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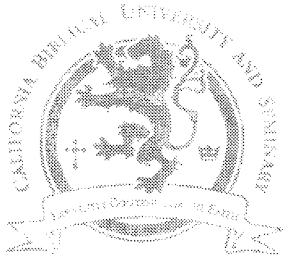
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A Review of *To Everyone an Answer*

EDS. BECKWITH, CRAIG, AND MORELAND

© DR. ROBERT A. MOREY

This book is a Festschrift in honor of Dr. Norman Geisler. It is, without a doubt, a landmark work that marks a “mega-shift” in evangelical apologetics and theology.

A mega-shift takes place when a fundamental change occurs in the foundation or basis of thought and life. For example, Thomas Aquinas caused a mega-shift in European thought and life by abandoning Platonic mysticism and replacing it with Aristotelian rationalism.

The Middle Ages

The shift in worldview from Plato to Aristotle had far-reaching consequences that are still with us today. Through the labors of Aquinas, the Medieval Roman Catholic Church became dependent upon the humanistic philosophy and theology of Aristotle.

The Islamic Influence

Aquinas derived his philosophy from the works of such Muslim philosophers as Ghazali and Averroes. They, in turn, derived their ideas from the pagan Greek philosophy of Aristotle. Their arguments for Islam and against Christianity were drawn from the pagan Greek concepts of the autonomy, self-sufficiency, and dominance of human “reason.”

A Muslim Philosophic Jihad

The Roman Catholic Church faced a philosophic Jihad that threatened to overwhelm the intellectual life of Europe. Catholic priests and university professors had no answers to the rationalism of the Muslim apologists. Obviously, a “Catholic” answer had to be found that could counter the Muslim influence in academia.

The Muslims had intimidated the Catholics and made them feel inferior because, while the Muslims appealed to idealistic Aristotelian human “reason” as the basis of their doctrines, all the Catholics had was blind “faith” in the dogmas of Rome. Thus the conflict came down to the Muslim’s humanistic reason versus the Catholic’s blind faith.

If You Can’t Beat Them, Join Them!

The answer came from an unlikely source. A monk who was nicknamed “the dumb ox” came up with the answer. Aquinas suggested that the best way to deal with the Muslims is to abandon their blind faith and adopt Aristotle’s reason as well! Thus Aquinas abandoned the dogmatic faith of popery and adopted the same pagan philosophic worldview as the Muslim apologists. He embraced the pagan dogma of the autonomy of human reason in which man is the measure of all things and thus the origin of truth, justice, morals, meaning, and beauty.

It is no surprise to find that his ideas and works were officially condemned as heresy and viewed as undermining the authority of the papacy. But after his death, the condemnation was removed; and he was proclaimed the official philosopher of the Roman Catholic Church.

Aquinas took Aristotle’s dichotomy of form/essence and turned it into the nature/grace dichotomy. He later refined it into the secular/sacred dichotomy that still plagues us today.

It was thus Aquinas who opened the way for secular humanism to take over Western philosophy, science, ethics, art, politics, and theology. Like a

malignant cancer, secularism cannot stop consuming all of life and culture until there is no sacredness left.

What Is Happening Today

This gives us a practical insight into the secular humanist's all-consuming lust to root out all sacred symbols from society. It can be a monument to the Ten Commandments, "In God we trust" on our coins, prayer before a football game, etc. Any and all "sacred" things must be destroyed. Secularism cannot tolerate these things. As Francis Schaeffer and many other evangelical scholars have repeatedly pointed out, Thomas Aquinas is directly to blame for setting in motion the secularist vision of life.

Look Before You Leap

Evangelical Christians should "look before they leap" to embrace Aquinas' pagan worldview. Aquinas' "natural" theology and "natural" law are only pseudo names for "secular" theology and "secular" law!

Besides being oxymorons, "natural" (i.e. secular) theology and "natural" (i.e. secular) law are only religious forms of secular humanism. Natural (i.e. secular) theology and natural (i.e. secular) law both attempt to find final answers without God (i.e. they are God-less) or His Word (i.e. they are Bible-less) solely on the basis of "nature" (i.e. man's reason, experience, feelings, and faith).

