as starting point gives his method an ecumenical flavor
2. though Scripture is normative, interpretation varies from culture to culture
3. salvation is performative: overturning the dehumanizing processes

B. Jon Sobrino - Latin American liberation theology, Jesuit

- * theology must be sensitive to the cultural context of humanity
- * church must identify with the poor and oppressed
- * Praxis is his central thesis. It combines practice with theory together in reflection and begins from action
- * result of praxis is "conscientization," a recognition of powerlessness, dependence, and frustration in all its ugliness
- * next step: a vision of "humanization" based on love of God and neighbor that is this worldly and practical
- * Jesus is liberator
- * Love brings justice

CONCLUDING ANALYSIS OF THE 4 METHODS

1. Each theologian adheres to symbol as important to theology. Rahner uses theological anthropology, Lonergan knowing, Macquarrie polarities, Tillich correlation, Tracy interpretation, Meland appreciative awareness, Schillebeeckx mediated immediacy, and Sobrino liberation. The world and the individual as sacrament describes the holiness encountered in reality which is salvific. The reality of God is described by Rahner as Mystery, Lonergan as Being-in-love, Macquarrie as Being-itself, Tillich as Ultimate Concern, Tracy as Holy Other, Meland as Goodness not our own, Schillebeeckx as Grace, and Sobrino as Liberation.
2. There is the confidence that the activities of the mind are able to penetrate reality. These theologians of method tell us the importance of the human person (Rahner), conversion (Lonergan), connection to world (Tillich), importance of tradition (Macquarrie), the manner of responsible interpretation (Tracy), developing internal and external relations (Meland), eradicating suffering (Schillebeeckx), and the socio-politico-economic factors involved in human faith (Sobrino).
3. There is an interpretation of data from a particular starting point. A method is not forced to begin in one place. Uniformity of starting points is not the value in theology as it once was (according to Mueller). Rahner uses Thomism influenced by Kant and Heidegger; Lonergan has written his own philosophical underpinnings; Tillich and Macquarrie rely upon existentialist categories; Tracy devises a hermeneutical schema; Meland roots himself in process-relational categories; Schillebeeckx uses French sociological analysis; and Sobrino uses Marxist analysis of society, politics, and economics.

Lonergan in his appeal to the mind, Tillich and Macquarrie in the existentialist's insistent need, Tracy and Meland in the universality of human experience, and Schillebeeckx and Sobrino to suffering -- each theologian acknowledges the difficulty and offers his contribution toward a common unity. While many starting points can be tolerated, every theologian must come clean on his or her starting point. Realistically, the starting point should be able to be critiqued by the method, call it into question, and improve it. After the starting point is surfaced, method will not allow sloppy reasoning or misapplication of the findings. The principles of coherency and adequacy must apply and can be examined by anyone interested so that theologians actually do what they say they will do.
4. There is an insistence that Scripture studies be integrated into all theology. Scripture no longer serves as a prooftext but as a document that exists in its own right. Rahner calls for a new area that he calls biblical theology. Lonergan unites Scripture to every step of his method, Tillich brings Scripture to the modern world as an answer, Macquarrie centers his tradition upon it, Tracy correlates Christian texts with human experiences and

language, Meland stresses its enduring empowerment as a legacy, Schillebeeckx founds the experience of Jesus in it, and Sobrino finds the Scriptures an unleashed liberating power for justice.

5. There is the irreducible unity between Christianity and humanization. Instead of a secularism which separates the world from God, these theologians find God's self-communication through the world in a sacramental way. Rahner emphasizes hominisation, Lonergan conversion to being in love, Tillich the new being, Macquarrie letting be, Tracy incarnational symbols, Meland the creative passage, Schillebeeckx mediated immediacy, and Sobrino discipleship.
6. There is the practical nature of theology. Far from being a work done in an ivory tower, theology leads the believer to live better and deeper faith. Rahner calls for the use of authentic freedom, Lonergan finishes his method with communications, Tillich emphasizes the courage to be, Macquarrie invites the believer to let be, Tracy ends his method with practical theology, Schillebeeckx encourages performative theology, and Sobrino relies upon praxis.
7. Each theologian searches for God in the modern world and lets God dictate where he will be found. Rahner and Lonergan locate the search in the openness of the human person, Tillich and Macquarrie in the questions arising from the modern world, Tracy and Meland in religious experience, and Schillebeeckx and Sobrino in the structures of society.

A SECOND APPROACH

David Tracy provides his own evaluation of various theological methods. His survey is broader and more representative, but it is still an inadequate model if one wishes to be inclusive of the greater theological family. Evangelicalism is evidently looked upon as an embarrassment that perhaps will eventually go away if ignored. Such an omission is unworthy of those whose battle cries are pluralistic and inclusive. Disagreement is fine, but a theological cold shoulder is out of bounds for those serious about genuine and open inquiry.

Tracy describes five fundamental methods of doing theology which are part of the Christian tradition.

The first model is the Orthodox model. Claims made by the modern world do not necessarily have any inner-theological relevance. Theology functions to provide a proof to support beliefs. The task of the theologian is an adequate understanding of the beliefs of his or her particular church tradition. The strength of this model is that it concerns itself with what faith says. It develops sophisticated models of belief within a church with no contact with other disciplines or claims. The weakness is that revelation overrides all other considerations and needs no help for interpretation.

The second model is the liberal model which accepts the ethical and existential commitment to secular faith as a constitutive drive present in all modern science as the heart of the liberal enterprise. Liberal theologians find themselves committed to the values of modern experiments, namely free and open inquiry, autonomous judgments, critical investigation of all claims to truth. The strength of this model is that it dialogues with the modern world's disciplines but its weakness lies in the inadequacies of its conclusions where so much is mixed together.

The third model is the neo-orthodox model which continues the liberal tradition and is not really a new alternative but rather a moment within a larger liberal tradition. Committed to the liberal analysis of the human situation, the neo-orthodox theologian insists that the negative elements of sin, tragedy, and

suffering are unaccounted for. The unique gift of faith is needed. This model's strength is its radical faith in the God of Jesus Christ. Its weakness lies in its inability to take the modern world's contribution as part of that experience.

The fourth model is the radical theology model of whom the "death of God" theologians are a primary instance (Altizer, Hamilton, van Buren). It insists that the God of the liberal, neo-orthodox, and orthodox theologians alienates the authentic conscience of the liberated contemporary human being. Their God must die in order for the human to live. This model's strength is its ability to pinpoint the question of the traditional understanding of the Christian God. Its weakness is its inability to judge the special character of revelation and affirm the reality of God. The question arises then whether under this model one can really continue the Christian enterprise in any meaningful way.

The fifth model is the revisionist model which is committed to the dramatic confrontation, the mutual illumination and correction, the possible basic reconciliation between principles of values, cognitive claims, and existential faith of both reinterpreted post-modern consciousness and reinterpreted Christianity. The most obvious examples of this model are the process theologians. There is a need in the modern world to continue the critical task of faith by historical, philosophical, and social scientific research and reflection. The task is the dramatic confrontation between modern consciousness and reinterpreted Christianity. The revisionist model holds the experience of the past in critical correlation with Christian texts in order to interpret the meaningfulness of the religious experience today.

AN EVANGELICAL ALTERNATIVE

There has been an epistemological shift resulting from the Enlightenment. As one contemporary liberal theologian has put it, we have eaten the apple and we cannot go back to where we were before. How can this shift be analyzed? I believe the following propositions lay out the new playing field:

Epistemology - We are the heirs of Kantianism willingly or not. Attention has moved from the known object to the knowing subject. Epistemology in a real sense has become psychology.

Theology - The starting point has shifted from God to man. Theology has become anthropology.

Philosophy - Rationalism has supplanted biblical supernaturalism. Rationalism has since been displaced or at least contested by mysticism, existentialism, and nihilism.

Cosmology - Supernaturalism has been devoured by naturalism. The spiritual has been overcome by a mechanistic materialism. In many circles theism has given way to pantheism or panentheism.

Schaeffer's two storey analysis (cf. Escape From Reason), though a simple one, seems to be accurate. Post-enlightened, post-modern humankind has come to the end of the Western Philosophical tradition (the judgment of Derrida and the deconstructionists) and found it bankrupt, empty, without meaning. Ultimate values (the upper storey) have been devoured and replaced by those entities in the lower storey that are utterly this worldly. These values have not and cannot sustain us.

Is there an alternative? Is there anything that can provide any genuinely meaningful reality? I believe there is.

Who says we cannot go both back and beyond contemporary modernity? What prevents us from affirming a genuinely evangelical commitment to Scripture with a theological worldview rooted in such a commitment? Has God died? Where is the autopsy report? Is Christ not risen? Where is the body? **The tomb is empty!** Are the Scriptures no longer of epistemological and soteriological value? Where is

the evidence that would lead us to nail the coffin shut? If it is there then we will abide by its conclusions. But if it is not, we will with confidence and humility boldly proclaim that our God lives, Jesus is His eternal Son, and salvation is found only in His glorious person and work appropriated by faith. There is an inclusive invitation; it is for the world. There is an exclusive entrance: **it is Christ!** (John 14:6; Acts 4:12; I Timothy 2:5).

Millard Erickson, in his Christian Theology provides, I believe, a reasonable and workable method for constructing a viable theology in the modern era which is significantly different than the models set forth by Mueller and Tracy, especially as to his starting point for doing theology. His model is cognizant of all that is going on in contemporary thought, and it also acknowledges the evangelical presuppositions underlying it. Erickson's model, and one I affirm with minor adjustments, is as follows:

1. Gather all relevant biblical materials on the particular doctrine being investigated. Utilize the "very best and most appropriate tools and methods for getting at the meaning of these passages." Make sure you are aware of the presuppositions of the authors being used.
2. Develop some unifying statements on the doctrine under investigation.
3. Analyze the meaning of the biblical teachings. The question must be asked, "What is really meant by this?" The Bible material is Foundational and ultimately decisive.
4. Utilize history. This step may take place at any one of several stages in the methodological process, but the important thing is that history be used, for this helps us "isolate the essence of the doctrine under consideration."
5. Identify the essence of the doctrine. Distinguish "the permanent, unvarying content of the doctrine from the cultural vehicle in which it is expressed." In other words, separate the permanent truth from the temporary form within which it is expressed.
6. Use other extra biblical sources such as general revelation, behavioral science, natural science, psychology (particularly the psychology of religion), and philosophy. Keep in mind their secondary status to Scripture.
7. Give the doctrine a contemporary expression. The aim in this seventh step is not so much to ensure the acceptability of the message as it is to ensure that the message is understood by all. This is "contextualizing" the message.
8. Decide on a particular theme or motif around which to approach theology. This lends unity to the system and power to the communication of it. The central motif around which theology is developed for Erickson is the magnificence of God. By this is meant the greatness of God in terms of his power, knowledge, and other traditional 'natural attributes,' as well as the excellence and splendor of his moral nature.

* For your professor, the central motif is Christology. All of my theology tends to be viewed through the dual lenses of the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. These approaches are complementary and not necessarily in opposition to one another.
9. Stratify the topics. Structure them from most important to least important. This helps to keep us focused on the task at hand and spares us from expending great amounts of energy and time on issues of secondary importance.

Erickson ends his discussion of his theological method by pointing out that theological statements are made with varying degrees of authority. This hierarchy of authority is given as follows, moving from the highest to the lowest:

1. direct statements of Scripture
2. direct implications of Scripture
3. probable implications of Scripture
4. inductive conclusions from Scripture
5. conclusions inferred from general revelation
6. outright speculation

The cornerstone of Erickson's theological method and our own is the priority and authority of Scripture. Basically one has 4 potential sources of authority for knowledge and truth:

1. <u>reason</u> - I think...	3. <u>tradition</u> - We've done...
2. <u>experience</u> - I feel...	4. <u>revelation</u> - God said!

While all 4 approaches of necessity will impact our theology, it is Scripture which is foundational and ultimately decisive.

We will seek clearly to establish the biblical base for each doctrine, and then articulate that doctrine in a manner that will speak to modern man of his need and God's wonderful provision in Christ. All the while we will seek to be self critical attempting to be aware of our own presuppositions, prejudices and biases. Humility and genuine openness to God's truth wherever it is found must undergird our theological method. We must constantly remind ourselves we can learn even from those with whom we disagree.

ROLE OF FEELING IN EPISTEMOLOGY	
Illegitimate Role	Legitimate Role
to test truth	to express truth
to determine truth	to enrich truth
as a basis for truth	as a byproduct of truth
as condition of truth	as concomitant of truth
as proof of truth	as a source of truth
to replace mind and careful reasoning	to refresh soul

THEOLOGICAL METHODOLOGY

"Doing and Understanding a Theology"

116A

TWO BROAD APPROACHES TO THE STUDY OF GOD

PHILOSOPHICAL

- Cosmological
- Ontological
- Teleological
- Moral

*Utilizes reason,
observation and
experience.*

*Believes we can find and
understand God through
Natural Revelation*

- Genesis 1:26-27
- Psalm 19:1-4
- Romans 1:19-20

BIBLICAL

brings one into the
presence of God
without delay.

Presupposes the
existence of God and
recognizes that only
through **SPECIAL
REVELATION** is
God savingly
revealed.

Genesis 1:1

MILLARD ERICKSON'S MODEL FOR DOING THEOLOGY


1. **Gather all relevant BIBLICAL MATERIALS on the particular doctrine being investigated.** Utilize the "very best and most appropriate tools and methods for getting at the meaning of these passages." Make sure you are aware of the presuppositions of the author.
2. **Develop some unifying statements on the doctrine under investigation.**
3. **Analyze the meaning of Biblical text/teachings.** The question must be asked, "*What is really meant by this?*"
4. **Utilize history.** This step may take place at any one of several stages in the methodological process, but the important thing is that history be used, for this helps us *see the development of the doctrine under consideration.*
5. **Identify the essence of the doctrine.** Distinguish "*The permanent, unvarying content of the doctrine*" from the cultural vehicle in which it is expressed.
6. **Use other extra - Biblical sources** such as general revelation, behavioral science, natural science, psychology (particularly the psychology of religion), and philosophy.
7. **Give the doctrine a contemporary expression.** The goal is not so much to ensure the acceptability of the message as it is to make certain that the message is understood. This is "*contextualizing*" the message.
8. **Decide on a particular theme or motif around which to approach theology.** This lends unity to the system and power to the communication of it. The central motif around which

theology is developed for Erickson is the magnificence of God. (DEF= the greatness of God in terms of His power, knowledge, and other traditional 'natural attributes,' as well as the excellence and splendor of His moral nature.) *(For Dr. Akin, the central motif is Christology. His theology tends to be viewed through the dual lenses of the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. His is a Christocentric theology.)*

9. **Stratify the topics**. Structure them from *most important* to *least important*. This helps keep us focused on the task at hand and spares us from expending great amounts of energy and time on issues of secondary importance.

ERICKSON'S HIERARCHY OF AUTHORITY

(From most important to least important.)

- 1) Direct Statements of Scripture*
 - 2) Direct Implications of Scripture*
 - 3) Probable Implications of Scripture*
 - 4) Inductive Conclusions from Scripture*
 - 5) Conclusions Inferred from general revelation*
 - 6) Outright speculation*
- 

THE CORNERSTONE OF AN EVANGELICAL THEOLOGY: A High Priority of Scripture.

First, seek to establish the BIBLICAL BASE for each doctrine.

Then, articulate that doctrine in a manner that will speak to modern man of his need and God's wonderful provision in Christ.

We must seek to be self-critical, attempting to be aware of our own presuppositions, prejudices, and biases. Humility and genuine openness to God's truth wherever it is found must undergird our theological method.

We must constantly remind ourselves we can learn - even from those with whom we disagree. "All truth is God's truth wherever it is found."

PROLEGOMENA

NECESSITY of Theology

In order to DEFINE Christianity

In order to DEFEND Christianity

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EXEGESIS AND THEOLOGY

EXEGESIS	THEOLOGY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analyzes • Relates Meaning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Correlates • Interrelates Meaning

POSSIBILITY of Theology

The REVELATION of God

The NATURE of Man

Man is RATIONAL

Man is SPIRITUAL

PRESUPPOSITIONS

The Bible is True

The Bible is Understandable

The Bible must be interpreted
plainly and literally

Since the Scriptures contain
the objective revelation of God,
they, alone, are authoritative

PROLEGOMENA

I. PROLEGOMENA -- How We Know God

A. Preconditions of Christian Theology

1. Metaphysical Precondition (Reality)--Theism

a. The seven alternatives

- 1) *Theism: An infinite God is beyond and in the universe.* Theism is the world view that says that the physical universe is not all there is. There is an infinite God beyond the universe who created it and yet who can act within it in a supernatural way. This is the view represented by traditional Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.
- 2) *Finite godism: A finite God is beyond and in the universe.* Finite godism is like theism, only the god beyond the universe and active in it is not infinite but is limited in his nature and power. William James, Edgar S. Brightman, Peter A. Bertocci and Rabbi Kushner are examples of this view.
- 3) *Deism: God is beyond the universe but not in it.* Deism is like theism minus miracles. It says God is transcendent over the universe but not supernaturally active in the world. It holds a naturalistic view of the world while insisting that there must be a creator or originator of the universe. It is represented by men like Voltaire, Thomas Jefferson, and Thomas Paine.
- 4) *Atheism: God does not exist beyond the universe or in it.* Atheism says the universe is all there is. No God exists anywhere, either in the universe or beyond it. The universe or cosmos is all there is or ever will be. It is eternal and self-sustaining. Some of the more famous atheists were Karl Marx, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Jean Paul Sartre.
- 5) *Pantheism: God is the universe.* For a pantheist there is no creator beyond the universe. Creator and creation are two different ways of viewing one reality. God is the universe (or, the All) and the "world" is God. There is ultimately only one reality, not many different ones. Pantheism is represented by certain forms of Hinduism, Zen Buddhism, and Christian Science.

- 6) *Pan-en-theism: God is in the universe.* This view says God is in the universe as a mind is in a body. The universe is God's "body." But there is another "pole" to God other than the physical universe, which is His eternal and infinite potential beyond the actual physical universe. This view is represented by A.N. Whitehead, Charles Hartshorne, and Shubert Ogden.
- 7) *Polytheism: There are many gods in the world.* Polytheism is the belief that there are many finite gods beyond the world who influence the world. They deny any infinite God beyond the world such as in theism. They hold, however, that the gods are active in the world in contrast to deism. The chief representatives of this view are the ancient Greeks and modern Mormons.