The attempt to find God without God, and to find morality without revealed absolutes, has always been a failure according to the Bible (1 Cor. 1:21). Once Aquinas let secular humanism out of Pandora's Box, like Shiva, it became the Destroyer of worlds.

His Last Testimony

One year before his death in 1274, Aquinas had an experience that shook the foundations of his theology. His contemporaries described it as a religious or mystical experience in which he encountered God in a powerful way. As a result of this experience, Aquinas declared, "All my work is like straw!" He renounced his philosophical work and refused to write one more page of natural theology, philosophy or law.

It is amazing to us that while erstwhile Evangelicals are rushing to embrace the philosophy of Aquinas, he repudiated it as worthless as straw. If he rejected it at the end of his life, why would anyone with a sane mind view it as valid?

A Muslim Crisis

The Muslim philosophers and apologists followed Aristotle's reasoning that the world had to be eternal. But this did not sit well with Muslim theologians who pointed out that the Qur'an clearly taught that the world was created. When the philosophers were accused of heresy, they devised a trick to avoid the charge.

The Muslim philosophers and apologists divided philosophy into a dichotomy in which something can be true according to "reason" and, at the same time, be false according to "faith." The reverse could also be true.

Thus it was the Muslims who set up the false dilemma of "reason versus faith" as the only two options before us. Then they demanded that people must choose either one or the other. By reason they meant the classic pagan concept of man as the origin of truth and thus the measure of all things. By faith they meant blind Islamic faith.

They went on to restrict "knowledge" to that which comes from human reason, which rested on "facts." "Belief" came from human faith, and rested on religious authority. While reason tells us what we "know," faith tells us what we "believe."

By this ploy, when the Muslim apologists were asked if the world was created or eternal, they answered, "While my reason tells me that it is eternal, my faith tells me that it was created." They knew that the world was eternal, but they believed that it was created. Knowledge came from reason, not from faith.

Emanuel Kant

This dichotomy between faith and reason became the basis of the German philosopher, Emanuel Kant. He took the false dichotomy between matter versus mind, form versus essence, nature versus grace, and nature versus freedom and turned it into the false dichotomy of the phenomenal (secular) versus the noumenal (sacred). The upper story was the noumenal realm of faith, religion, myth, and legend. The bottom story of the phenomenal was the realm of facts, science, and reason.

Religious liberals like Karl Barth adopted Kant's upper-story and lower-story theory and placed the Bible on the upper story of myth and legend. He could deny the virgin birth on the lower level of the phenomenal, i.e. science, biology, history, etc., while affirming it on the upper level of the noumenal, i.e. myth, religious history, etc.

Modern neo-orthodox theologians are using the same trick today that was invented by the Muslims during the time of Aquinas. Truly there is nothing new under the sun!

Aquinas' Response

The Islamic dichotomy between reason and faith was adopted by Aquinas and became a central tenet of his philosophy. Some things were true according to reason and some things were true according to faith.

This classic Greek dichotomy between reason and faith was renamed "nature" and "grace." While "nature" (i.e. reason) tells us most things, "grace" (i.e. faith) tells us what we cannot know through reason. But where did reason stop and faith begin?

The line between human reason and human faith was a sliding scale that moved up and down according to individual philosophers. When a Catholic thinker could not justify a Church dogma by Aristotelian reason and logic, he accepted it by blind faith on the authority of the Roman church.

The Reformation Mega-shift

The Reformation was a reaction to and rebellion against the nature/grace, reason/faith model of philosophy that had become the official position of the Roman Church. The Reformation was thus a mega-shift against this Catholic/Islamic Aristotelian worldview.

Luther said that Aquinas went to hell like all the pagans before him! Aristotle and the other pagan philosophers were in error and we should reject them. Calvin and the other Reformers dismissed the schoolmen as heretics and fools.

The heirs of the Reformation, such as the Puritans, likewise rebelled against the pagan dogma of the self-sufficiency of human reason. Instead of looking to man's reason or man's faith as the origin and measure of all things, including God, the Reformers taught that we should look outside of ourselves to God alone for the final answers to truth, justice, morals, meaning, and beauty. Their doctrine of *sola scriptura* was the answer to the Catholic/Islamic/Greek dogma of *sola ratióne*.

Instead of dividing life into the humanistic dichotomies of mind/matter, form/essence, reason/faith, nature/grace, secular/sacred, and phenomenal/noumenal, the Reformers brought all of life under the divine authority of Scripture and the Lordship of Christ. What we believe and how we live is to be decided by God through special revelation alone. All

of life is sacred and under the rule of Scripture. There is no secular realm where the Lordship of Christ and the Bible are irrelevant.

The Reformers unified all of life, bringing all of it under the Lordship of Christ, by putting all things under the objective, absolute authority of Scripture. The Bible became the basis of theology, philosophy, science, the arts, law, government, and ethics. The Lordship of Christ was applied to all of life, and every square inch of earth was claimed for Christ alone.

The Eyes of Lady Justice

The Swiss Reformers symbolized *sola scriptura* by changing the symbol of Lady Justice. The pagans always pictured Lady Justice as being blindfolded. But in a famous statue, the Swiss took off her blindfold and had her point her sword to the open Bible at her feet. Revealed law was the only way for a nation to have moral laws. Natural (i.e. secular) law was a fraud.

Instead of the Catholic and pagan doctrine of natural law, the Reformers saw society being regulated according to the revealed laws found in the Bible. Justice was no longer blind and in the dark, but now she stood in the blazing light of the Word of God.

Our Evangelical Fathers

The Puritans the Pilgrims, and our evangelical forefathers, such as Spurgeon, Schaeffer, Henry, Clark, etc., followed the lead of the Reformers in rejecting Aquinas' bastardized (i.e. Greek/Muslim/Catholic) worldview and his distinction between humanistic reason and blind faith. They chose God as the Origin instead of man, revelation as the authority instead of human reason or faith, and Jesus as Lord; not Plato, Aristotle, Whitehead, Barth, etc.

Francis Schaeffer explained it this way:

A rationalist is someone who thinks that man can begin with himself and his reason plus what he observes, without information from any other source, and come to final answers in regard to truth, ethics, and reality...No one stresses more than I that people have no final answers in regard to truth, morals or epistemology without God's revelation in the Bible. This is true in philosophy, science, and theology. Rationalism can take a secular or theological form. In both, the rationalist thinks that on the basis of man's reason, plus what he can see about him, final answers are possible. My books stress that man cannot generate final answers from himself. First, even without the Fall, man was finite and

needed the knowledge God gave him (revelation). Second, on this side of the Fall this is even more necessary.¹

Norman Geisler

In our day, Geisler was the first to openly break with the evangelical Protestant tradition of *sola scriptura*. In his seminal book on Thomas Aquinas, he stated that since the previous generation of Protestant apologists, such as Carl Henry, Francis Schaeffer, etc., were now dead, the time was now ripe for him and other secret Thomists to come “out of the closet.” If they would have revealed their beliefs while the great evangelical lights were alive, they would have been shot out of the saddle and run out of evangelical circles.

Instead of *sola scriptura*, Geisler shifted over to *sola rationé*. Instead of all of life being under the authority of the Bible, he followed Aquinas – who followed the Muslims, who followed Aristotle – in dividing life into the dichotomy of reason/faith, secular/sacred, nature/grace. Man is the origin and measure of all things, including God.

Once Geisler came out of his closet and proclaimed that he preferred Aquinas over Paul and Catholic theology over Reformation doctrine, the other secret Thomists were emboldened to come out as well. This is why the contributors in To Everyone an Answer, such as Beckwith, Craig, and Moreland, are now confident enough to reveal their true beliefs. Beckwith comments:

This volume is a festschrift to honor the career of Norman L. Geisler...an important influence on all the contributors of this volume.²

The Great Betrayal

The betrayal of the Reformation and the return to Thomistic Catholic natural theology and natural law is a mega-shift that bodes ill for Evangelicals. Whereas the Reformation saw all of life under the Lordship of Christ as revealed in His Law/Word, these new apologists look to human reason, experience, feelings, and faith. Man is Lord – not Christ!