Norman Geisler's Apologetic ↓ Defending Theism

- 1) Something undeniably exists.
- 2) Nothing cannot cause something.
- 3) Something eternally and necessarily exists.
- 4) I am not eternal and necessary.
- 5) Whatever is not eternal and necessary needs a cause.
- 6) Therefore, there is an eternal and necessary cause of my noneternal and not necessary existence.
- 7) But I am a personal, moral, and intelligent being.
- 8) But only an intelligent and moral being can create an intelligent and moral being.
- 9) Therefore, a personal, moral, intelligent, eternal, and necessary being exists (i.e., God).
- 10) Now there cannot be more than one such being (cannot have two different beings that are exactly the same). [weakest point in my view]
- 11) Therefore, only one God exists as the cause of all else that exists (i.e., theism).

Process Theology: BiPolar God

GOD

Potential Actual
 What Can Be What is
 Eternal Temporal
 Absolute Relative
 Infinite Finite
 Unchanging Changing
 Imperishable Perishable
 Conceptual Physical
 "Soul" "Body"
 Beyond World The World
 Primordial Nature Consequent Nature
 Eternal Objects Actual Entities

Theism and Pantheism Compared

THEISM	PANTHEISM
Creator of the world	Director of the world
Creation EX NIHILO	Creation EX HULAS
God: Independent of world	God: Interdependent w/ world
God: In control of world	God: In cooperation w/world
God is OVER world	God is IN (and with) World
Monopolar	BiPolar

2. Axiological Precondition (value) -- Absolutism

tolerated so long as they stick to therapeutic messages of enhanced self-esteem, and resisted whenever they inject divine authority or universal claims to truth in their sermons.

The Displacement of Morality

Ivan, in Fyodor Dostoyevsky's novel *The Brothers Karamazov* was right—if God is dead everything *is* permissible. The God allowed by postmodernism is not the God of the Bible, but a vague idea of spirituality. There are no tablets of stone, no Ten Commandments . . . no rules.

Morality is, along with other foundations of culture, discarded as oppressive and totalitarian. A pervasive moral relativism marks postmodern culture. This is not to say that postmodernists are reluctant to employ moral language. To the contrary, postmodern culture is filled with moral discourse. But the issues of moral concern are quite arbitrary, and in many cases represent a reversal of biblical morality.

Homosexuality, for example, is openly advocated and accepted. The rise of gay and lesbian studies in universities, the emergence of homosexual political power, and the homoerotic images now common to popular culture mark this dramatic moral reversal. Homosexuality is no longer considered a sin. *Homophobia* is now targeted as sin, and demands for tolerance of "alternative lifestyles" have now turned into demand for public celebration of all lifestyles as morally equal.

Michael Jones described modernity as "rationalized sexual misbehavior," and postmodernity is its logical extension. Michel Foucault, who argued that all sexual morality is an abuse of power, called for postmodernism to celebrate "polymorphous perversity." He lived and died dedicated to this lifestyle, and his prophecy has been fulfilled in this decade.

Christian Ministry in a Postmodern Age

Postmodernism represents the unique challenge facing Christianity in this generation. Walter Truett Anderson described the postmodern reality in his clever book, *Reality Isn't What it Used to Be*² This is the central claim of postmodernism—reality is not what it used to be, and never will be again. Humanity now come of age, we will make our own truth, define our own reality, and seek our own self-esteem.

In this culture, ministry *is* stranger than it used to be. Postmodern concepts of truth now reign in the postmodern age—and even in the postmodern pew. Research indicates that a growing majority of those who claim to be Christian reject the very notion of absolute truth.

² Walter Truett Anderson, *Reality Isn't What it Used to Be* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1990).

The “death of the text” is evident in the resistance to biblical preaching in many churches. Postmodern ears no longer want to hear the “thus saith the Lord” of the biblical text. Since truth is made, and not found, we can design our own personal religion or spirituality—and leave out inconvenient doctrines and moral commands. Postmodernism promises that the individual can construct a personal structure of spirituality, free from outside interference or permission. Under the motto, “There’s no truth like my truth,” postmodernism’s children will establish their own doctrinal system, and will defy correction.

Gene Veith, dean of the School of Arts and Sciences at Concordia University, tells of a young man who claimed to be a Christian and professed belief in Christ and love for the Bible, but also believed in reincarnation. His pastor confronted this belief in reincarnation by directing the young man to Hebrews 9:27. The text was read: “It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.” The young man looked back at his pastor and replied, “Well, that’s your interpretation.”³

In the name of postmodernism, *anything* can be explained away as a matter of interpretation. Games played with language mean that every statement must be evaluated with care. A statement as clear and plain as the first line of the Apostles’ Creed, “I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth,” must be evaluated in terms of the speaker’s intentions. Does this confession assert belief that God is actually the maker of heaven and earth, or is this a statement of mere personal sentiment?

The strangeness of ministry in a postmodern age can be seen in Bible studies which do not study the Bible, but are psychological exercises in self-discovery; in the cafeteria-style morality practiced by so many church members; and in the growing acceptance of other religions as valid paths to salvation.

Modern culture is revolt against the truth, and postmodernism is but the latest form of this revolt. Ministry in these strange times calls for undiluted conviction and faithful apologetics. The temptations to compromise are great, and the opposition which comes to anyone who would claim to preach absolute and eternal truth is severe. But this is the task of the believing church.

We must understand postmodernism, read its theorists and learn its language. This is much a missiological challenge as an intellectual exercise. We cannot address ourselves to a postmodern culture unless we understand its mind.

By its very nature, postmodernism is doomed to self-destruction. Its central principles cannot be consistently applied. (Just ask a postmodern academic to accept the “death of the text” in terms of his contract.) The church must continue to be the people of

³ Gene Veith, “Catechesis, Preaching, and Vocation,” in *Here We Stand*, ed. James Boice and Ben Sasse (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1996), pp. 82-83.

truth, holding fast to the claims of Christ, and contending for the faith once for all delivered to the saints. Postmodernism rejects any "once for all" truth, but the church cannot compromise its witness.

The Christian ministry *is* stranger than it used to be. But this is an era of great evangelistic opportunity, for as the false gods of postmodernism die, the church bears witness to the Word of Life. In the midst of a postmodern age, our task is to bear witness to the Truth, and to pick up the pieces as the culture breaks apart.

*R. Albert Mohler, Jr., is President and Professor of Christian Theology, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2825 Lexington Road, Louisville, KY, 40280
Phone 502.897.4121, Fax 502.899-1770*

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"Postmodern thinking, with new directions in literary criticism, linguistic theory, communications theory and anthropology/sociology, has challenged traditional approaches to Scripture at three points, among others: (1) Unchanging, ultimate truth does not exist. (2) Language cannot accurately communicate thought to another person's mind, and with time and culture distance the attempt becomes ever more futile. (3) The inadequacy of language is not necessarily bad because meaning is constituted of a combination of what is out there (objects and events, including the words of others) and what is in here (my own subjective sense). Though the words of others play a formative role, the controlling element is what I bring to the text. And the outcome of that mix is all the reality there is. Thus meaning is relative to my present subjective perceptions." --Robertson McQuilkin and Bradford Mullen The Impact of Postmodern Thinking on Evangelical Hermeneutics JETS (March 1997) p. 71.

The answer to prayer is the part of prayer that glorifies
God. —E. M. BOUNDS in *The Possibilities of Prayer*

Suppose you're travelling to work and you see a stop sign. What do you do? That depends on how you exegete the stop sign.

1. A postmodernist deconstructs the sign (knocks it over with his car), ending forever the tyranny of the north-south traffic over the east-west traffic.
2. Similarly, a Marxist sees a stop sign as an instrument of class conflict. He concludes that the bourgeoisie use the north-south road and obstruct the progress of the workers on the east-west road.
3. A serious and educated Catholic believes that he cannot understand the stop sign apart from its interpretative community and their tradition. Observing that the interpretative community doesn't take it too seriously, he doesn't feel obligated to take it too seriously either.
4. An average Catholic (or Orthodox or Coptic or Anglican or Methodist or Presbyterian or whatever) doesn't bother to read the sign but he'll stop if the car in front of him does.
5. A fundamentalist, taking the text very literally, stops at the stop sign and waits for it to tell him to go.
6. A preacher might look up "STOP" in his lexicons of English and discover that it can mean:
 - 1) something which prevents motion, such as a plug for a drain, or a block of wood that prevents a door from closing;
 - 2) a location where a train or bus lets off passengers. The main point of his sermon the following Sunday on this text is: when you see a stop sign, it is a place where traffic is naturally clogged, so it is a good place to let off passengers from your car.
7. An orthodox Jew does one of two things:
 - a) Take another route to work that doesn't have a stop sign so that he doesn't run the risk of disobeying the Law.
 - b) Stop at the stop sign, say "Blessed art thou, O Lord our God, King of the Universe, who hast given us thy commandment to stop," wait 3 seconds according to his watch, and then proceed.

Incidentally, the Talmud has the following comments on this passage: R[abbi] Meir says: He who does not stop shall not live long. R. Hillel says: cursed is he who does not count to three before proceeding. R. Simon ben Judah says: why three? Because the Holy One, blessed be He, gave us the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings. R. ben Isaac says: Because of the three Patriarchs. R. Yehuda says: Why bless the Lord at a stop sign? Because it says: "Be still, and know that I am God." R. Hezekiel says: When Jephthah returned from defeating the Ammonites, the Holy One,

blessed be He, knew that a donkey would run out of the house and overtake his daughter: but Jephthah did not stop at the stop sign, and the donkey did not have time to come out. For this reason he saw his daughter first and lost her. Thus he was judged for his transgression at the stop sign. R. Gamaliel says: R. Hillel, when he was a baby, never spoke a word, though his parents tried to teach him by speaking and showing him the words on a scroll. One day his father was driving through town and did not stop at the sign. Young Hillel called out: "Stop, father!" In this way, he began reading and speaking at the same time. Thus it is written: "Out of the mouth of babes." R. ben Jacob says: where did the stop sign come from? Out of the sky, for it is written: "Forever, O Lord, your word is fixed in the heavens." R. ben Nathan says: When were stop signs created? On the fourth day, for it is written: "let them serve as signs." R. Yeshuah says: . . .
[continues for three more pages]

8. A Pharisee does the same thing as an orthodox Jew, except that he waits 10 seconds instead of 3. He also replaces his brake lights with 1000 watt searchlights and connects his horn so that it is activated whenever he touches the brake pedal.

9. A scholar from Jesus Seminar concludes that the passage "STOP" undoubtedly was never uttered by Jesus himself, but belongs entirely to Stage III of the gospel tradition, when the church was first confronted by traffic in its parking lot.

10. An NT scholar notices that there is no stop sign on Mark street but there is one on Matthew and Luke streets, and concludes that the ones on Luke and Matthew streets are both copied from a sign on a completely hypothetical street called "Q". There is an excellent 300 page discussion of speculations on the origin of these stop signs and the differences between the stop signs on Matthew and Luke street in the scholar's commentary on the passage. There is an unfortunate omission in the commentary, however: the author apparently forgot to explain what the text means.

11. An OT scholar points out that there are a number of stylistic differences between the first and second half of the passage "STOP". For example, "ST" contains no enclosed areas and 5 line endings, whereas "OP" contains two enclosed areas and only one line termination. He concludes that the author for the second part is different from the author for the first part and probably lived hundreds of years later. Later scholars determine that the second half is itself actually written by two separate authors because of dissimilar stylistic differences between the "O" and the "P".

12. Another prominent OT scholar notes in his commentary that the stop sign would fit better into the context three streets back. (Unfortunately, he neglected to explain why in his commentary.) Clearly it was moved to its present location by a later redactor. He thus exegetes the intersection as though the stop sign were not there.

13. Because of the difficulties in interpretation, another OT scholar amends the text, changing "T" to "H". "SHOP" is much easier to understand in context than "STOP" because of the multiplicity of stores in the area. The contextual corruption probably occurred because "SHOP" is so similar to "STOP" on the sign several streets back that it is a natural mistake for a scribe to make. Thus the sign should be interpreted to announce the existence of a shopping area.

Why do we do it? I am often asked. "Why do you bother with this, Chuck Colson?" The fight is overwhelming.

Let me offer three reasons.

First, I discovered in a flood of tears 22 years ago that what was in my heart, which was a whole lot worse than anything you read about in Watergate accounts, could be forgiven and wiped away by the historical fact that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, died on the cross for my sins. That was the greatest discovery of my life. Imagine you can be forgiven and free. But if Jesus did that for us, what do we owe him? Everything! Out of gratitude for what God has done for me I will serve Him. It is my duty. I have no choice.

"Oh no, pastor! I may have lost my leg, but I lighted the first candle."

Second, I am going to press on for another reason. Hebrew legend has it that there was an old man standing outside of the walls of Sodom. He was shaking his fists saying, "Stop! Stop! Stop!" Someone came along and said, "You can't stop them! You can't save them! Save your breath, old man." He said, "No, I am going to keep screaming, not because I can change them, but I don't want them to change me."

Keep screaming!

Third, it is amazing what one little light can do. I think of Timisoara when Laszlo Tokes's church was surrounded in 1989. Peter Dugulescu was the pastor of the local Baptist church. He was out there in the crowd around the church. Ceausescu's tanks surrounded them and the troops came into the square. The people started singing.

Peter Dugulescu told me the most marvelous story. A young Baptist lad named Daniel Gavra, 23 years old, came running up, and he had his coat closed obviously hiding something inside. Peter Dugulescu said, "No! No! No violence!" And Daniel Gavra said, "No, pastor, not violence. I've got candles." He pulled out not a gun but candles. And he started to light candles and passed them around. You may have seen it on television. It was a dramatic scene. That whole square in Timisoara was ablaze with lights. Ceausescu couldn't stand it, and he started firing on the crowd. Daniel Gavra grabbed a young girl with him, and they started running down the street. Suddenly he heard a shot, and he felt her fall. She was dead before she hit the pavement. Seconds later he felt his own right leg blown away. He woke up in the hospital two days later.

Peter Dugulescu came to see him in the hospital. His leg was gone. Peter Dugulescu said, "Daniel, that is tough. You have lost your leg." Daniel Gavra looked up to him and said, "Oh no, pastor! I may have lost my leg, but I lighted the first candle."

We do what we do out of duty because we are so grateful to God for what He has done. We do what we do because we don't want them to change us. And we do what we do because one light in the darkness can dispel evil. It is true: Good overcomes evil. Defend the faith with gentleness and reverence. Give a reason, an apology, for the hope which is within you.

God bless you. ■

To purchase an audio cassette of "Bringing The Gospel to Athens" call 1-800-995-8777. Cost is \$6.95, plus shipping and handling.

They said it

"What we need in this state is a reverse inquisition. We burn the religious kooks at the stake. That's what we need. Clean up this society and get to a secular reality."

— Assisted suicide practitioner Jack Kevorkian, according to the Feb. 24 issue of *The Kansas City Star*.

Cloning "has the potential of giving women complete control over reproduction ... a stunning possibility that could, carried to its logical extreme, eliminate men altogether." — Ann Northrop, a columnist for *LGNY*, a New York homosexual newspaper, according to the March 6 issue of *USA Today*.

"Don't young people read newspapers? Don't they know that, thanks to President Clinton, they could have chosen to have a doctor suck their baby's brains out, and Delaware would not have chosen to charge them with murder?" — Columnist George Will in the Nov. 24, 1996, issue of *The Washington Post* on the two 18-year-olds who are charged with killing their newborn son.

KUDZU



Orr goes on to state,

"I recognize therefore to the full the need of growth and progress in history. Bit by bit, as the years go on, we see more clearly the essential lineaments of the truth as it is in Jesus; we learn to disengage the genuine truths of Christ's gospel from human additions and corruptions; we apprehend their bearings and relations with one another, and with new truths, more distinctly; we see them in new points of view, develop, and apply them in new ways."

Notre Dame professor Alvin Plantinga also defends the existence of a Christian worldview. He insists that there is a Christian philosophy as well as a Christian biology, psychology, sociology, and economics. He declares, "All these areas need to be thought anew from an explicitly Christian and theistic perspective. They're typically not done that way at all, of course, and the results are usually antithetical or irrelevant to Christianity."

Joining Plantinga and Orr in their call for a Christian worldview is theologian Carl F. H. Henry. In his six-volume *God, Revelation and Authority*, he wrote,

The task of Christian leadership is to confront modern man with the Christian world-life view as the revealed conceptuality for understanding reality and experience, and to recall reason once again from the vagabondage or irrationalism and the arrogance of autonomy to the service of true faith. That does not imply modern man's return to the medieval mind. It implies, rather, a reaching for the eternal mind, for the mind of Christ, for the truth of revelation, for the Logos as transcendent source of orders and structures of being, for the Logos-incarnate in Jesus Christ, for the Logos as divine agent in creation, redemption and judgment, for the Logos who stands invisibly but identifiably as the true center of nature, history, ethics, philosophy and religion.

Clearly, we recognize the need for every Christian to embrace a Christ-centered, common-sense, rationally defensible and experimentally meaningful worldview.

World Views

"You see, it really does matter very much, how we think about the cosmos."

- George Roche

Definition:

"The framework through which you see and the basis on which you decide"

A Way Of Seeing Or Interpreting All Of Reality

A Perceptual Framework

Determines Our Values

'The Christian ideal,' it is said,
has not been tried and found wanting;
it has been found difficult and left
untried.

What's Wrong with the World

-G. K. Chesterton

when Luther said no to indulgences that he became a Reformer. Today the confession that Jesus Christ is Lord requires a decisive repudiation of views that demean the atoning work of God the Son. The worshiping community cannot in the name of inclusiveness honestly allow the implication that the salvation accomplished once for all on the cross is one among many salvations.

There is a fantasy abroad that the Christian community can have a center without a circumference. Since we gather around Jesus, it is argued, it is our center, not our boundaries, that matter. But this is the persistent illusion of compulsive hypertolerance. A community with no boundaries can neither have a center nor be a community.

A center without a circumference is a dot, nothing more. Without boundaries, a circle is not a circle. The circle of faith cannot identify its center without recognizing its margins. The debate about whether heresy can be defined is a struggle to specify margins, the legitimate boundaries of the worshiping community.

The rediscovery of boundaries will be the preoccupation of twenty-first century theology. Some cannot imagine any boundary-making work without becoming anxious. They recount the sins of the last five centuries: a history that left many dead and wounded. Rather than fixate on these *last* five centuries, we should instead reexamine the *first* five centuries, a time of flourishing consensus, as evidenced in the seven Ecumenical Councils and the most widely regarded Doctors of the Church venerated East and West.

Some think that specifying boundaries at all will be tainted by hubris and splattered with blood. The apostolic faith has learned under the guidance of the Spirit that when the boundaries are accurately stated, conflict and hubris are tamed and purified. ❏

By Thomas C. Oden, professor of theology and ethics, Drew University. Oden is the author of Requiem: A Lament in Three Movements (Abingdon).

The Christian religion . . . teaches men these two truths; that there is a God whom men can know, and that there is a corruption in their nature which renders them unworthy of Him. It is equally important to men to know both these points; and it is equally dangerous for man to know God without knowing his own wretchedness, and to know his own wretchedness without knowing the Redeemer who can free him from it. The knowledge of only one of these points gives rise either to the pride of philosophers, who have known God, and not their own wretchedness, or to the despair of atheists, who know their own wretchedness, but not the Redeemer.

—Pascal, *Pensées*, IX

It is easy to be a madman: it is easy to be a heretic. It is always easy to let the age have its head; the difficult thing is to keep one's own. . . It is always simple to fall; there are an infinity of angles at which one falls, only one at which one stands. . . But to have avoided them all has been one whirling adventure; and in my vision the heavenly chariot files thundering through the ages, the dull heresies sprawling and prostrate, the wild truth reeling but erect.

--G.K. Chesterton, *Orthodoxy: The Romance of the Faith* (New York: Image Books, 1990), 101

* Existentialism (Søren Kierkegaard)

True Christianity can be known only by a leap of faith, not by reason. God is transcendent, not immanent. Each individual must take his/her own leap of faith, which transcends all rational or conventional wisdom.

* Revivalism (E.Y. Mullins)

Christianity is confirmed in our own personal experience with Jesus Christ. This is close to inductive presuppositionalism.

Your professor tends to combine aspects both of Evidentialism and Foundationalism in his approach to this issue. Certain spiritual truths do seem to be intuitive to humanity and naturally embraced (Foundationalism). Further, when one begins a quest for truth and the gathering of evidence, the case for Christian theism is discovered to be the best (Evidentialism). Foundational evidentialism would reflect my own conviction in this area.

For More Information.....

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“How They Started”

In the United States the earliest universities were founded by church denominations, the first being Harvard (1636). They pursued Christian theology as the context for dealing with all the major disciplines and sought thereby to educate the clergy for effective ministry. William and Mary was established for similar purposes in 1693, Yale in 1701, Princeton in 1746, Pennsylvania in 1749, Columbia in 1754, Brown in 1763, Duke in 1838.

- **Secular Humanism - Humanism cut loose from a trust/commitment to God.**
"There is NO God!"
- **FIVE VIEWS COMMON TO CLASSIC HUMANISTS:**
 1. OPTIMISTIC ANTHROPOLOGY - all persons have worth and dignity.
 2. THIS-WORLDLY SELF-FULFILLMENT - fulfillment should come in this present world as there is no other.
 3. VOLUNTARISM - Human freedom and responsibility (existentialism) play an important role.
 4. MELIORISM/FUTURISM: Optimistic that humans, using science and reason, can solve many (eventually all!!) of this world's problems.
 5. HUMANISTIC AXIOLOGY AND ETHICS: Values and morality are based on what is *best* for persons (i.e. human rights) - a Pragmatic, Utilitarian view of life. (The BEST for the MOST) (Experience is our guide).
- **FIVE VIEWS UNIQUE TO SECULAR HUMANISM**
 1. NATURALISTIC ANTISUPERNATURALISM = Only the natural world exists.
 2. EVOLUTIONISM = Human origin can be explained exclusively by naturalistic evolution (time plus chance; natural selection/random mutations)
 3. ANNIHILATIONISM = There is no personal survival after death.
 4. ANTHROPOLOGICAL OPTIMISM = Humans are masters of their own fate through science and reason. There is no concept of personal sin.
 5. MORAL RELATIVISM = All ethics are emotive and therefore subjective.

Either I determine the place in which I will find God, or I allow God to determine the place where he will be found. If it is I who say where God will be, I will always find there a God who in some way corresponds to me, is agreeable to me, fits with my nature. But if it is God who says where He will be, then that will truly be a place which at first is not agreeable to me at all, which does not fit so well with me. That place is the cross of Christ. And whoever will find God there must draw near to the cross in the manner which the sermon on the Mount requires. This does not correspond to our nature at all.

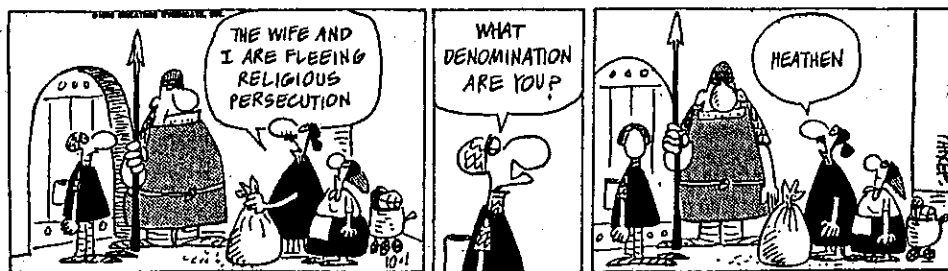
--Deitrich Bonhoeffer, Meditating on the Word, as quoted by Anthony C. Thiselton, New Horizons in Hermeneutics (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1992), 35.

Although historical precursors of the pragmatic philosophy of education are philosophers like Protagoras, Bacon, and Comte, the pragmatic philosophy of education is relatively recent and perhaps the dominant philosophy of education today. It is found explicitly in the writings of Dewey, for whom pragmatism is primarily a theory of meaning and truth (instrumentalism or experimentalism) and in Kilpatrick, Childs, Counts, Raup, Brubaker, Neff, Bode, Axtelle, Thomas, Bayles, Stanley, Benne, Rugg, Hook, and Brameld, who identified his theory as reconstructionism.

Brameld's categories of educational philosophy are:

1. essentialism, in which education is seen as the transmission of cultural essentials, as in idealism and realism;
2. perennialism, in which education is seen as the transmission of perennial or absolute and universal truths, as, e.g., in realists like Maritain or Adler or in those holding for religious absolutes;
3. progressivism, in which education is seen as the process of intelligent problem solving, with emphasis on method, as in Dewey's theory; and
4. reconstructionism (Brameld's own view), in which education is seen to be the source and implementation of new social ends for social reconstruction. Emphasis is on goals as well as on method.

WIZARD OF ID



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FREE INQUIRY

✓ Guilt by Association -- Equates socializing with someone as advocating their views.

- * Jesus ate with publicans and sinners, so He could not be the Messiah.
- * Bob attended this (liberal/fundy) meeting, so he's a (liberal/fundy).

✓ Paradox -- Driven to a position that appears contradictory or equivocal, but the person insists is true. A paradox may not be wrong or fallacious, but it is least puzzling and in need of further explanation. In the case of some Christian doctrines, it may be necessary to hold two apparently contradictory truths in paradox, tension, or antinomy.

- * A Cretian says, "All Cretians are liars."
- * Jesus is divine and human.
- * This sentence is false.
- * We are free, but God has predestined us.

Using Logic in Biblical Exegesis

Logic is very useful in understanding what is being said in a passage (and in explaining it with clarity in a message). Analyze the logic used in the following scriptural examples. Can you think of other examples?

"All (adult humans) have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God." (Rom.3:23) I am an adult human. Therefore, I have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.

"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins." (1 Jn 1:9) I am confessing my sin. Therefore, He will forgive me.

"Choose ye this day whom ye will serve, [either pagan gods or JHWH]. But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" (Josh 24:15).

*"You're playing God."
"Somebody has to!"*

—Steve Martin,
The Man with Two Brains

*I teach you the overman. Man is
something that is to be overcome.
What have you done to overcome
him?*

—Friedrich Nietzsche,
Thus Spake Zarathustra,
I prologue, p. 3.

Examples: No major religion, but numerous major thinkers

Plato

John Stuart Mill

William James

Rabbi Kushner (Author of When Bad Things Happen To Good People)

6. Deism: God exists beyond the universe, but not in it (supernaturally).

Examples: Voltaire
Thomas Jefferson
Benjamin Franklin
Thomas Paine

7. Polytheism: There are many gods in the universe (finite gods).

Examples: Ancient Greek gods
Ancient Roman gods
Shintoism
Mormonism

Animism

The belief in the existence of spiritual beings that are separable or separate from bodies.²

Humanism

Way of life based on the belief that what is good for human beings is the highest good.³

Mysticism

The search for direct personal experience of the divine.³

Paganism

The religion and worship of those who are neither Christians, Jews nor Muslims.³

¹ From *Operation World*, Copyright © Patrick Johnstone 1993. Published by OM Publishing, Carlisle, UK.

² Copyright ©1996 by Houghton Mifflin Company. Reproduced by permission from *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, Third Edition*.

³ From *Eerdmans' Handbook to the World's Religions*, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., ©1982, 1994. Used by permission.

Polytheism

The belief in and worship of a variety of gods, who rule over various aspects of the world and life.³

Primal Religions

Religious systems of tribal groups having no literary tradition. Characterized by belief in spiritual forces behind natural phenomena, a reverence for ancestors and a tight-knit social system.³

Spiritualism

Any religious system or practice which has the object of establishing communication with the dead.³

Syncretism

The growing together of two or more religions making a new development in religion which contains some of the beliefs and practices of both.³

NATURALISM

- Thales (624-546 BC) --Pre-Socratic Materialism
Water is the underlying reality behind appearances.
- Anaximander (610-546 BC) -- Pre-Socratic Materialism
A basic substance (apeiron) is the source of all things.
- Anaximenes (585-528 BC) -- Pre-Socratic Materialism
Air is the ultimate source of all things.
- Heraclitus (536-470 BC) -- Pre-Socratic Materialism
Fire is the source of all things.
- Democritus (460-371 BC) -- Atomism
Tiny, indestructible particles called atoms are foundational for all of reality.
- Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) -- Materialistic Monism
All conscious life can be explained by the brain and central nervous system; all emotions can be explained by glandular activity.
- Sir Isaac Newton (1642-1727) -- Mechanistic Materialism
His followers developed Newtonian physics, which pictured the world as a machine governed by the laws of nature. Although Newton himself was a theist, the Newtonian physics led to Deism in religion.
- Karl Marx (1818-1883) -- Dialectical Materialism
Adapted Hegel's dialectical method without the idealist presuppositions. Applied a materialist interpretation to history, based on economic systems (primitive communism, slave society, feudal society, bourgeois capitalism, and a classless society after the revolution of the proletariat).
- Alfred North Whitehead (1861-1947) -- Process Theology
In an effort to avoid the problems raised for traditional Christianity by modern science and by the problem of evil, Whitehead redefined Christianity. He viewed God in a pantheistic way. His dipolar theism portrayed God as evolving from an imperfect, primordial being to a perfect consequent being.
- Carl Sagan (1934-1996) -- Secular Humanism
A non-theist who believes "the Cosmos is all that is or ever was or ever will be."
Accepts the theory of evolution as the explanation of human life. Makes aiding humankind the goal of science. Accepts some Christian values without accepting the Christian faith on which those values are based.

FIDELITAS

Commentary on Theology and Culture

Ministry is Stranger Than it Used to Be: The Challenge of Postmodernism

R. Albert Mohler, Jr., President
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

A common concern now seems to emerge wherever ministers gather—ministry is stranger than it used to be. Not that ministry is more difficult, more tiring, or more demanding . . . just different—and increasingly strange.

That sense of strangeness may well be due to the rise of postmodern culture and philosophy; perhaps the most important intellectual and cultural movement of the late twentieth century. What difference does postmodernism make? Just look at the modern media, pop culture, and the blank stares you receive from some persons when you talk about truth, meaning, and morality.

Postmodernism developed among academics and artists, but has quickly spread throughout the culture. At the most basic level, postmodernism refers to the passing of modernity and the rise of a new cultural movement. Modernity—the dominant worldview since the Enlightenment—has been supplanted by postmodernism, which both extends and denies certain principles and symbols central to the modern age.

Clearly, much of the literature about postmodernism is nonsensical and hard to take seriously. When major postmodern figures speak or write, the gibberish which often results sounds more like a vocabulary test than a sustained argument. But postmodernism cannot be dismissed as unimportant or irrelevant. This is not a matter of concern only among academics and the *avant garde*—this new movement represents a critical challenge to the Christian church, and to the minister.

- a. Value represents intrinsic good.
- b. Good is what is desirable for its own sake (Good is an end, not a mere means to an end).
- c. Good is what one ought to do.
- d. "Ought" cannot be reduce to "is" (the descriptive is not the prescriptive).
- e. Good is absolute, not relative.
- f. Good is objective, not merely subjective.
- g. Good is discovered, not created by man.
- h. God is the source of all good.

- 1) Something is not good simply because God wills it (Voluntarism).
- 2) Rather, God wills it because it is good (in accordance with His unchangeably good nature) (Essentialism).

Note: To deny that value is objective and absolute is self-defeating: it amounts to this: "It is absolutely true that there are no absolutes."

3. Revelational Precondition (source) -- Revelationalism

- a. God is the ultimate source of all truth.
 - 1) Truth is disclosed by God--revelation.
 - 2) Truth is discovered by man--reason.
- b. There are two spheres of revelation.
 - 1) General revelation--in nature. (General revelation refers to God's means of revealing Himself to man through the physical universe and the moral order.)

"That the universe is ordered seems self-evident."

-Paul Davies

In The beginning God created the heavens and the earth."

-Genesis 1:1

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."

-John 1:1

"Theism, the belief that God is, and atheism, the belief that God is not, are simply two beliefs. They are two fundamental ways of seeing the whole of existence. The one, theism, sees existence as ultimately meaningful, as having a meaning beyond itself; the other sees existence as having no meaning beyond itself."

-Stephen D. Schwartz

*"Belief in God is the heart and center of the Christian religion--
as it is of Judaism and Islam."*

-Alvin Plantinga

Scripture	General Revelation Through Nature
Genesis 1	Creation is good like God; man resembles God.
Job 12: 7f	Birds and beasts speak of God.
Job 20:27	Heavens reveal man's iniquity
Psalms 14:1	Only a fool does not believe in God.
Psalms 19:1	Heavens declare God's glory.
Psalms 97:6	Heavens declare God's righteousness.
Psalms 65:8	There are natural signs.
Psalms 94:9	There is a similarity between God & man.
Ecclesiastes	Natural knowledge of God under the sun.
Isaiah 40:12	Greatness of Creator known through creation.
Isaiah 45:6, 22	All ends of the earth know God.
Acts 14	Pagans know God through nature.
Acts 17	Greek philosophy used to argue to God.
Romans 1:18f	All men know God through creation.
Romans 2:12f	Moral law written on the hearts of men.

2) Special revelation--in Scripture (Special revelation refers to God's specific means of revealing Himself to man, through the Bible and in the person of Jesus Christ).

- a) In times past (OT)--God spoke through the prophets (Heb 1:1).
- b) In last days (NT)--God spoke through Christ and Apostles (Heb. 2:3-4) who wrote Scripture (II Peter 3: 15-16).

3) Comparison and importance of two spheres of revelation.

a) Comparison:

GENERAL	SPECIAL
Given to all of rational capability	Given to all believers and some unbelievers
Apparently sufficient only for condemnation	Sufficient for salvation
Declares God's greatness	Declares God's saving grace and goodness

b) Importance of revelation

GENERAL	SPECIAL
Provide common ground with unbeliever	Overcome sin obscuring general revelation
Provide sphere for pre-evangelism	Disclose God's plan of salvation
Provide background for special revelation	Provide clearer and more detailed revelation of God's will.

4. Canonical (Extent) --Finalism

- a. Bible is final authority.
- b. Bible is a completed authority (the canon is closed).

1) Christ verified the complete Old Testament canon.

Matthew 5:17, 18 -- "*Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish them but to fulfill. For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter (yodh) or stroke (tittle) shall pass away from the Law, until all is accomplished.*"

Luke 24:27 -- "*And beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explains to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures.*"

2) Christ promised a complete New Testament canon.

John 14:26 --*"But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all I have said to you."*

John 16:13 --*"But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come."*

Hebrews 1: 1-2 --*"God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son."* ("spoken" is aorist tense, denoting completed action).