¹ Francis Schaeffer, “Appendix A,” The God Who Is There (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1998) 183-84.

² Francis Beckwith, William Lane Craig, James Porter Moreland, eds., To Everyone an Answer: A Case for the Christian Worldview (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2004) 13.

The present chaos and crisis within evangelicalism is due to a megashift in what people accept as the final authority that gives them the final answers to the riddles of life. The end result is the rise of rationalism, empiricism, mysticism, and fideism within evangelicalism.

Each humanistic form of naturalism is as relative as the next because finite man cannot generate absolute truth. If God has not spoken in Scripture and thus has not given us final answers, then we will fall into the darkness of the vanity of our own bloated and conceited speculations and prejudices. Once you build your house on the shifting sands of human autonomy, it will fall. You will be adrift in the abyss of the unrelated!

The Purpose-Driven Humanist

The “seeker church” movement openly abandons the authority of the Bible when it comes to the doctrine of the church. At one seminar I attended, a representative from Willow Creek told us to “put away your Bibles because no one is interested in setting up a New Testament church!”

We were told to set up a church that was “relevant” to modern people. Thus we should look to the felt-needs of our local community instead of the Bible when it comes to the nature, structure, and ministries of the Church.

Once the authority of Scripture was thrown out and human reason, experience, feelings, and faith became the origin of the nature, function, offices, and services of the church, this has resulted in the chaos of relativism in which each church does what is right in its own mind and the Bible is ignored.

Humanistic Apologists

The same is true for the new breed of “evangelical” philosophers, theologians, and apologists. Once they replaced *sola scriptura* with *sola rationé*, anything goes! Take the issue of the pagan Greek concept of “free will” that is nowhere found in the Bible.

When you challenge a rationalist for solid exegetical proof that man has a “will” that is “free” from sin and its effects, he will ignore your request for a detailed exegesis of Scripture and, instead, emphasize that free will is a philosophic “given” because it is “intuitive,” “universal,” and “self-evident.”

Of course, these simplistic clichés are only silly banners that are waved to psychologically manipulate the naïve. The foundational ideas of

natural theology are not intuitive, universal, or self-evident in any sense whatsoever. They are only an example of what psychologists call “wish fulfillment.”

The Fads of Time

The Bible has been shoved aside in favor of whatever philosophical fad is in vogue in intellectual circles. If the philosophic wind is blowing in the direction of “eternal time,” then those who are “conformed to this world” will follow suit (Rom. 12:1-2).

That the Bible nowhere teaches the oxymoron of eternal time is not a problem to them because, as Beckwith argues, general revelation mediated through human reason is,

...a legitimate means by which human beings may acquire knowledge of theological truths.³

A Landmark Work

The book, To Everyone an Answer, is a landmark publication because the rationalists who put it together have come clean and put their cards on the table for all to see. Indeed, I am thrilled because in the past when I called them “rationalists,” I was accused of being a *liar!* Now that they openly call themselves rationalists, I am now vindicated 100 percent. Those who called me a liar are the ones “with pants on fire!”

The Rise and Demise of Rationalism

William Lane Craig describes himself and the other writers as “theological rationalists.”⁴ Several comments are in order.

First, Dr. Craig did not describe himself as a “rational theologian” but as a “theological rationalist.” This is important because the noun “rationalist” tells us, in terms of the history of philosophy, to which worldview he subscribes. He and the other contributors are rationalists as opposed to empiricists, mystics, fideists, and Biblicists.

A rationalist believes that man is the measure of all things and the origin of truth, justice, morals, meaning, and beauty. Man does not *need* the special revelation found in the Bible to discover final answers. By

³ Beckwith, To Everyone an Answer 16.

⁴ Craig, To Everyone an Answer 19.

reflecting on nature, through his pristine intellect, he can discern the meaning of all things, earthly and divine.