Hebrews 2:3-4 --*"After it was at the first spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed to us by those who heard, God also bearing witness with them, both by signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit to His own will."*

B. Procedure of Theology

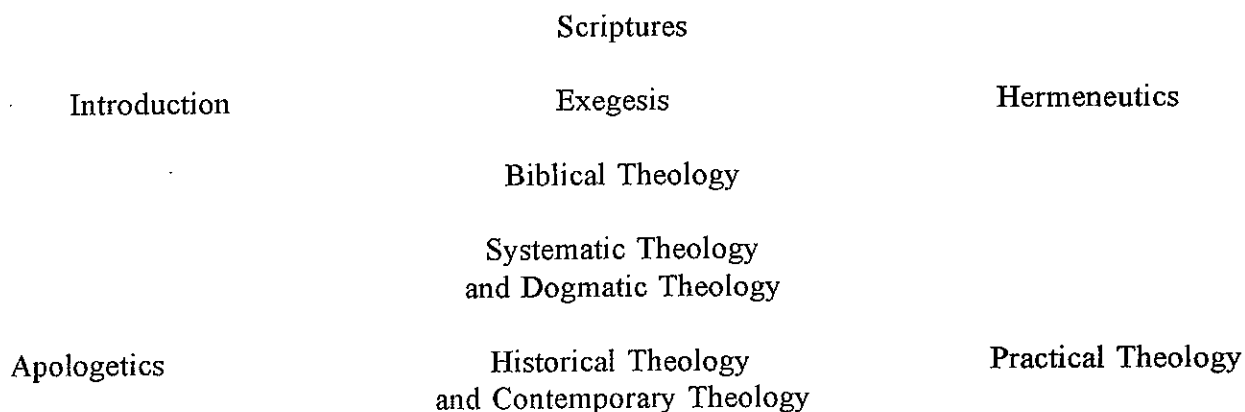
1. Relation of Biblical Theology and Systematic Theology (Geisler)

	Biblical Theology	Systematic Theology
SOURCE	Special revelation	General and special revelation (and other)
PERSPECTIVE	Individual author's	Collective whole
CONTRIBUTION	Basic "stuff"	Overall structure
PROCEDURE	Exegetical	Inferential
APPROACH	Historical	Philosophical

2. A Comparison of Theological Methods

(See charts on following pages)

RELATIONSHIP OF BIBLICAL THEOLOGY TO OTHER DISCIPLINES



Contrasts Between Biblical and Systematic Theology	
BIBLICAL THEOLOGY	SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY
Restricts its study to Scripture	Seeks truth from Scripture and from any source outside the Bible
Examines the parts of Scripture	Examines the whole of Scripture
Compiles information on a doctrine from a specific writer (e.g., John or Paul) or a particular era (e.g., Abrahamic, Mosaic, or prophetic)	Compiles information on a doctrine by correlating all the Scriptures
Seeks to understand why or how a doctrine developed	Seeks to understand what was ultimately written
Seeks to understand the process as well as the result-the product	Seeks to understand the result - the product
Views the progress of revelation in different eras (as in Edenic, Noahic)	Views the culmination of God's revelation

Sequence of Biblical Theology:

Exegesis ➡ Biblical Theology ➡ Systematic Theology

In Summary

There are two broad methods of approaching the study of God:

1. Philosophical: begin with the rational arguments--cosmological, teleological, anthropological, ontological, and moral. This approach believes that one can find and understand God through natural revelation (Gen. 1:26-27; Psalm 19:1-4; Rom. 1:19-20).
2. Biblical: the Bible, however, brings one into the presence of God without delay. This approach presupposes the existence of God and recognizes that only through special revelation is God fully and savingly revealed (Gen. 1:1).

Although it is impossible to fully describe or define God, the following description is helpful, taken from the Westminster Shorter Catechism (1647) -

"God is Spirit, infinite, eternal and unchangeable in His being, power, holiness, justice, goodness and truth."

Five foundational principles of the knowledge about God which Christians have are:

1. God has spoken to us and the Bible is His Word, given to us to make us wise unto salvation.
2. God is Lord and King over His world; He rules all things for His own glory, displaying His perfection in all that He does, in order that men and angels may worship and adore Him.
3. God is Savior, active in sovereign, holy love through the Lord Jesus Christ to rescue mankind from the guilt and power of sin, to adopt them as sons, and to bless them accordingly.
4. God is Triune; there is within the Godhead three persons, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and the work of salvation is one in which all three act together in perfect harmony; the Father purposing redemption, the Son securing it, and the Spirit applying it.
5. Godliness means responding to God's revelation in trust and obedience, faith and worship, prayer and praise, submission and service. Life must be seen and lived in the light of God's Word. This and nothing else, is true religion.

When a person loses sight of the personal God, several dangers follow:

God is dead philosophy	-- does not work
Despair	-- does not help
Immortality	-- does not satisfy

Why should we study theology?

Lucy and Linus, now famous little people in Charles Shultz's cartoon "*PEANUTS*", are staring out the window. The rain is pouring down ---

Lucy speaks: *"Boy look at that rain...what if it floods the whole world?"*

Linus answers: *"It will never do that. In the ninth chapter of Genesis, God promised Noah that would never happen again, and the sign of the promise is the rainbow."*

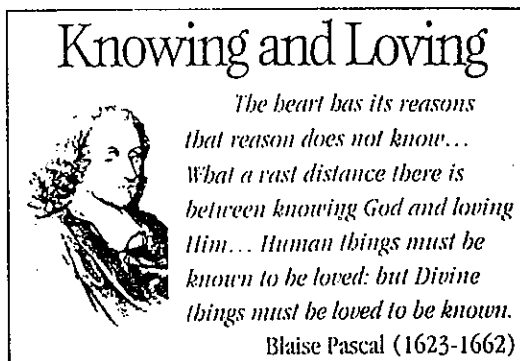
Lucy is looking directly at him as he is speaking. She turns back toward the window, smiles big and announces:

"You have taken a great load off of my mind."

Linus responds: *"Sound theology has a way of doing that!"*

Wise and timely words from Linus. With feelings of fear and uncertainty while watching events from our windows, many of us often hear least what we need most -- sound, reliable theology that offers reassurance and hope...based squarely on God's Word, the Bible -- not feeling or opinions or even logic. We need to hear what God has said and rest our case there.

Theology then is the basic foundation for the entire Christian life in its individual and corporate forms including all aspects of devotion, service and worship.



Unchanging truths and our changing world

America at the end of the 20th century is a society in the midst of a culture-shift. All around us are signs that our culture is being transformed by a constellation of forces including the electronic media, a post-industrial economy, rapid demographic change and a breakdown of shared moral values.

All of this comes as the memory of the Christian worldview becomes ever more remote from modern consciousness. Questions concerning right and wrong are now reduced to arguments over individual rights. What was once unmentionable has now become the focus of mainstream entertainment. Americans have increasingly lost the capacity for shame, and sin has been banished as a category for public conversation.

But the problem is even worse, for the very notion of objective truth is itself denied by millions of Americans. As the late professor Allan Bloom warned in *The Closing of the American Mind*, "There is one thing a professor can be absolutely sure of: almost every student entering the university believes, or says he believes, that truth is relative."

The Barna Research Group released a study two years ago indicating that 67 percent of Americans reject the very notion of absolute truth, and that 52 percent of self-identified "born again" Christians shared that belief.



R. Albert Mohler

The report continued, "The typical adult would argue that what is considered truth by me may not be the same truth to which you ascribe and neither one of us is necessarily wrong, even if our respective truths are in conflict."

This new reality represents a fundamental challenge to the Christian Church. Either we will stand against the tide and speak for absolute truth, or we will abdicate the faith once for all delivered to the saints.

Christianity stands or falls on the basis of its truth claim, and that claim is to absolute truth, not mere subjectivity and relativism. The Lord who claimed to be "the Way, the Truth, and the Life," cannot be served by disciples who reject the very notion of objective truth.

The task of proclaiming Christ in the midst of this changing culture requires that we make clear our witness to Jesus Christ and His gospel as a truth more true than anything else the world can know — and not as a matter of mere religious preference or private discrimination. Americans — including many church members — have so concentrated on religious experience that they have neglected or even denied the foundation of that experience.

In the midst of a changing world, the Church must uphold its witness to what G.K. Chesterton called the "permanent things." There is no genuine Christianity other than that based upon absolute truth — on the truth of God the Creator and Sustainer of all things; on Jesus Christ as the Incarnate Word, our Messiah and Mediator; on salvation through Jesus Christ and His atoning death as our substitute; and the Hope of Glory as our promise for eternity.

Southern Baptist seminaries were founded upon this faith, and there we must stand without apology as we move into the future. We bear the challenge of preparing a generation of God-called ministers of the Gospel who are ready to take front-line positions as we proclaim biblical truth in troubled times. This will require the greatest degree of commitment, and the highest quality of consecrated scholarship.

But this massive shift in the beliefs and attitudes of persons inside and outside the Church represents an urgent challenge to the local church and to the denomination as well. Churches are now pressured to conform their convictions to a relativistic mindset which reduces all issues of truth to matters of individual preference and personal taste.

Claims of the exclusivity of salvation through the atoning work of Christ and other central doctrinal affirmations are inherently offensive to a society which would reduce all matters of faith and doctrine to simple choices on a cafeteria line of theological options.

The hard truths of the Christian faith are now rejected in favor of the soft reassurances of our therapeutic culture. Sin is out . . . self esteem is in. Atonement is outmoded, to be replaced with self-improvement. Discipleship gives way to superficial sentimentalism and theological content is no deeper than the emotivism found in greeting cards.

The moral commands of God, stripped of their objective status and absolute truthfulness, are replaced by individual codes of conduct, rooted in nothing more than ego. The Ten Commandments are replaced with each individual's version of Ted Turner's infamous "ten suggestions."

That this phenomenon shapes the modern American mind should come as no surprise. Secularism and humanistic ideologies have so distorted the secular worldview that the sacred truths of God are no more than a distant memory for many Americans. Years of values clarification and other humanistic learning theories have so shaped the national character that most Americans look for moral guidance from their own self-centered emotions and whims.

The media and our entertainment culture reinforce both the moral relativism which comes naturally to fallen humanity and the self-centered perspective on life which is the core of the modern entertainment industry.

But these shaping influences - and the reflection of absolute truth itself - are not merely phenomena outside the Church, they are devastating characteristics of many who consider themselves Christians. Christians are those who have come to know Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, and who have been saved by His mercy and grace. This means, at least in part, that Christians are those who have submitted themselves to the truth of who Jesus Christ is, and what He has done for us through His substitutionary atonement. We are saved by grace through faith, but our faith is not in a theory or self-focused philosophy, but in Jesus Christ himself. Our trust and confidence is that what Scripture reveals concerning all truth - including the truth of who Christ is and what He has done for us - is authentic, objective, absolute truth. Furthermore, though we acknowledge our own fallibility and imperfection, we affirm the infallibility and inerrancy (perfection) of the Bible as our God-given deposit of objective truth.

One cannot be an authentic disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ and hold these truths to be matters of mere personal preference. If these truths are not objectively true, then we are objectively lost. A "church" filled with persons who deny the existence of absolute truth is not a church at all.

Our Lord promised His disciples, "And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32). These are challenging days for the Church, for our denomination, for theological seminaries, and for individual Christians as we seek to proclaim Christ in a changing world. But these are exciting days as well, for our opportunity is to speak the truth in love, and to demonstrate the truth in life.

Dr. R. Albert Mohler Jr. is the ninth president of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, KY.

THE HEFLEY REPORT

Volume 2, Number 7

Views expressed on this page are not necessarily those of the editors of the Indiana Baptist

March, 1994

America's Elite Colleges Aren't What They Used to Be

Harvard.

The most prestigious school in America for bragging purposes and getting a power-packed job.

The alma mater of presidents John F. Kennedy, Franklin D. Roosevelt, John Adams and John Quincy Adams.

The richest of all private universities with a billion dollar endowment.

Founded just 16 years after the Pilgrims landed at Plymouth, as a Bible-believing school for ministers, Harvard was for decades a citadel for evangelical Christianity.

The symbols remain. The stately Harvard Memorial Church stands near the center of the campus, its spire pointing toward heaven. "Veritas" — truth — is inscribed on buildings.

Two years ago, the Rev. Peter Gomes, minister of Harvard Church, announced at a student rally for homosexuals that he was gay.

Campus, a national conservative student newspaper, quoted Sandi Dubowski, a leader in Harvard's Bi-sexual Gay and Lesbian Student Association, as saying, "You can't disassociate Harvard and homosexuality... they are intertwined."

The "free" Harvard paper, *Peninsula*, replied with a series of articles questioning the morality and tolerance of the homosexual movement. Harvard gays retorted by publishing the names of the paper's editors in a homosexual newsletter. Among those receiving death threats was *Peninsula* co-editor Roger Landry. A telephone caller told him that he would be stabbed with an AIDS-infected needle.

So much for tolerance and freedom of speech at Harvard.

Yale.

The second most prestigious school in America. The first 13 presidents were "reverends."

George Bush is an alumnus. Gerald Ford, Bill Clinton, and Hillary Rodham Clinton attended Yale's law school.

Jonathan Edwards graduated from Yale at age 17, in the year 1720. Edwards sparked the Great Awakening revival with his memorable sermon, "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God."

Yale is setting the pace for building a multi-sexual campus culture. The provost established an eight-member Gay and Lesbian Research Fund Committee to prepare a lesbian and gay studies program with endowed professorships, visiting scholar programs and other funds for doctoral research. The Committee circulates a list of 70 Yale courses related to homosexual studies.

Yale also funds the Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Co-Operative (BGLADS) which sponsors dances drawing one tenth of the student body. Last year BGLADS sponsored a pornographic magazine, prepared by Yale students and distributed all over the campus in blatant defiance of local porn laws.

In 1992 Dean Donald Kagan asked Yale faculty to pay more attention to studies in western civilization. "It is both right and necessary," he said, "to place Western civilization and the culture to which it has given rise at the center of our studies, and we fail to do so at the peril of our students, our country and of the hopes for a democratic society emerging throughout the world today."

Howls and screams echoed across the campus. The Yale student paper derided Dean

Kagan as "racist, sexist and out of touch." Black activists called for an administrative review of the university's "racist" curriculum.

So goes life at Yale.

Take a quick peek at Princeton which will no longer support the Boy Scouts through the local United Way. Why? Because the Boy Scouts will not accept homosexual scout leaders.

Look in at Duke, once a bastion of Wesleyan spirituality, now the most politically correct university in the south. Duke has a divinity school, as does Harvard, Yale and Princeton. Like its Ivy League counterparts, the Duke Divinity School is not noted for graduating church builders.

At Duke you can also take English courses in "Queer Performativity," "Gay Abandon" and "Introduction to Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual Studies." A Duke senior says the courses amount to a "weird study of perverted sexuality."

Cross the country to California's Stanford University, renowned for turning out top-flight scientists and engineers.

Stanford is now officially multi-cultural with western civilization getting the short end of the curriculum stick.

Stanford has gone one up on Harvard by celebrating a homosexual marriage in the University's Memorial Church. The officiating Stanford dean said, "We had a first [homosexual] wedding; there will be a second."

Stanford "freshpeople" are given a politically correct orientation. According to *Campus*, the 1992 orientation was titled, "Faces of the Community." The first "face" was a staged performance of the Rodney King beating. The second face, a proud "queer," urged freshpeople to "overcome their fears of being queer." The third face, a professor, began by telling the new students that "orientation is designed to disorient you." He then asked the 1,500 freshpeople to join in a chorus of animal calls. "By the time you leave Stanford," he predicted, "you should be completely disoriented."

Not to be outdone, Judy Gappa, Purdue University's first Vice-President of Human Relations, appointed a Director of Multicultural Affairs. Gappa and her director brought together a 22-member advisory group which they said represented the various cultures on campus. Blacks, Hispanics, Asians and one white male (well known for his socialist views) were included. The group will control the type of speech permitted at Purdue.

Student newspapers, one of the last bastions of dissent on many elite campuses, are pressured to fall in line. The editors don't always toe the mark. Even so, publication does not necessarily guarantee distribution. Black activists at the University of Pennsylvania carted away thousands of papers that included a story on black racism. When the theft became known, the UP president sided with the thieves.

The Student Press Law Center in Washington, DC reports the stealing of student papers on 28 other campuses during the past 14 months.

The Young American Foundation surveyed the top 50 U.S. universities and found that only three had invited a political conservative or moderate to give the commencement address the previous year. The Foundation's report concludes: "No conservative movement leader, free market scholar, Reagan- or Bush-

appointed jurist, or religious leader addressed any of the schools' commencements."

Russian author Alexander Solzhenitsyn was invited to give a major address at Harvard. He told a friend afterward that the scorn he received from students and faculty at Harvard hurt him more than his years in the Soviet gulag prison.

The sum of it all is this: rad-liberals, homosexual and lesbian activists, black racists and elitist white liberals have virtually taken over many, if not most of the fountainheads of American higher education.

Resisting institutions are now coming under pressure from accrediting agencies. Most ominous is a directive recently issued by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges, requiring four-year colleges in California, Hawaii and Guam to assess their progress on multiculturalism during accreditation reviews. Administrators of church-related schools fear this could lead to regulations on choosing students or faculty based on sexual orientation.

Accreditation is vital to a college's survival.

Meanwhile, what are the students learning? A study conducted at the University of Pennsylvania found that half of those interviewed could not name their senators and three-fourths could not identify Lincoln as the author of the words, "...government of the people, by the people and for the people."

From Harvard, Yale, Princeton (all established by Bible-believing Christians), Stanford, Purdue and other prestigious schools, will come the intellectual leaders of the next generation. In fact, enforcers of the new ideologies are already ensconced in the pinnacles of power. Have you checked the academic history of President Clinton's White House appointees recently?

Plain and simple, elitist higher education is denying many students of their right to learn the values of America's Judeo-Christian

heritage. Intolerant activists, in faculties and regulatory bureaucracies, are making a mockery of Biblical marriage, stripping religious symbols from public life and pushing God-fearing people out of the public square.

Item: A White House lesbian appointee recently ruled that church-related nursing homes cannot use religious logos in their advertisements.

Item: The U.S. Army has removed the cross of Christianity and Judaism's tablets and star of David from the chaplain's crest. The new crest depicts the sun with its rays as a symbol of the presence of God in nature.

Back to higher education. Our class of Christian concern is now in session. Here are some things every God-fearing American can do:

1. Choose carefully the college which your child will attend. Put Christian values and doctrinal soundness at the top of your list of qualifications. Don't assume that a "church" college has remained true to the faith.

2. Support with your checkbook colleges which have remained true to the values of their founding fathers. More scholarship money, to mention only one thing, is desperately needed by loyal Baptist colleges that must compete with public institutions which use taxpayer money to subsidize student tuition.

3. Support Baptist Student Unions and other Christian ministries on state and private campuses. Christian students desperately need the haven of refuge and Christian orientation which these ministries can provide.

4. Form a group in your church to study the history and changes in higher education in America.

Clearly, American higher education isn't what it used to be. This is a major cause of the moral degeneration in our society, where, in Chuck Colson's words: "morality is reduced to individual feelings," leaving society "with no moral principles..." ♦



"Hope. What a glorious word. Much of my life had been a battle against cynicism. By emigrating to America I felt I would find freedom to continue my search for truth."

"How could I have foreseen the major political shifts that would occur in the two most powerful nations in the world?"

"When the new 'politically correct' regime came to power in the U.S. I found myself asking over and over:

"Why did I ever leave the Soviet Union to come to the United States? And how can I escape from America?"

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An Open Letter to Evangelical Students in Tradition-Impaired Seminaries

TO: Orthodox and evangelical students entering countertraditional seminaries

FROM: A theologian who shares both your pain and your traditional faith, and empathizes with your apprehension

by Thomas C. Oden

This memorandum is addressed to traditional Christian believers entering seminary education, hoping to ready you for the actual experiences, positive and negative, through which you are soon to move. I would like to supply you with a modest manual of procedures about how the seminary works, how to use its grievance remedies, and how at times to effect its policy formation.

Since this is an "open" letter, anybody can read it. Even if it is addressed to a particular audience, others may find it intriguing as a window into theological education; arresting in the same way an accidentally overheard conversation may be fascinating.

A countertraditional seminary environment will inevitably test the spiritual caliber of any traditional student. You may have been told that you are going to be a student in a neopagan environment where the legitimization of experimental sexuality will be a constant struggle, where you will be ridiculed if you speak of Scripture as the Word of God, where if you challenge speculative theories of Scripture criticism you may be scolded in the form of grade evaluations, where you may be subtly coerced by social pressure to bow to the new age gods of secularization, situation ethics, absolute cultural relativism, hedonic nativism, and radical feminism.

Much of this is true, but it only partly describes the actual environment into which you are entering. These challenges will be there, but you will also be able to find a faithful community of students who share your love for the Lord and commitment to the ministry of Word and sacrament. You do well to prepare for a spiritual trial.

If you are politically liberal, emotively self-revealing, sexually tolerant, liturgically lenient, and have a convivial, malleable view of scriptural authority, you probably will be right at home in most of your classes, and you may feel that much of what follows does not apply to you.

If you are politically on the conservative side, doctrinally orthodox, committed to a single heterosexual relationship of covenant fidelity, drawn to classic liturgies, value emotive privacy, have a high view of scriptural authority, and are temperamentally traditional, it would not be unusual if at times you feel

keenly the absence of certain kinds of moral support in the seminary environment. If you believe unwaveringly in the incarnation and resurrection, I urge that you read this and meditate on its possible import for you.

Two Cheers for Inclusiveness

You are entering a diverse community that prides itself on its heterogeneity. Multicultural diversity is a standard advertising slogan for the liberated seminary. Indeed, it is a strength of the liberal seminary that one may not be able to replicate in more homogeneous settings. Inconsistently, however, its diversity often does not seek out or even tolerate traditionalists of any sort. When you arrive on the doorstep, you may feel that you are permitted to stay only in a penitential costume. You indeed are a legitimate part of that diversity, but will have to fight steadily for decent treatment.

You are going to hear a lot about the ideal of inclusiveness in the days ahead. But these may become long days in which you may at times feel excluded or ostracized in this haven of supposedly inclusive, unconditional love. The exclusion will come at times precisely because of your gender, social location, political values, sexual ethics, or doctrinal orthodoxy, because these views tend to threaten the comfortable fantasy of the ruling ascendancy of liberal dogmatism.

You will face sophisticated attempts to infantilize you, ignore you, disempower you, to rule you out of the voices of legitimacy because you are an evangelical or a traditional Christian. Some may seem to signal that you are too dumb to belong here.

Names One Must Be Prepared to Be Called in Inclusiveness Haven

Most of the critical traditionalist voices have already been systematically ruled out of the faculty and of faculty searches in most disciplines, so you should not be surprised if these ostracizing exclusions happen again to you. Some academics feel mortified by the presence of biblical pietists and conservatives and proliferators and moral traditionalists in their midst, and they want to curb your numbers in the student body and its representational processes. You may be an embarrassment to them.

Be prepared to be called weird names unfamiliar to your previous self-understanding, from

patriarchal to puritanical, from misogynist to medievalist. On good days you turn out to be merely a fundamentalist, a chauvinist pig, an Archie Bunker, a Boy Scout, an Uncle Tom, or a nerd. On worse days you may be pegged as a McCarthyite or on some lunatic fringe, and it may be insinuated that you are to some degree sexist, racist, fascist, or some other sort of rightwing religious extremist. If orthodox, you may be located in history a little to the back of Genghis Khan, and identified with slave traders and oppressors because of the racial and social location of your great-great-grandparents, regardless of what your own views may be.

You must be prepared to be called such names and not flinch. Be ready to examine the extent to which those names are descriptive of you and the extent to which they do not apply to you fairly. Often, these names say more about the desperate defensiveness of the egalitarian-latitudinarian tradition than about you. You must be ready to take on the curse of being a committed, allegiant Christian in a dogmatically antitraditional ethos.


You can do this only if your faith is strong, and if you have a supportive community. You will need support from both like-minded fellow students and at

least some encouraging pastors from your judicatory, including alumni of the seminary. You are not without advocates and ombudsmen in this situation, but they will not come flocking to your defense unless you make known your critical needs and bruises.

Following Channels and Democratic Remedies


Learn to use the democratic channels available to you. You are not powerless unless you choose to be. You cannot be victimized without some level of collusion with the dominator. There are many remedies and modes of redress, even if it seems atypical of your character to appeal to them. These remedies will almost certainly fall short of reorganizing the faculty with persons thoroughly grounded in classical Christian teaching. That is a scenario that will not happen during your seminary days, as long as tenure abuse and ideological cloning remain the common practice of liberated faculties.

But what proximate remedies are within your reach? First, vote thoughtfully for representatives to your student government organization. Ask about their views of ideological harassment and student rights. The seminary student body is a democracy. It may have been for years in the hands of countertraditional advocates who have considered student government their unchallenged turf. It is necessary now for you to assert your minority status and insist on not being



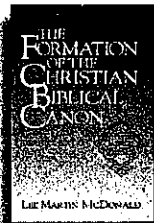
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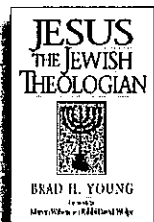
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TRANSLATED BY
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infantilized.

Through duly elected representatives, you have the power to influence to some modest degree such crucial matters as student life policies, housing, chapel services, and occasionally curriculum and faculty search processes. You may be outvoted in these processes, because they will normally be largely defined and shaped by countertraditionalist faculty, but that gives you no excuse for withdrawing or not asserting your legitimate interests.

The traditionalist's particular temptation is quietism and withdrawal, often in a spirit of injured innocence, which thinks it has been wronged and victimized, and that it has been left no remedies. There are remedies, and that is what I am trying to communicate in concrete terms.

Consumer Advocacy in Seminary Education

You are paying many thousands of dollars to attend a church-related, yet now largely tuition-driven, educational system. That ethos is different from the tax-supported university from which some of you have come. When tuition is high, it is assumed to have substantial benefits. At least minimally it is supposed to prepare you for a life of ministry in the church that actually exists.

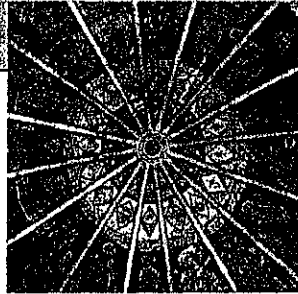
Do not assume too quickly that there is a direct correlation between what you pay and what you get. You do well to insist on services that are promised and agreed upon. Read the seminary history and mission statement.

You have a right to claim faculty time in appropriate ways. If faculty are unfindable, you may consider an escalating strategy; first leave a note, then E-mail a search warrant, then if all else fails, fax an obituary.

You have a right to request from the dean's office a list of members of standing committees—committees like student life, faculty, curriculum, admissions, worship, and library affairs. Use the petitioning process, and if that is ineffective, go to the dean, not alone, but with supportive colleagues. You have just as much right to the petitioning process as anyone else.

The consumer-advocacy model fits any consumer who is being cheated, who is being subjected to false advertising, who is offered fraudulent promises. The consumer's maxim is *caveat emptor*; "let the buyer beware." Ask questions about your purchase of a costly educational product if it is not working for you. Search out the

REMEMBERING THE CHRISTIAN PAST ROBERT L. WILKEN



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appropriate complaint desk (your adviser, student services, administration faculty) and utilize legitimate procedures for grievances.

The Special Vocation of Moderate Women and Minority Persons

If you are an Asian evangelical, or from the Two-Thirds World, you have a distinct sphere of accountability. You come out of a missional tradition of ardent evangelical commitment. Yet having arrived, you have little choice but to try to accommodate to a liberal Western educational system that will pressure you to think in terms of the assumptions of moral relativism, hedonism, pantheism, class warfare politics, and religious syncretism—assumptions you have a hard time translating back home. As an example, Minjung (Korean "Suffering People's" theology) is held in notoriously low regard by most Korean Protestant laity, but among elite Western liberal intellectuals, you would think it is the only Korean theology that has any legitimacy. You do well to attend Korean caucus meetings, speak your mind, and never allow Koreans to be represented by countertraditionalists alone.

If you are a woman who is orthodox or evangelical or traditionalist or pietistic, you have a special role. You need not tremble at the strident outrage of neopagan feminism. You do not have to collude with it. If you are called to hold to scriptural truth, you are free to do so even when it means swimming against the current, whether on questions of biblical authority or liturgy or personal integrity or ethics or abortion or family values or covenant fidelity in sexual relationships.

If you are a Hispanic student, you do well to remind liberated seminarians that the vast number of Hispanic Protestant laity are evangelicals, that many are charismatic or pentecostal evangelicals and that quasi-Marxist movements in South America are barely surviving into a second generation.

If you are an African American evangelical, you have an extraordinarily important share of leadership responsibility. You do well to attend all the meetings of the black caucus and make it clear that you are an active part of it, and that you want to see the black caucus contribute not merely to the divisive politicization of the community, but to the real development of curriculum and pedagogy that serves the whole church catholic, to which African voices have significantly contributed for two millennia.

I believe that African American, Asian American, Hispanic American, and women evangelicals can have significant impact on the policy and personnel changes needed in the countertraditional seminary. Their voices will not be written off so quickly as are the voices of white males, who have been assigned pariah roles. So you may feel a special burden to speak up for those who are relatively voiceless in the odd frame of reference of the countertraditional ethos, where the most marginalized person may be the WASP pietist. Evangelicals have no excuse for colluding with their own

marginalization, but at times they may depend on blacks, women, hispanics, and Asians of conscience to speak out for them in circumstances of silence and heartache.

Dying Infantilization

It has long been assumed that pietists and evangelicals do not know how to play the rough and tumble games of political action. That, until recently, has indeed been regrettably true. But that need no longer remain the case. When demeaned and marginalized and made to be nothing, if we collude with that marginalization, it is our own responsibility, for which no one else will be accountable on the Last Day.

If we allow ourselves to be invisible, we have not learned enough either from the Scripture or, if necessary, even from modernity with its consciousness-raising strategies or from Marxist hermeneutics, from sociology of knowledge, and from social location analysis. These modes of analysis are just as open to evangelicals as are their customary exponents. This is what it means to turn the hypermodern critique back on the hypermodern critics.

The search for institutional funding is not *per se* greatly important to the identity of students with evangelical self-understanding. But what is important is that you achieve equity status with other caucuses and outspoken pressure groups within the seminary in order not to be intimidated or manipulated. Thus it is important that you insist on funding and space allocation and time recognition at the same level as gender and race caucuses have received, and insist on the same level of representation in the search committees that other caucus groups have achieved. Your numbers are probably much larger than are normally accounted. Even in a seminary with negligible evangelical and pietistic representation on the faculty, you are likely to find that a large proportion of the students may be legitimately classified as evangelical or traditionalist or pietist or orthodox.

You may have assumed that withdrawing from the community in a quiet prayer group is your primary duty or only feasible option. You may have other duties and options. It is a mistake for you not to claim what is rightfully yours in the form of fair democratic representation. You have an equal right to be heard with social activists, new age nativists, ultrafeminists, Gaia (breathing earth) theorists, animal rights advocates, champions of oral and anal sex with either or both genders, and radical speculative biblical critics. If you withhold active participation in the arena of student life, you are turning over the field to all comers.

I pray that you will become more biblically grounded and spiritually intentional and function more like a recognized group within the community of faith, not hiding your identity under a bushel of rationalizations. This is the only way to avoid becoming prematurely marginalized in the present caucus-oriented cauldron. If others are going to insist on your

conforming to what they regard as political correctness, you must also signal the ways in which you understand your political accountability and your perceptions of minimal levels of decency and propriety in civil discourse.

While the external situation will not easily change, you must have the courage to speak to its proximate inability to reform itself. There is little likelihood that any substantive faculty reform will come from a faculty intent upon reproducing itself ideologically. Do not expect the early selection of any new evangelical or orthodox faculty members who might

be prepared to face off on the liberated agenda. You will do better to team up with centrist and evangelical alumni who have gone through this already, paid their money to get a fragmented education in classical Christian teaching, and then faced service in the church with distinct handicaps that have been foisted on them by prevailing ideologies.

Resisting Marginalization

You have a right to speak out in class about your real convictions. Apostolicity itself is a critical principle that brings its own "hermeneutic of suspicion" to modern ideological critics.

The text has rights over against its interpreters, some of whom stand poised to exploit, assault, and mug the text. When contemporary readers make themselves the absolute masters of the text, then the author has lost all rights of authorship. Authorial intent becomes subservient to contemporary ideological interests. Historians are not the absolute judges and arbiters of the documents of testimony. If it is God who is speaking, the text must be viewed as the judge and constrainer of the interpreter.

There is a danger that pretentious criticism may set itself between the text and contemporary hearers, as if to say, "Sorry, you can meet the apostles only if we doorkeeping guild scholars deign to introduce you to them with our methods and categories." This premise has led to the temporarily expanding employment of a knowledge elite, but hardly to improved historical or textual inquiry, which does not lord it over texts but is called to listen to them.

You need not be intimidated by the ideological self-assuredness of liberated faculty. Inwardly they feel their own vulnerability deeply. Dare to speak the truth to them quietly in love.

The first illusion you may have to give up is the fantasy of making the highest grades, even if you are capable of doing so. You may not be able

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to do that with a clear conscience. You may fail some classes, although that is highly unlikely with present grade inflation. If you do, and if unfairness is a significant factor, I hope you may be able to count on a support group that will help you get your case heard through proper grievance procedures.

Countering Harassment

If you are ideologically harassed repeatedly, you need to keep careful written records that can be confirmed and authenticated by other witnesses. If a particular abuse persistently happens in a class, you should immediately—that very day—write up an accurate account of it and send it to the Dean with a copy to the President. You should be able to document with others in the class environment that an ideological bias or act of unfairness has occurred.

A liberal faculty has come to expect pietistic acquiescence. It has been spoiled by pietistic compliance to assume that conservative students will always be politically inept. That is a pattern that your generation of students is already changing.

You need not carry cases of abuse to alumni unless all other institutional remedies are blocked. If that should occur seek out spirited alumni in your judicatory who are concerned about the intellectual integrity and fairness of theological education. If necessary seek practical and constitutional means of effecting funding decisions and ecclesial policies. No remedies, however, can be expected if you do not document carefully and accurately, in a way that can be corroborated, the instances of abuse or unfairness that occur in classes or in grading procedures or space allocation or funding.

Maintaining Your Constitutional Rights

You have a right to use legitimate democratic channels of appeal and grievance. Even if you are part of a small minority, you always have the power to petition. Any group can petition any faculty member or the Dean or the President or the Faculty Committee in charge of tenure and promotion decisions or student affairs on any issue that needs to be called to their attention. Use the power of petition, not recklessly, but in good order seeking civil discourse. It will not always be effective or elicit rapid policy changes, but it will elicit a conversation and proximate recognition in a diverse community. Petitions can be posted openly on public notice boards.

You retain first amendment rights and other constitutional remedies, regardless of what happens in the classroom or on the grade sheet. That means you do not have to apologize for exercising your right to speak, your rights of free assembly and association, your right to petition, and your right to equal, nondiscriminatory treatment.

You have a right not to disclose private or personal information in an intensive group process that you consider confidential. You have a right to publish

and distribute information and opinion. You have a right to see your official records, including psychological evaluations and advisory recommendations. These cannot by law be withheld from you. Having these rights is part of what makes this society relatively civil. If you fail to exercise those rights, do not blame the environment or social constraints.

Applying the Pluralistic Appeal Against Pseudoinclusivism

In this pseudoinclusivist setting, classic Christians do well to learn that it is better to argue not against but for the case of pluralism, not in the sense of doctrinal pluralism, but cultural pluralism, because the church is catholic, and we belong to it. No one is to be left out because of race or class status or social location. Inclusiveness criticisms must now extend to embrace abuses against traditionalists. The real moral problem with the rhetoric of inclusivism is its lack of true inclusiveness, its willful exclusion of nonliberals.

You are not forced by some cosmic destiny to collude with your pariah status. You can challenge it, reasonably contest it, and sometimes even reshape certain aspects of institutional policy and life. If you are allocated an evangelical dunce cap, the thing to do with it is to put it on the allocator's head and refuse to stand in the corner. If you are publicly assigned a demeaning name or label or untrue epithet (like "fundamentalist" or "racist" or "sexist" or "homophobe"), the thing to do with that appellation is to write a memorandum signed by two other witnesses that correctly describes the language used and submit it respectfully to the proper Grievance Committee or the Dean. Appeals may be made, if necessary, to the university administration and the Trustees. The names of all these people and their offices are available in your school bulletin.

You must learn how to communicate to liberal colleagues and faculty how hollow their inclusion arguments sound to traditional believers who themselves are being marginalized and infantilized. This is your opportunity to put to work the oppression analysis that the countertraditionalists have taught you, and call its abusers to accountability.

Distinguishing the True Victim from a Victimization Strategy

True victims do not view victimization as a ploy or strategy. The Spirit-formed community reaches out compassionately for each true victim—whether of sexual abuse or racial hatred or war or economic dislocation. True victims need help precisely because they are victims, and they may even need help in seeing that they are victims. They must not be debased or caricatured.

True victims are distinguished from persons who use victim status as a leverage for upward social mobility, who squeeze all the sympathy they can get out of their historical memory of victimization, who play on generous sympathies to gain status and special privilege, who toy with scrupled consciences to get

perks. This is not true victimization but manipulation by all alleged victim. Usually it is easy to spot the difference.