Since the contributors to this volume believe in the self-sufficiency of human reason to discover theological truth, it is no surprise to find that no one bothers to give any exegetical support to their ideas. If an idea seems “rational” to them, i.e. it feels good, then it is true.

Where Are the Definitions?

Of course, the contributors do not attempt to give us a clear and concise definition of such words as “reason,” “rational,” “intuitive,” “universal,” “self-evident,” “common sense,” etc. They know how the game is played. The moment you define “rationality,” it becomes self-refuting! To use “reason” to define “reason” is to row with one oar! To begin by assuming what you want to prove in the end is to argue in a circle.

The Collapse of Rationalism

The eighteenth and nineteenth century European Rationalists utterly failed to come to a common definition of rationality. Thus rationalism collapsed in upon itself when it became obvious that, instead of dealing with objective and absolute truth, there were as many different and contradictory definitions of rationality as there were rationalists!

The term “rational” is a culturally conditioned word that was intrinsically both subjective and relative because it only described some kind of subjective psychological state of “comfort” in the mind of the rationalist. If an idea “felt” comfortable, it was rational. If an idea “felt” wrong, it was dismissed as irrational.

This is what “intuitive” truth is all about. If an idea feels right to you, it is true. For example, while Aristotle felt that the eternity of the universe was intuitively true, yet, other rationalists felt that the creation of the universe was intuitively true. Thus what is intuitive truth is more related to the culture and times in which one lived instead of some kind of objective rationality.

It became clear that what felt rational to a Western European may not automatically feel rational to non-European cultures. One man’s rationality was another man’s idiocy. Take “common sense” as a perfect example of rationalism’s failure to define itself.

The Howe brothers use the phrase “common sense” as a synonym for reason.⁵ What they do not tell their readers is that they are whipping a dead horse at this point.

How “Common Sense” Died

The “common sense” school of philosophy arose in Scotland during the eighteenth century as a reaction to the English philosopher David Hume. It was created by Thomas Reid (1710-1796) and was adopted by many Christian theologians and philosophers. Even the great Charles Hodge based his systematic theology upon it.

The common sense movement fell apart when no one could define what was or was not common sense. It was revealed to be a relative term limited by time, place, religion, and culture. For example, while it is only common sense for an Asian to eat the penis of a tiger to enhance his sexual virility, it is only common sense for a Western European not to eat penises for any reason whatsoever.

The phrase “common sense” refers to what makes “sense” to the “common” people in a given culture at a given time. Given its limited, relative, and subjective nature, common sense cannot be the origin of truth, justice, morals, meaning or beauty. It is a particular in search of an infinite to explain it.

Promises, Promises

The Howe brothers promised on page 25 to define the word “reason.” We looked forward to a simple and concise definition of the nature, origin, and attributes of reason. But, sorry to say, they never got around to defining it.

While they could not define the nature of reason, they did repeat the Jesuit distinction between the “acts” and “objects” of reason. But, having failed to define exactly what “x” *is*, this renders any discussion of what “x” *does* useless.

The Jesuit Connection

Our evangelical and Puritan forefathers correctly understood the true motives behind the Jesuits coming into Protestant countries to set up universities and private schools. The Pope commissioned the Jesuits to

⁵ Howe and Howe, To Everyone an Answer 23.

infiltrate the Protestant world by education. Catholic schools were Trojan horses in which the conversion of Protestants was the hidden agenda. Their goal was to replace *sola scriptura* with various forms of rationalism. Once they managed to get the Bible out of the picture, the road back to Rome was secure.

The Gold of Rome

Since the wealth of the Vatican was a “bottomless pit” of money, the Jesuits could build the best well-equipped colleges and universities in the country. All the marble, the gold, and the huge buildings take your breath away. What evangelical school could compete with the gold of Rome?

Wheaton College was, at one time, the best college we Evangelicals had. It has since gone apostate and is now in the hands of the liberals. But it was at one time the best we had. Yet, it was no more than a glorified Sunday School when compared to the glory and wealth of such Catholic schools as Loyola, Notre Dame, Fordham, etc.