Reversing Roles to Check Victimization Strategies

In rare comic moments, thoughtful postcritical traditionalists need to be prepared themselves to play an impromptu role. You must be able on a moment's notice, in irreverent jest, to put on a victim costume and play the victimization game. But this reversal is only for jest, never for self-defense.

At times I find it fitting amid oceans of political correctness to cast myself momentarily in the role of the sensitivity impaired. When students come into my office and see piles of unsorted papers on my desk, I may indicate faintly that I am filing impaired. Those of us who are tradition oriented can wryly dub ourselves innovation-impaired or change challenged. When I cancel appointments, I am tempted to plead being leisure deprived or time impaired. These all have the ring of victimization status. You get the idea.

But be forewarned: Any such rationalization should be taken whimsically, not seriously. If you cast yourself indulgently or needlessly in a victim role, you have merely trapped yourself. That excess will run counter to your larger objective of calling all parties to civil discourse without prematurely claiming victim status. You do better to see yourself as personally accountable for your own actual collusion with unfair practices. Recovering evangelicals in the liberated environment need not become a new mutation of victimology. In the hothouse PC atmosphere, the believer is tempted to plead too quickly for worldly equality in claiming victimization status. This is a false flag to fly under unless in jest or as a posture in camp drollery.

There is a deeper reason for judging this alternative as false. If God has become lowly flesh in Jesus, a startling paradox prevails. In the environment of dialogue with other faiths in other gods, those whose life is hid in Christ cannot seek or embrace or delight in equal status with chic neopagans or canny shamans or parapsychology promoters or new age channelers. Rather, they are free to become the lowly servants amid these companions in order to attest to God's own freely given Servant Lordship. The aim is not equality but voluntary, incarnationally modeled servanthood. The disciple of the Servant Lord always freely chooses the unpretentious path, identifying with the sinner and alienated, refusing second-class citizenship in an idolatrous pantheon.

Finding Colleagues in the Paleo-orthodox Subculture

In every seminary I know of there is a functioning group, often hidden away inconspicuously, of evangelical or traditionalist students. Sometimes this group takes the form of a prayer group or a Bible study group or coffee klatch. These are the folks you can if you

wish seek out. By what names and under what flags do these groups fly? At one seminary, the orthodox students call themselves the Athanasian Society. Nice move. It avoids the defensive nuances of the terms evangelical and pietistic in a countertraditional context. A traditional prayer group for women might be called the Company of Macrina or if you are interested in social service grounded in the way of holiness, you might call your group the Phoebe Palmer Circle.

Why Evangelical Students May Constitute the Only Viable Hope for Transforming Tradition-Impaired Seminaries

You may be asking yourself: Is this what I really want to participate in—turning the seminary even more into a nest of interest groups? It is too late to ask whether this is the way the game is played. The countertraditional seminary ethos is already dominated by the conflicted cacophony of voices that are generally prevailing in our society. You can either learn to play on this field or not, but you cannot easily redesign the field. You may be asking: What did I get myself in for? I thought I was coming to seminary to be formed spiritually and biblically and liturgically. Now I am being asked to help reform the seminary. Must I pay good money to be persecuted, to become an alien in what should be my homeland?

I am sorry you needed to ask that. You should not be put in the position of having to teach the teachers or reform the reformers or mentor the mentors or shepherd the shepherds. If the seminary were rightly functioning, such a request would be entirely out of place. But take it from me, or from any traditionalist ecclesial survivor, the scene I am describing is not a burlesque of prevailing institutional values.

Should you transfer to another seminary? If you are a traditional Christian, I hope you will not, although there are good reasons to leave this option open. Personally, I hope you will stay in the inclusiveness fray and make it more inclusive. Remember that if all the heterosexuals leave a given seminary, it becomes functionally homosexual. If all the readers of Bible as holy writ abandon the seminary, it becomes functionally a place where the Bible is not read as holy writ but as a playground for hypercritical speculations. If you want to go to a seminary where you will not be challenged by the pluralism of the actual cultural situation, you can easily find one. But I think the battle for postmodern orthodoxy is worth fighting in the hothouse arena of pseudoinclusivism.

Thomas C. Oden is the Henry Anson Buttz Professor of Theology, The Theological School, Drew University, Madison, New Jersey.

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**A General Comparison/Contrast of Conservative & Moderates
in the Southern Baptist Convention**

	Conservatives	Moderates
<i>Theological</i>	<p>*Affirm the <u>inerrancy</u> of the Bible. Find no errors in the autographs, philosophically, theologically, scientifically or historically.</p> <p>*Bible <u>is</u> the Word of God.</p> <p>*Emphasize the necessity of theological <u>integrity</u>.</p> <p>*All are <u>creationists</u> (though not all are "young earthers").</p> <p>*All affirm <u>soteriological exclusivism</u> (people are saved only through Christ).</p> <p>*Affirms Scripture as the foundational source of religious spiritual authority.</p> <p>*Affirm congregationalism with strong <u>pastoral</u> authority/ leadership.</p> <p>*Oppose women as pastors: (complementarians in the home/church).</p> <p>*View autonomy as a precious check against both hierarchicalism and connectionalism.</p>	<p>*Affirm the <u>authority</u> of the Bible in matters of salvation. Find some errors in areas such as science and history.</p> <p>*Bible <u>contains/becomes</u> the Word of God.</p> <p>*Emphasizes the necessity of theological <u>diversity</u>.</p> <p>*Many are <u>theistic evolutionists</u>.</p> <p>*Many affirm <u>soteriological inclusivism</u> (some in other religions may be saved).</p> <p>*Affirms Scripture, along with reason, experience, and tradition as sources of religious/spiritual authority.</p> <p>*Affirm congregationalism with strong <u>congregational</u> authority and democratic process.</p> <p>*Affirm women as pastors: (egalitarians in the home/church).</p> <p>*View autonomy as the right of every church to do or believe what it wishes and not have its fellowship questioned associationally or denominationally.</p>

	Conservatives	Moderates
<i>Theological Cont'd</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Affirm the eternal continuation of both heaven and hell. *See the priesthood of all believers as guaranteeing direct access to God for all believers and as a doctrine of responsibility. *Discover no contradictions or internal inconsistencies in the Bible when it is properly interpreted. *Affirm <u>historical-grammatical</u> interpretation. *Find no mythological elements in Scripture. *Emphasize the transcendent truth of Scripture. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Some embrace the idea of the annihilation of the wicked. *See the priesthood of all believers as a doctrine which gives to each the right to believe anything he/she wishes. *Discover numerous contradictions and internal inconsistencies in the Bible. *Affirm <u>historical-critical</u> interpretation. *Open to mythological elements in Scripture. *See much of the Bible as culturally conditional.
<i>Moral</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Pro-life. *Most favor a voluntary prayer amendment. *All see homosexuality/lesbianism as sin and a choice of lifestyle. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Pro-choice. *Most oppose a voluntary prayer amendment. *Some see homosexuality/lesbianism as an acceptable lifestyle and a pre-disposed psychological orientation.

When faith is in the mouth rather than in the heart, when the solid knowledge of Sacred Scripture fails us, nevertheless by terrorization we drive men to believe what they do not believe, to love what they do not love, to know what they do not know. That which is forced cannot be sincere, and that which is not voluntary cannot please God. —Desiderius Erasmus (1469-1536)

	Conservatives	Moderates
<i>Political</i>	<p>*Most are Reagan/Bush Republicans (political right)</p> <p>*Emphasize peacemaking together with a strong military.</p> <p>*Favor smaller government, less taxes, state and local rights, and greater individual freedom</p> <p>*Advocate separation of church and state to the extent that government neither establishes religion nor interferes with its practice.</p>	<p>*Most are Carter/Clinton Democrats (political left)</p> <p>*Emphasize peacemaking without intervention of military.</p> <p>*Most favor big federal government with multiplied social and welfare programs.</p> <p>*Advocate separation of church and state to the extent that the church makes little attempt to impact community morality through government.</p>
<i>Denominational</i>	<p>*See the others as "moderates," or "liberals," or "neo-orthodox."</p> <p>*View creeds and confessions as important defining documents, though always subject to Scripture.</p> <p>*Believe that the institutions and agencies of a denomination should operate with confessional integrity.</p> <p>*Intensely evangelistic and missionary.</p> <p>*Are more comfortable in cooperative ventures with evangelical groups like IVF, Campus Crusade, Promise Keepers, and Wycliffe Bible Translators.</p>	<p>*See the other as "fundamentalists."</p> <p>*View creeds and confessions as problematic at best, confining and wrong at worst.</p> <p>*Believe that the institutions and agencies of a denomination should operate without confessional restraint.</p> <p>*Inclined heavily toward "social ministries."</p> <p>*Are more comfortable in cooperative ventures with groups like the CBF, BJCPA, and mainline denominations.</p>

The information used to compile this chart was gleaned primarily, though not exclusively, from the following works:

Nancy Ammerman, Baptist Battles, Rutgers, 1990.

Thomas Bland, Jr., ed., Servant Songs, Smyth and Helwys, 1994.

Robert Ferguson, ed., Amidst Babel, Speak the Truth, Smyth and Helwys, 1993

Walter Shurden, ed., The Struggle for the Soul of the SBC, Mercer, 1993.

FROM THE PUBLISHER

Educators vs. indoctrinators

More image than reality is involved in spelling out the difference between the two

HAVING SPENT THE LAST 50 YEARS AS A STUDENT, a teacher, an administrator, and a board member in a variety of schools at all levels, I can tell you that I have yet to meet a professional educator who will stand up and say unambiguously: "We're here not to educate but to indoctrinate your child."

But why is it that the one term gets such good press and the other one such a bad rap? Why is it that in most people's minds education is a high and lofty thing while indoctrination is the work of Puritans and Nazis? Why is it, in contemporary parlance, that liberals are portrayed as the educators while conservatives get consigned to the role of indoctrinators?

Why, as a result, does almost everyone want his or her children educated, while almost no one wants them indoctrinated?

In fact, the dictionary definitions of the two words highlight no radical distinctions. "Teaching," "training," and "instruction" are part of both education and indoctrination, according to my trusty desk dictionary.

Yet the two are different in modern usage, and only a fool would deny it. Part of the difference has to do with 20th-century distaste for doctrine itself. For most people today, the word has a harsh, narrow-minded, and intolerant sound. When evangelical ministers, youth leaders, professors, and other leaders can go around saying—as they regularly do—that they don't want to get hung up on doctrine, it shouldn't be surprising that the population at large has a negative view of the word. To call someone "doctrinaire" is rarely a compliment.

Modern people, in fact, have been taught that it's arrogant to assert very much at all to be true. The becoming posture is not to affirm, but to question. Especially within education, we are told (and especially within the context of higher education), the assignment is to examine, explore, and evaluate, rather than to assert, proclaim, or indoctrinate.

THERE'S JUST ENOUGH TRUTH IN THOSE ASSERTIONS (but weren't we doing away with assertions? Is somebody trying to indoctrinate us about the nature of education?) to be believable.

You have to be a pretty clumsy and amateurish communicator not to have discovered that a frontal approach is rarely the best means of being persuasive. Far better to walk tentatively about the subject, probing cautiously here, poking hesitantly there, and joining everyone else in a certain air of detachment before saying what you maybe believe. Even the parent of a teenager knows that such a roundabout approach is typically the best way to make a point.

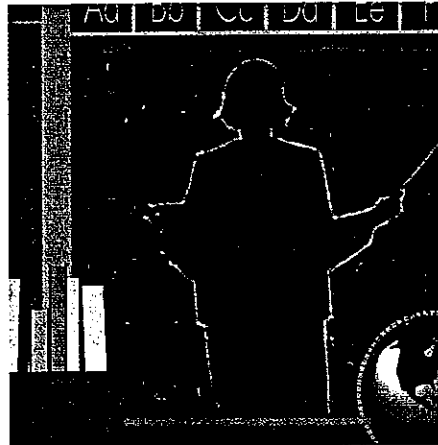
But let's all stop pretending that the disjunct is between the truly

objective folks on the one hand (the educators) and the sneaky, opinionated people on the other hand (the indoctrinators). In fact what we're really talking about are effective indoctrinators on the one hand and blunderbuss indoctrinators on the other. Some are deft at their work (they're the really good educators), and some are awkward and transparent in their efforts to win the hearts and minds of their students.

Where is the effective educator who has no mission? Where is the master teacher who hasn't got a list of goals and aspirations for every student? What does it mean to instill those values and those standards in the thinking process of another human being?

No matter how it's done, isn't it indoctrination?

Modern state education, pretending to be valueless, is of course one of the greatest—and most monolithic—purveyors of a value system in all of human history. As such, while pretending to be open-minded, it is also one of the greatest indoctrinators in all of history. That's what education does.



BUT CHRISTIANS HAVE ALSO often tended to get especially gun-shy on these issues. We've become scared to admit that we are indoctrinators. Instead, we should admit it right up front. And then we should explain quite openly how we go about the task of indoctrinating our young people and anyone else who will listen.

We do it by saying crisply, clearly, and winsomely what we believe. And then we say: Now let's take all that apart. Let's see whether what we've affirmed can withstand the light of day and the arguments of our opponents. Let's explore whether we've left out some criticisms and

counter-opinions, which, if we had included them, would have prompted us to make our assertions in a different way.

Do you call such a process "education" or "indoctrination"? I suggest it's the best of both.

A few days ago, I found myself following a station wagon down the street. It was, of course, a Volvo. The back end was plastered with a predictable array of bumper stickers, including a pro-abortion slogan, a "Support Greenpeace" encouragement, and a call for "Free Needles for All." The sticker that really got my attention, though, in the middle of the mess, was one that said: "A Mind Is a Terrible Thing To Clutter Up."

I pity the teacher (or the magazine publisher) who expects his or her assertions and proclamations to be believed just because they've been asserted or proclaimed. But I pity even more the critics of indoctrination who don't seem to have a clue what they themselves are doing. ☸

by JOEL BELZ

T H E B A P T I S T STANDARD

TEXAS BAPTISTS' WEEKLY NEWSJOURNAL

THIS WEEK
JULY 17, 1996
Vol. 108 • No. 29

Arsonists torch Garland church shared by races

Members of two Garland congregations—Audubon Park Church and New Revelation Missionary Church—that share a building spent part of last week praying for arsonists who set fire to their house of worship.

Page 2

New churches needed to reach nation for Christ, Lewis insists

Starting something new always must be a priority with God's people, Home Mission Board President Larry Lewis stressed during the last-ever HMB-sponsored home missions conference. To reach America for Christ, Southern Baptists must start churches, he said.

Page 3

New labels blur old religious lines

By Mark Wingfield
Kentucky Western Recorder
LOUISVILLE, Ky. (ABP)—Are you a fundamentalist, evangelical or liberal?

In the future, that question could be more significant than whether you're a Baptist, Presbyterian, Catholic or Episcopalian, according to a number of sociologists and church historians.

"Denominationalism is still here but is losing its relevance. It just doesn't mean as much anymore," explained Leon McBeth, church history professor at Southwestern Seminary.

"In the future, people will still be Baptist, Presbyterian, Lutheran, Methodist. But that is increasingly irrelevant," McBeth continued. "What is increasingly significant is whether in their own understanding they are charismatic, evangelical, liberal, independent or fundamentalist."

"It makes more difference whether you're a member of one of these newly emerging groups than what denomination you happen to belong to."

In practical terms, this means that conservative Baptists often find more in common with conservative Catholics and conservative Presbyterians than with more liberal Baptists.

"In the old days, someone who said, 'I'm a Methodist'

scholars call them.

"Until 1960, more than 90 percent of American Protestants who moved to a new community used denominational names as their primary guide to selecting a new church," according to Herb Miller, a Texas church-

growth consultant and editor of a monthly newsletter called Net Results.

"Since 1960, fewer than 50 percent of Protestants use the denominational label on the lawn as the primary means of picking a congregation."

Rather than being guided by denominational labels, most people now select a church by evaluating its worship style, quality of caring, types of ministry and theological frame of reference, Miller wrote in a recent article titled "Does It Matter What Your Church Believes?"

Modern Americans "consciously or unconsciously" pick a church that falls into one of five theological categories that cross denominational lines, Miller said.

His five categories are charismatic, fundamentalist, evangelical, moderate and liberal.

Other scholars and church consultants categorize these transdenominational groups differently, adding labels such as progressive, orthodox, conservative, independent and variations on the term evangelical.

This trend creates a variety of strange bedfellows, both on the religious and political scene.

"What happens at the local level is that people put together ideas and strategies from all sorts of different traditions, almost without regard for which ideological camp those ideas are supposed to be associated with," said Nancy Ammerman, a Baptist sociologist who studies religion at Hartford Seminary in Connecticut.

"So you'll get a local congregation that is absolutely gung-ho for Habitat for Humanity, which is supposedly a liberal initiative, and also gung-ho for the Christian Coalition and also supporting alternatives to abortion without taking a hardline pro-life stance," she explained.

"People are simply putting together all kinds of strategies at the local level that don't fall (See New groups ..., Page 6)





Evangelical

By Mark Wingfield
Kentucky Western Recorder
LOUISVILLE, Ky. (ABP) — Few American Protestants want to be called fundamentalists or liberals anymore, but it seems almost everyone wants to be classified as an evangelical.

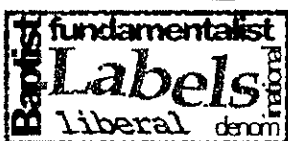
This hasn't always been true. In fact, in the past Southern Baptists have shunned the evangelical label for a variety of reasons but now are among those rushing to claim it.

"Obviously, the word 'liberal' and the word 'fundamentalist' have been demonized," explained Mark Coppenger, president of Midwestern Seminary in Kansas City, Mo., and a former professor at Wheaton College, an evangelical school in Illinois. "People avoid those labels."

"Evangelical," however, "is one of those labels people like to hear," he said. "When it's an attractive label, you have a lot of folks who like to assume it."

So just what or who is an evangelical?

"An evangelical is a fundamentalist who's not mad at anybody," said Leon McBeth, church his-



tory professor at Southwestern Seminary.

"As a historian, I can demonstrate that the new evangelicals originated from the old fundamentalists in an effort to rehabilitate, to overcome the awful

public image of fundamentalism," he said. "The evangelicals are fundamentalists once removed and sometimes twice removed."

On the right end of the spectrum today, finding the difference between where the evangelical category begins and the fundamentalist category ends is a matter of subtle degrees, McBeth said.

"It's like looking at pastel colors. Sometimes it's hard to know when you've passed from pink to rose."

Classical fundamentalists

have embraced the evangelical label in recent years because of the highly negative associations in the press between the word "fundamentalist" and bomb-throwing international terrorists, noted Timothy Weber, church history professor at Southern Seminary.

In the early days of this century's evangelical movement, evangelicals "went to great lengths to assure fundamentalists they believed the same things, but they believed them in a nicer way," said Weber, who has ties to Fuller Theological Seminary and Denver Seminary, two self-described evangelical schools. "The difference is not so much theological as it is attitudinal."

Evangelicals are "less combative, more open to scholarship and have a much more positive view toward culture in general" than fundamentalists, Weber said. "Evangelicals were not content to remain marginalized. They wanted to enter mainstream American life."

This desire to move into the larger world created a major rift between evangelicals and fundamentalists beginning around the 1940s, Weber said.

"This is what got Billy Graham in trouble," he explained. "He was preaching what they were preaching but throwing his arms wide open and allowing even liberals to support him."

That didn't sit well with true fundamentalists, who insist on maintaining separation from those who claim to be Christian but don't act or believe exactly in the same way as fundamentalists, Weber said.

Thus, the National Association of Evangelicals emerged as an umbrella group about mid-century with the motto, "Cooperation without compromise."

"In American religion, the one most important event of the 20th century has been the rise of Billy Graham," McBeth said. "Billy Graham is the primary catalyst who extricated evangelicalism out of the clutches of old-style fundamentalism."

Another distinction between evangelicals and fundamentalists is the subtle difference between calling the Bible "infallible" or "inerrant," said Nancy Ammerman, a Baptist sociologist teaching at Hartford Seminary in Connecticut.

"Fundamentalists differ from evangelicals on being more insistent on inerrancy (a belief that the Bible contains no errors and should be read literally) as the primary way of understanding scripture," she said. "Evangelicals, while they take scripture very seriously, are not as united on a certain way of understanding scripture."

Affirming the Bible as infallible—meaning trustworthy in all it teaches—is the basic minimum belief about scripture to define an evangelical, Weber added.

"If you're not willing to call the Bible infallible or in some sense absolutely unique and authoritative, you're probably crossing the line" into liberalism, Weber said.

Whose dictionary do you use?

Although different people create different labels for the new affinity groupings in American religion, here's a rundown on some of the most commonly identified groups:

♦ **FUNDAMENTALISTS** most often are viewed as ultra-conservatives who embrace a very clear-cut set of beliefs: verbal inspiration of scripture as the word of God; virgin birth of Christ; substitutionary atonement for sin through Christ's death on the cross; bodily resurrection of Christ; second-coming of Christ. Fundamentalists tend to be separatists. They also usually embrace a premillennial, dispensational view of the end times.

♦ **CHARISMATICS** emphasize personal communication from the Holy Spirit and place a high value on miracles, healing and spiritual gifts, such as speaking in tongues.

♦ **EVANGELICALS** often share the same theological beliefs as fundamentalists, but generally are perceived as less strident and more open to dialogue with people of other beliefs. They also are more likely to talk about the Bible being infallible rather than inerrant.

♦ **PROGRESSIVE EVANGELICALS** use the same doctrinal base as evangelicals but mix in elements of a more liberal social agenda.

♦ **MODERATES** emphasize actions more than belief and freedom more than absolute truth. Although not placing a primary emphasis on doctrine,

moderates do embrace most traditional doctrinal boundaries that separate them from liberals.

♦ **LIBERALS** emphasize God's benevolence over God's judgment, usually to the point of asserting that all people will be saved in the end or that all religions ultimately lead to the same place.

Fundamentalist

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (ABP)—Fundamentalism is a mindset found among liberals and conservatives alike, according to many who study religious trends in America. Although "fundamentalist" is a term most often applied to ultra-conservatives, it just as easily could be applied to anyone who is "ultra" anything, these scholars and social scientists agree.

"I believe that in fundamentalism the spirit and attitude is almost as important as the doctrinal viewpoints," said Leon McBeth, church history professor at Southwestern Seminary. "There is a liberal who is militant, who is closed-minded, who is not willing to look at alternatives. And while the theological views are completely different, the spirit is twin to the spirit of the fundamentalist," he said.

Some scholars even suggest that fundamentalist attitudes can be found in people of all types of doctrinal viewpoints.

"There are lots of other ideologies that are just as hard-nosed and intolerant and willing to draw lines and willing to see the world through only one lens that aren't necessarily on the far right," said Nancy Ammerman, a Baptist sociologist who specializes in religious studies at Hartford Seminary in Connecticut.

In the case of those of a more liberal persuasion, the irony is that those who preach loudest for tolerance themselves may become intolerant of other viewpoints. Stan Hasty, executive director of the Alliance of Baptists, admits he purposely reminds his group of this fact.

"One of things I choose to do as staff leader of the Alliance from time to time is to remind my own group that we must allow the kind of theological differences, social and political differences, that we claim for ourselves."

New groups blur boundaries

(Continued from Page 1) along the liberal-conservative lines anymore," Ammerman said.

Political issues have helped believers of all denominations—even Protestants and Catholics—come together in these new affinity groupings, said Stan Hasty, executive director of the Alliance of Baptists and former news chief for the Baptist Joint Committee.

"I think particularly the pro-life cluster of issues has enabled people who previously never would have thought about getting together to put aside those differences," he said.

Moderate

One example is the 1994 signing of a document called "Evangelicals and Catholics Together," in which a wide range of conservative Protestant figures joined conservative Catholics in a statement opposing abortion and speaking to other social issues.

While conservative groups such as the Christian Coalition and Moral Majority may be better known, similar transdenominational groupings have developed among liberals and progressive evangelicals.

For example, author Tony Campolo and several other high-profile evangelicals have formed a new group that held its first public meeting in Washington. They bill themselves as an alternative to the Religious Right, extending the "pro-life" ethic beyond abortion to include opposition to capital punishment and concern for the poor.

The trend toward theological cross-currents also is beginning to impact theological education, particularly as factions within certain denominational traditions lose confidence in their denominational seminaries.

One way this is unfolding is through the creation of special studies programs at some schools. For example, Duke University's divinity school now has a Baptist studies program and similar programs for students of other faith traditions.

Another variation on this trend is beginning to form in Kentucky, as Baptist moderates, disenfranchised from the conservative bent of Southern Seminary, are seeking to form a coalition with Lexington Seminary, a Disciples of Christ school.

Ultimately, the cross-currents

of religious affinity groups will not destroy traditional denominations, McBeth asserted. But this trend has created a fertile field for a new type of church to thrive—the independent megachurch, he said.

These are "strong churches that basically have outgrown their need for denominational ties," he said. "They can make it on their own," training their own ministers, producing their own literature, developing their own programs.

McBeth compared these independent churches to Notre Dame University's football team.

Most college football programs are associated with other schools through a particular conference, but Notre Dame is not. "They play football and do it very well, but they go wherever they will and play whomever they wish," he said.

So it is with megachurches that either have cut formal ties with their denomination or are only marginally associated with a denomination, McBeth said. "They've not so much rejected the denomination as outgrown it. The only thing they need from a denomination is the pastor's pension board, and they don't always need that."



A PUBLICATION OF

VANGUARD

OVERCOMING THE DARKNESS

How Do You Spell Truth?

The ABC's of Western Thinking

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Don Closson

Do you remember the commercial that asked, "How do you spell relief?" To the horror of elementary teachers everywhere, you were supposed to answer "R-O-L-A-I-D-S." In a similar fashion, today, if you ask someone, "How do you spell truth?" you might be surprised by the response.

Truth with a capital "T"

As a young Christian in college, I was greatly influenced by the writings of Francis Schaeffer. I will never forget the impact of his critique of modern culture and his use of the phrase *true truth*. *True truth* might be thought of as truth with a capital "T" because it is based on the existence of a personal God, the creator of all that exists, and a revealer of Himself via the Bible and the Incarnation of His Son, Jesus.

Truth with a small "t"

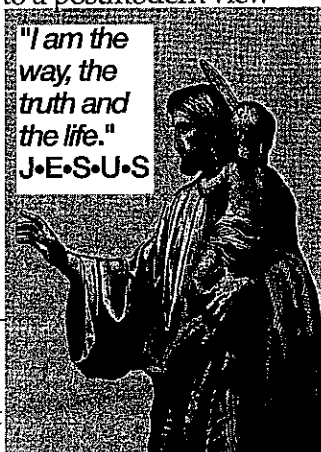
Today, if you ask average men and women how to "spell" truth, their responses will probably indicate a view that is strictly earth-bound; truth beginning with a small "t." God is not in the picture; in fact, belief in God would be seen as a handicap in discerning truth accurately.

Truth as Social Construct

However, there is another spelling for truth that is finding more and more adherents. Today, especially on college campuses, the question might be answered with C-O-N-S-T-R-U-C-T, as in social construct. In this approach truth is generated by the social group.

These three conceptions of truth describe three comprehensive systems of thought that are active in Western culture and in the U.S. The first (Truth) portrays Christian theism (what some refer to as a pre-modern view). Although this view is still quite popular, many in our churches function as if they were members of the second group which is often classified as a modernist perspective (truth). The third group (truth as social construct) is a fairly recent arrival, but has become highly influential both in academia and in common culture. It has been called post-modernism. People within these three different perspectives see the world quite differently. Until recently, Christians focused their apologetics, or defense of the faith, mainly at modernists and as a result often attempted to justify belief within a modernist framework of truth. Now we are being called upon to respond to a postmodern view that will require a far different approach.

Although post-modernism has many aspects that Christians must reject, it has also revealed just how much Christian thinking has been influenced by the modernist challenge.



How Do You Spell Truth? cont'd on pg 2

"What is the relationship of reason to belief in God?"

Certainly this is one of the most urgent questions

Christians (as well as unbelievers)

can ask. Is it rational in this secular age to

believe in an omnipotent, wholly good

Creator of the world?"

—Kelly J. Clark,

Return to

Reason

How Do You Spell Truth? cont'd from pg 1

In this discussion we will look at modernism and postmodernism in light of Christian evangelism and apologetics. We are now fighting battles on two fronts, and we need to develop different tools or "weapons" for each. Much of this war of ideas revolves around the notion of what is true, or perhaps how we as individuals can know what is true. This may sound like an ivory tower discussion, but it is a vital topic that we need to understand as we attempt to share the truth of the Gospel with those we encounter.

The Modernist View

In their book *Truth Is Stranger Than It Used to Be*, Richard Middleton and Brian Walsh use an interesting metaphor to describe the different views of truth and the ways that we perceive it in our culture. Imagine three umpires meeting after a day at the park. As they reflect on the day's activities one ump declares, "There's balls and there's strikes and I call 'em the way they are." Another responds, "There's balls and there's strikes and I call 'em the way I see 'em." The third says, "There's balls and there's strikes, and they ain't nothin' until I call 'em." Each of the umpires may make the same call, but they will be making it for very different reasons. The position of the first ump is known as naive realism. He believes that his calls correspond to something quite real and substantive called balls and strikes. He is also very confident that he can discern what is a ball or a strike with a high degree of accuracy. This confidence is a trademark of modernism. As we will see later, the other two umpires reflect positions that reject such a confidence in knowing what is true.

Modernism grew out of the Enlightenment and matured in the last century to dominate much of European and American thought. Its greatest American advocate has been John Dewey. In his book *Reconstruction In Philosophy*, he highlights the difference between pre-modern and modern thinking. First, modernism rejects the reality of supernatural events or beings. It focuses only on this world and the secular. Second, it rejects the authority of the church . . . or religion in general, and replaces it with the power of the individ-

ual mind. Third, it replaces the static world of the Middle Ages with a belief in progress towards a future human utopia. Finally, it believes that the patient scientific study of nature will provide the means for this utopia.

The implications of modernism were and are profound. Under its umbrella, the universe was understood to be an impersonal mechanism needing neither a creator nor a sustainer God; in the same way, humans were seen as biological machines. All of human behavior could conceivably be explained biologically, given enough time for science to study the data. Consequently, modernism views humans as self-governing beings free to embrace whatever their rational minds discover. Modernists

"...modernism is very confident that it can discover truth... post-modernism is defined by its skepticism that truth of any type can be known."

might be called rationalistic optimists because they are quite confident in their ability to perceive reality without distortion.

Modernists see no need for a savior provided by God because mankind can be its own savior with the help of science; humans lack only education.

The Postmodern Condition

Where modernism is very confident that it can discover truth via science, postmodernism is defined by its skepticism that truth of any type can be known. Much of postmodernism is a negative response to the confidence of modernism. Yet, postmodernism is a strange combination of a vague romantic optimism that mankind can solve its social and economic problems, coupled with a dramatic pessimism about ever knowing truth at a universal level. This reflects the strong influence of atheistic existentialism on post-modern thinking.

One of the primary tenets of postmodernism is that truth is a social construct. This theory would argue, for example, that Western modernity which has come to dominate the globe and define what is rational and normative for human life is not

How Do You Spell Truth? cont'd on pg 3

How Do You Spell Truth? cont'd from pg 2

in place because it is any truer than other world views. Instead, it is a set of ideas that people have used to manipulate others with in order to gain power over them.

As a result of postmodernist thinking, anyone who claims to know something that is universally true, true for everyone, everywhere, anytime, is accused of marginalizing those who disagree. Once a person or group is marginalized, a justification has been established to oppress them. Postmodernists point to Western culture's aptitude towards conquering and destroying other cultures in the name of progress and modernization.

One can easily see that a Christian world view conflicts with much of what postmodernism teaches. Christianity claims to be true for everyone, everywhere. Thus, it is not surprising that a variety of postmodernists have criticized Christianity as "oppressive." How Christians respond to such critiques will be important in building an approach to postmodernists who need Christ but do not sense their need.

A Christian View of Truth

Earlier we used the metaphor of umpires who call strikes and balls within different frameworks for knowing. The ump who "calls 'em the way they are" is a naive realist; the second ump who "calls 'em like he sees 'em" represents the critical realist view, and the ump who says "they ain't nothin' until I call 'em" portrays a radical perspectivist view. The questions before us are, What view should a Christian take? and How does this choice affect the way in which we do apologetics and evangelism?

If we accept the view of the first ump who "calls 'em the way they are," we have adopted a modernist perspective. Unfortunately, experience tells us that the assumptions that come with this view don't seem to hold up. It assumes that common sense and logic will always lead people to the Truth of the gospel; we just need to give people enough evidence. While this approach does work with some, it works mainly because they already agree with us on a theistic, Western view of reality.

However, modernism has also led many to believe that the universe is a godless machine run by the logical laws of nature as discovered by science.

The third ump who says "they ain't nothin' until I call 'em" sees truth as entirely personal. Although we admit that people do create personal frameworks for interpreting life and reality, there is ultimately only one true reality, one true God. However, we might learn from the perspectivist in order to find common ground when witnessing. One commonality is the notion of an acute consciousness of suffering by marginalized people. Christianity shares this concern yet offers a radically different solution.

The second umpire states that there are balls and strikes, and "I call 'em as I see 'em." This view of truth, called critical realism, recognizes that there is one true reality, but that our ability to perceive it is limited. The Bible teaches that sin has distorted our view. Even as believers we must admit that we don't always understand why God does what He does.

The best evangelistic approach attempts to find common ground with an unbeliever while never relinquishing all that is true of the Christian world view. If rational, logical arguments are persuasive, use them. If storytelling works, as in the more narratively oriented societies of the Middle East, use it. We should not be limited to either a modernist or postmodernist view of truth, but work from a distinctively Christian perspective that holds that the God who created the universe wants us to gently instruct others in the hope that He will grant them repentance and lead them to a knowledge of the truth. ■

Notes

1. Richard Middleton and Brian Walsh, *Truth Is Stranger Than It Used to Be: Biblical Faith in a Postmodern Age* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1995), p. 31.
2. John Dewey, *Reconstruction in Philosophy* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1920), pp. 47-49.
3. Dennis McCallum, ed., *The Death of Truth* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Bethany House, 1996), pp. 23-26.

Please note: For a complete tape on this subject (and several others) see the enclosed card.

"By concerning
of human action
as a response to
truth and to the
demands of an
ethical ideal,
Christian
thought runs
counter to some
of the most
deeply held
tenets of this
post-
modern age."

—Roger Lundin,

*The Culture of
Interpretation*

FIDELITAS

Commentary on Theology and Culture

Ministry is Stranger Than it Used to Be: The Challenge of Postmodernism

R. Albert Mohler, Jr., President
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

A common concern now seems to emerge wherever ministers gather—ministry is stranger than it used to be. Not that ministry is more difficult, more tiring, or more demanding . . . just different—and increasingly strange.

That sense of strangeness may well be due to the rise of postmodern culture and philosophy; perhaps the most important intellectual and cultural movement of the late twentieth century. What difference does postmodernism make? Just look at the modern media, pop culture, and the blank stares you receive from some persons when you talk about truth, meaning, and morality.

Postmodernism developed among academics and artists, but has quickly spread throughout the culture. At the most basic level, postmodernism refers to the passing of modernity and the rise of a new cultural movement. Modernity—the dominant worldview since the Enlightenment—has been supplanted by postmodernism, which both extends and denies certain principles and symbols central to the modern age.

Clearly, much of the literature about postmodernism is nonsensical and hard to take seriously. When major postmodern figures speak or write, the gibberish which often results sounds more like a vocabulary test than a sustained argument. But postmodernism cannot be dismissed as unimportant or irrelevant. This is not a matter of concern only among academics and the *avant garde*—this new movement represents a critical challenge to the Christian church, and to the minister.

Actually, postmodernism may not be a movement or methodology at all. We might best describe postmodernism as a *mood* which sets itself apart from the certainties of the modern age. This mood is the heart of the postmodern challenge.

What are the contours of this postmodern mood? Is this new movement helpful in our proclamation of the Gospel? Or, will the postmodern age bring a great retreat from Christian truth? A look at the basic features of postmodernism may be helpful.