Once the Jesuits had the best private universities in the land, naïve evangelical students flocked to these institutions and were brainwashed by the Jesuits with Catholic natural theology and natural law. Once these students substituted human reason in the place of the Bible, it was only a matter of time before the Reformation was rooted out of their thinking.

This is why To Everyone an Answer is so instructive. The educational background of a writer tells us what he was taught in his classroom days. And, given the natural laziness of man, most professors simply teach their students what they were taught when they were students. After all, why not use the same class notes, the same textbooks, and why not quote the same authors your professors cited? And, why not teach the same theology to your students that you were taught? After all, you don't know any better or different. All you know is what you were taught.

The Jesuit Legacy

This, of course, carries through to the next generation. For example, someone from an evangelical home goes off to some prestigious Catholic university where the Jesuits educate (i.e. brainwash) him. Upon graduating, he becomes a professor in an evangelical school.

He, in turn indoctrinates his students with the same Jesuit teachings he had been taught. Thus, although these students did not physically attend a Catholic university, they received the same Catholic theology they

would have received there. Once they are Jesuitized, they go on to teach their students what they were taught.

The Love of the World

Now, why in the world would an evangelical school hire someone from a Catholic university? Simple. Most so-called “Christian” colleges are so desperate for the world’s acceptance that they would hire someone from “Satan U” if it would give them worldly acceptance!

The lust for the world’s acceptance drives many evangelical schools to accept teachers trained by the Jesuits. They are stupid enough to think they are “lucky” to have a professor from a prestigious Catholic university. They do not seem to understand that they are inviting Jesuit wolves in sheep’s clothing into their schools.

Recent Conversions to Rome

Dr. Frank Beckwith has announced that he and his wife have joined the Roman Catholic Church. This is the final demonstration of where the natural theology found in To Everyone an Answer leads. The rest of the contributors should follow his brave example and admit that they are Roman Catholic in their hearts and minds. They should be honest enough to join the Catholics and leave our evangelical churches and schools forever. Like Judas, they should “go into the night.”

Now that you understand how Rome has infiltrated evangelical schools, is it any wonder that so many evangelical students have converted to Roman Catholicism? Once they were taught natural theology by their Jesuit-trained professors, they followed the yellow brick road all the way to the Vatican.

The Catholic/Evangelical Accord

The Jesuit influence in evangelical circles became so strong that a joint Catholic and Evangelical statement of faith was issued that compromised the Reformation and exalted Rome. It should be no surprise to find that those Protestants who signed the statement were products of Jesuit natural theology. They are at the forefront of ecumenical meetings with Roman Catholics, Greek Orthodox leaders, Mormons, etc.

The Background of the Authors

In this light, it is interesting to note the educational background of the writers, philosophers, theologians, and apologists who contributed to this volume. Where did they receive their education? We do not have to guess. Their biography is in the back of the book.

“Roman” Geisler

Let us begin with Norman Geisler. He is a well-known philosopher in evangelical circles. Where did he receive his Ph.D. in philosophy? He was educated at Loyola University in Chicago (1967-1970), named after the founder of the Jesuit order.

Think about it. Geisler was educated by the Jesuits! Now we know why Geisler so rigorously defends Thomas Aquinas. He is only defending what his Jesuit professors taught him to defend. No wonder he earned the nickname “Roman” Geisler!

Frank Beckwith

Let us go on to some of the other authors. One of the chief authors is Francis Beckwith. Where did he earn his Ph.D.? He also was trained in Catholic philosophy by the Jesuits at Fordham University. This explains his hostility to Calvinism and his conversion to the cult of Catholicism.

Michael Bauman

Another writer, Michael Bauman, earned his Ph.D. in Catholic theology and literature from the Jesuits at Fordham University. Since we are not told when he studied with the Jesuits at Fordham, he may have studied there when Beckwith was there. Were they friends? Who knows?