The Deconstruction of Truth

Though the nature of truth has been debated throughout the centuries, postmodernism has turned this debate on its head. While most arguments throughout history have focused on rival claims to truth, postmodernism rejects the very notion of truth as fixed, universal, objective, or absolute.

The Christian tradition understands truth as established by God and revealed through the self-revelation of God in Scripture. Truth is eternal, fixed, and universal. Our responsibility is to order our minds in accordance with God's revealed truth and to bear witness to this truth. We serve a Savior who identified himself as "the Way, the Truth, and the Life" and called for belief.

Modern science, itself a product of the Enlightenment, rejected revelation as a source of truth and put the scientific method in its place. Modernity attempted to establish truth on the basis of scientific precision through the process of inductive thought and investigation. The other disciplines attempted to follow the lead of the scientists in establishing objective truth through rational thought. Modernists were confident that their approach would yield objective and universal truths by means of human reason.

The postmodernists reject both the Christian and modernist approaches to the question of truth. According to postmodern theory, truth is not universal, is not objective or absolute, and cannot be determined by a commonly accepted method. Instead, postmodernists argue that truth is socially constructed, plural, and inaccessible to universal reason.

As postmodern philosopher Richard Rorty asserts, truth is made rather than found. According to the deconstructionists, one influential sect among the postmodernists, all truth is socially constructed. That is, social groups construct their own "truth" in order to serve their own interests. As Michel Foucault—one of the most significant postmodern theorists—argued, all claims to truth are constructed to serve those in power. Thus, the role of the intellectual is to *deconstruct* truth claims in order to liberate the society.

What has been understood and affirmed as truth, argue the postmodernists, is nothing more than a convenient structure of thought intended to oppress the powerless.

Truth is not universal, for every culture establishes its own truth. Truth is not objectively real, for all truth is merely constructed—as Rorty stated, truth is *made*, not *found*.

Little imagination is needed to see that this radical relativism is a direct challenge to the Christian gospel. Our claim is not to preach one truth among many; about one Savior among many; through one gospel, among many. We do not believe that the Christian gospel is a socially constructed truth, but the Truth which sets sinners free from sin—and is objectively, universally, historically true. As the late Francis Schaeffer instructed, the Christian church must contend for *true truth*.

The Death of the Metanarrative

Since postmodernists believe all truth to be socially constructed, all presentations of absolute, universal, established truth must be resisted. All grand and expansive accounts of truth, meaning, and existence are cast aside as “metanarratives” which claim far more than they can deliver.

Jean-Francois Lyotard, perhaps the most famous European postmodernist, defined postmodernism in this way: “Simplifying to the extreme, I define *postmodern* as incredulity toward metanarratives.”¹ Thus, all the great philosophical systems are dead, all cultural accounts are limited, all that remains are little stories accepted as true by different groups and cultures. Claims to universal truth—the metanarratives—are oppressive, “totalizing” and thus must be resisted.

The problem with this, of course, is that Christianity is meaningless apart from the gospel—which is a metanarrative. Indeed, the Christian gospel is nothing less than the *Metanarrative of all Metanarratives*. For Christianity to surrender the claim that the gospel is universally true and objectively established is to surrender the center of our faith. Christianity is the great metanarrative of redemption. Our story begins with creation by the sovereign, omnipotent God; continues through the fall of the humanity into sin and the redemption of sinners through the substitutionary work of Christ on the cross; and promises an eternal dual destiny for all humanity—the redeemed with God forever in glory and the unredeemed in eternal punishment. That is the message we preach—and it is a glorious, world-changing metanarrative.

We do not preach the gospel as one narrative among many true narratives, or as “our” narrative alongside the authentic narratives of others. We cannot retreat to claim

¹ Jean-Francois Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A report on Knowledge*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi, “Theory and History of Literature,” vol. 10 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), p. xxiv.

that biblical truth is merely true *for us*. Our claim is that the Bible is the Word of God *for all*. This is deeply offensive to the postmodern worldview, which charges all who claim universal truth with imperialism and oppression.

The Demise of the Text

If the metanarrative is dead, then the great texts behind the metanarratives must also be dead. Postmodernism asserts the fallacy of ascribing meaning to a text, or even to the author. The reader establishes the meaning, and no controls limit the meaning of the reading.

Jacques Derrida, the leading literary deconstructionist, described this move in terms of the “death of the author” and the “death of the text.” Meaning—*made*, not *found*—is created by the reader in the act of reading. The text must be deconstructed in order to get rid of the author and let the text live as a liberating word.

This new hermeneutical method explains much of the current debate in literature, politics, law, and theology. All texts—whether the Holy Scripture, the United States Constitution, or the works of Mark Twain—are subjected to esoteric criticism and dissection, all in the name of liberation.

Texts, according to the postmodernists, reveal a subtext of oppressive intentions on the part of the author, and so must be deconstructed. This is no matter of mere academic significance. This is the argument behind much contemporary constitutional interpretation made by judges, the presentation of issues in the media, and the fragmentation of modern biblical scholarship. The rise of feminist, liberation, homosexual, and various other interest-group schools of interpretation is central to this postmodern principle.

Therefore, the Bible is subjected to radical re-interpretation, often with little or no regard for the plain meaning of the text or the clear intention of the human author. Texts which are not pleasing to the postmodern mind are rejected as oppressive, patriarchal, heterosexist, homophobic, or deformed by some other political or ideological bias. The authority of the text is denied in the name of liberation, and the most fanciful and ridiculous interpretations are celebrated as “affirming” and thus “authentic.”

Of course, the notion of the “death of the author” takes on an entirely new meaning when applied to Scripture, for we claim that the Bible is not the mere words of men, but the Word of God. Postmodernism’s insistence on the death of the author is inherently atheistic and anti-supernaturalistic. The claim to divine revelation is written off as only one more projection of oppressive power.

The Dominion of Therapy

When truth is denied, therapy remains. The critical questions shifts from "What is true?" to "What makes me feel good?." This cultural trend has been developing throughout the century, but now reaches epic proportions.

The culture we confront is almost completely under submission to what Philip Reiff called the "triumph of the therapeutic." In a postmodern world, all issues eventually revolve around the self. Thus, enhanced self-esteem is all that remains as the goal of many educational and theological approaches. Categories such as "sin" are rejected as oppressive and harmful to self-esteem.

Therapeutic approaches are dominant in a postmodern culture made up of individuals uncertain that truth even exists—but assured that our self-esteem must remain intact. Right and wrong are discarded as out-of-date reminders of an oppressive past. In the name of our own "authenticity" we will reject all inconvenient moral standards and replace concern for *right* and *wrong* with the assertion of our *rights*.

Theology is likewise reduced to therapy. Entire theological systems and approaches are constructed with the goal reduced to nothing more than self-esteem for individuals and special groups. These "feel good" theologies dispense with the "negativity" of offensive biblical texts, or with the Bible altogether. Out are categories such as "lostness" and judgment. In their place are vague notions of acceptance without repentance and wholeness without redemption. We may not know (or care) if we are saved or lost, but we certainly do feel better about ourselves.

The Decline of Authority

Since postmodern culture is committed to a radical vision of liberation, all authorities must be overthrown. Among the dethroned authorities are texts, authors, traditions, metanarratives, the Bible, God, and all powers on heaven and earth. Except, of course, for the authority of the postmodern theorists and cultural figures, who wield their power in the name of oppressed peoples everywhere.

According to the postmodernists, those in authority use their power to remain in power, and to serve their own interests. Their laws, traditions, texts, and "truth" are nothing more than that which is designed to maintain them in power.

So, the authority of governmental leaders is eroded, as is the authority of teachers, community leaders, parents, and ministers. Ultimately, the authority of God is rejected as totalitarian and autocratic. Ministers are representatives of this autocratic deity, and are to be resisted as authorities as well.

Doctrines, traditions, creeds and confessions—all are to be rejected and charged with limiting self-expression and representing oppressive authority. Preachers are

tolerated so long as they stick to therapeutic messages of enhanced self-esteem, and resisted whenever they inject divine authority or universal claims to truth in their sermons.

The Displacement of Morality

Ivan, in Fyodor Dostoyevsky's novel *The Brothers Karamazov* was right—if God is dead everything is permissible. The God allowed by postmodernism is not the God of the Bible, but a vague idea of spirituality. There are no tablets of stone, no Ten Commandments . . . no rules.

Morality is, along with other foundations of culture, discarded as oppressive and totalitarian. A pervasive moral relativism marks postmodern culture. This is not to say that postmodernists are reluctant to employ moral language. To the contrary, postmodern culture is filled with moral discourse. But the issues of moral concern are quite arbitrary, and in many cases represent a reversal of biblical morality.

Homosexuality, for example, is openly advocated and accepted. The rise of gay and lesbian studies in universities, the emergence of homosexual political power, and the homoerotic images now common to popular culture mark this dramatic moral reversal. Homosexuality is no longer considered a sin. *Homophobia* is now targeted as sin, and demands for tolerance of "alternative lifestyles" have now turned into demand for public celebration of all lifestyles as morally equal.

Michael Jones described modernity as "rationalized sexual misbehavior," and postmodernity is its logical extension. Michel Foucault, who argued that all sexual morality is an abuse of power, called for postmodernism to celebrate "polymorphous perversity." He lived and died dedicated to this lifestyle, and his prophecy has been fulfilled in this decade.

Christian Ministry in a Postmodern Age

Postmodernism represents the unique challenge facing Christianity in this generation. Walter Truett Anderson described the postmodern reality in his clever book, *Reality Isn't What it Used to Be*² This is the central claim of postmodernism—reality is not what it used to be, and never will be again. Humanity now come of age, we will make our own truth, define our own reality, and seek our own self-esteem.

In this culture, ministry is stranger than it used to be. Postmodern concepts of truth now reign in the postmodern age—and even in the postmodern pew. Research indicates that a growing majority of those who claim to be Christian reject the very notion of absolute truth.

² Walter Truett Anderson, *Reality Isn't What it Used to Be* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1990).

The “death of the text” is evident in the resistance to biblical preaching in many churches. Postmodern ears no longer want to hear the “thus saith the Lord” of the biblical text. Since truth is made, and not found, we can design our own personal religion or spirituality—and leave out inconvenient doctrines and moral commands. Postmodernism promises that the individual can construct a personal structure of spirituality, free from outside interference or permission. Under the motto, “There’s no truth like my truth,” postmodernism’s children will establish their own doctrinal system, and will defy correction.

Gene Veith, dean of the School of Arts and Sciences at Concordia University, tells of a young man who claimed to be a Christian and professed belief in Christ and love for the Bible, but also believed in reincarnation. His pastor confronted this belief in reincarnation by directing the young man to Hebrews 9:27. The text was read: “It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.” The young man looked back at his pastor and replied, “Well, that’s your interpretation.”³

In the name of postmodernism, *anything* can be explained away as a matter of interpretation. Games played with language mean that every statement must be evaluated with care. A statement as clear and plain as the first line of the Apostles’ Creed, “I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth,” must be evaluated in terms of the speaker’s intentions. Does this confession assert belief that God is actually the maker of heaven and earth, or is this a statement of mere personal sentiment?

The strangeness of ministry in a postmodern age can be seen in Bible studies which do not study the Bible, but are psychological exercises in self-discovery; in the cafeteria-style morality practiced by so many church members; and in the growing acceptance of other religions as valid paths to salvation.

Modern culture is revolt against the truth, and postmodernism is but the latest form of this revolt. Ministry in these strange times calls for undiluted conviction and faithful apologetics. The temptations to compromise are great, and the opposition which comes to anyone who would claim to preach absolute and eternal truth is severe. But this is the task of the believing church.

We must understand postmodernism, read its theorists and learn its language. This is much a missiological challenge as an intellectual exercise. We cannot address ourselves to a postmodern culture unless we understand its mind.

By its very nature, postmodernism is doomed to self-destruction. Its central principles cannot be consistently applied. (Just ask a postmodern academic to accept the “death of the text” in terms of his contract.) The church must continue to be the people of

³ Gene Veith, “Catechesis, Preaching, and Vocation,” in *Here We Stand*, ed. James Boice and Ben Sasse (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1996), pp. 82-83.

truth, holding fast to the claims of Christ, and contending for the faith once for all delivered to the saints. Postmodernism rejects any "once for all" truth, but the church cannot compromise its witness.

The Christian ministry *is* stranger than it used to be. But this is an era of great evangelistic opportunity, for as the false gods of postmodernism die, the church bears witness to the Word of Life. In the midst of a postmodern age, our task is to bear witness to the Truth, and to pick up the pieces as the culture breaks apart.

*R. Albert Mohler, Jr., is President and Professor of Christian Theology, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2825 Lexington Road, Louisville, KY, 40280
Phone 502.897.4121, Fax 502.899-1770*

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"Postmodern thinking, with new directions in literary criticism, linguistic theory, communications theory and anthropology/sociology, has challenged traditional approaches to Scripture at three points, among others: (1) Unchanging, ultimate truth does not exist. (2) Language cannot accurately communicate thought to another person's mind, and with time and culture distance the attempt becomes ever more futile. (3) The inadequacy of language is not necessarily bad because meaning is constituted of a combination of what is out there (objects and events, including the words of others) and what is in here (my own subjective sense). Though the words of others play a formative role, the controlling element is what I bring to the text. And the outcome of that mix is all the reality there is. Thus meaning is relative to my present subjective perceptions." --Robertson McQuilkin and Bradford Mullen The Impact of Postmodern Thinking on Evangelical Hermeneutics JETS (March 1997) p. 71.

The answer to prayer is the part of prayer that glorifies
God. —E. M. BOUNDS in *The Possibilities of Prayer*

Suppose you're travelling to work and you see a stop sign. What do you do? That depends on how you exegete the stop sign.

1. A postmodernist deconstructs the sign (knocks it over with his car), ending forever the tyranny of the north-south traffic over the east-west traffic.
2. Similarly, a Marxist sees a stop sign as an instrument of class conflict. He concludes that the bourgeoisie use the north-south road and obstruct the progress of the workers on the east-west road.
3. A serious and educated Catholic believes that he cannot understand the stop sign apart from its interpretative community and their tradition. Observing that the interpretative community doesn't take it too seriously, he doesn't feel obligated to take it too seriously either.
4. An average Catholic (or Orthodox or Coptic or Anglican or Methodist or Presbyterian or whatever) doesn't bother to read the sign but he'll stop if the car in front of him does.
5. A fundamentalist, taking the text very literally, stops at the stop sign and waits for it to tell him to go.
6. A preacher might look up "STOP" in his lexicons of English and discover that it can mean:
 - 1) something which prevents motion, such as a plug for a drain, or a block of wood that prevents a door from closing;
 - 2) a location where a train or bus lets off passengers. The main point of his sermon the following Sunday on this text is: when you see a stop sign, it is a place where traffic is naturally clogged, so it is a good place to let off passengers from your car.
7. An orthodox Jew does one of two things:
 - a) Take another route to work that doesn't have a stop sign so that he doesn't run the risk of disobeying the Law.
 - b) Stop at the stop sign, say "Blessed art thou, O Lord our God, King of the Universe, who hast given us thy commandment to stop," wait 3 seconds according to his watch, and then proceed.

Incidentally, the Talmud has the following comments on this passage: R[abbi] Meir says: He who does not stop shall not live long. R. Hillel says: cursed is he who does not count to three before proceeding. R. Simon ben Judah says: why three? Because the Holy One, blessed be He, gave us the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings. R. ben Isaac says: Because of the three Patriarchs. R. Yehuda says: Why bless the Lord at a stop sign? Because it says: "Be still, and know that I am God." R. Hezekiel says: When Jephthah returned from defeating the Ammonites, the Holy One,

blessed be He, knew that a donkey would run out of the house and overtake his daughter: but Jephthah did not stop at the stop sign, and the donkey did not have time to come out. For this reason he saw his daughter first and lost her. Thus he was judged for his transgression at the stop sign. R. Gamaliel says: R. Hillel, when he was a baby, never spoke a word, though his parents tried to teach him by speaking and showing him the words on a scroll. One day his father was driving through town and did not stop at the sign. Young Hillel called out: "Stop, father!" In this way, he began reading and speaking at the same time. Thus it is written: "Out of the mouth of babes." R. ben Jacob says: where did the stop sign come from? Out of the sky, for it is written: "Forever, O Lord, your word is fixed in the heavens." R. ben Nathan says: When were stop signs created? On the fourth day, for it is written: "let them serve as signs." R. Yeshuah says: . . .
[continues for three more pages]

8. A Pharisee does the same thing as an orthodox Jew, except that he waits 10 seconds instead of 3. He also replaces his brake lights with 1000 watt searchlights and connects his horn so that it is activated whenever he touches the brake pedal.

9. A scholar from Jesus Seminar concludes that the passage "STOP" undoubtedly was never uttered by Jesus himself, but belongs entirely to Stage III of the gospel tradition, when the church was first confronted by traffic in its parking lot.

10. An NT scholar notices that there is no stop sign on Mark street but there is one on Matthew and Luke streets, and concludes that the ones on Luke and Matthew streets are both copied from a sign on a completely hypothetical street called "Q". There is an excellent 300 page discussion of speculations on the origin of these stop signs and the differences between the stop signs on Matthew and Luke street in the scholar's commentary on the passage. There is an unfortunate omission in the commentary, however: the author apparently forgot to explain what the text means.

11. An OT scholar points out that there are a number of stylistic differences between the first and second half of the passage "STOP". For example, "ST" contains no enclosed areas and 5 line endings, whereas "OP" contains two enclosed areas and only one line termination. He concludes that the author for the second part is different from the author for the first part and probably lived hundreds of years later. Later scholars determine that the second half is itself actually written by two separate authors because of dissimilar stylistic differences between the "O" and the "P".

12. Another prominent OT scholar notes in his commentary that the stop sign would fit better into the context three streets back. (Unfortunately, he neglected to explain why in his commentary.) Clearly it was moved to its present location by a later redactor. He thus exegetes the intersection as though the stop sign were not there.

13. Because of the difficulties in interpretation, another OT scholar amends the text, changing "T" to "H". "SHOP" is much easier to understand in context than "STOP" because of the multiplicity of stores in the area. The contextual corruption probably occurred because "SHOP" is so similar to "STOP" on the sign several streets back that it is a natural mistake for a scribe to make. Thus the sign should be interpreted to announce the existence of a shopping area.