Paul Copan

Then there is Paul Copan. Where did he earn his Ph.D.? Well, lo and behold, he earned his Ph.D. in Catholic philosophy from the Jesuits at Marquette University. He also points out that he owes a great debt to Geisler.⁶

Do you see any connection between these men? Are you able to connect the dots? I can. As I connect the dots, the word “Jesuit” is spelled out!

⁶ Copan, *To Everyone an Answer* 108.

Many Others

I admit that I got curious and started looking up on the Internet all the men in evangelical circles who are part of the “natural” theology movement. They either graduated from a Jesuit school or were trained by those such as Geisler, who were indoctrinated by the Jesuits.

The Proof of the Pudding

Someone may object at this point and say, “So what! Just because they graduated from Catholic schools and were trained by the Jesuits does not mean they accepted those Catholic doctrines.”

Well, the only way to answer this question is to check what these men are teaching today. And, lo and behold, they are teaching Catholic doctrines that were condemned by the Reformation: natural theology, natural law, natural morality, Molinism, the Catholic view of free will, etc.

In this volume, the authors freely admit that they are teaching Jesuit doctrines in evangelical schools. They side with Rome against traditional Protestant doctrines nine times out of ten. Several examples will demonstrate this reality.

Jesuit Counter-Reformation Doctrine

The “Jesuit connection” is further evidenced by the recent appearance in evangelical circles of a Jesuit doctrine called “Molinism.” According to the Catholic Encyclopedia, and every other reference work we consulted, a Jesuit priest named Luis de Molina developed a doctrine that would undercut the Reformation gospel that we are saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, according to Scripture alone.

Molina dedicated his pernicious heresy to the Inquisition, where thousands of Protestants were tortured and then butchered like cattle. It was so novel and new that two Popes almost declared it heresy! Yet it proved so useful in converting naïve Protestants that, in the end, it became a favorite Jesuit weapon.

Now, who would think that such a Jesuit doctrine, bathed in the blood of the Inquisition, would be taught by such evangelical thinkers as William Lane Craig, J. P. Moreland, and their numerous clones! Yet this is undeniably true!

Now, to be sure, they do not call this Jesuit doctrine by its official name, Molinism, as found in the encyclopedias. In order to divert students from the Jesuit origin of the doctrine, they renamed it “Middle Knowledge” and pretend that they found it taught in the Bible. They have painted a

Jesuit doctrine with Protestant colors and then pawned it off as biblical truth!

Think about this for a minute: Molinism is a doctrine that was *never* heard of in the history of Judaism or Christianity. It was invented by a Jesuit by the name of Molina. Since this is true, how could it, in principle, be found in the Bible, which was written thousands of years before Molina was born? It can't!

Jesuit Textbooks in Evangelical Schools

Another example of the "Jesuit factor" is to examine the footnotes in To Everyone an Answer. Why? To whom do the authors appeal as their authority? Do they appeal to Catholic or Protestant authorities? To Jesuit scholars or evangelical scholars?

It should not be a surprise by this time to find that the authorities and books cited are Roman Catholic, not Protestant! The Jesuits are the authorities they appeal to as the basis of their teaching. They are truly the wolves in sheep's clothing Jesus warned us about! Those who cite Jesuits as their authority have clearly sold out to Roman Catholic philosophy, theology, and apologetics. Shame!

Sola Scriptura or Sola Rationé

They have abandoned *sola scriptura* and replaced it with *sola rationé*. This is why they depend on Catholic writers such as Budziszewski, Kreeft, Tacelli, etc., who merely parrot Thomas Aquinas. They even use Peter Kreeft's Jesuit textbook on apologetics in such evangelical schools as Biola University!

The authors of To Everyone an Answer believe that man, starting only with himself, by himself, and looking within himself, can discover truth, justice, morals, meaning, and beauty independent of and apart from the Bible. They have adopted the Catholic view that what we believe and how we live does not depend upon Scripture. Instead, they have swallowed Catholic natural theology; hook, line and sinker. Our ideas about God need not come from the Bible but from "nature" (i.e. human "reason," "experience," "feelings," and "faith."). Beckwith put it this way:

...the editors of this volume believe that general revelation is a legitimate means by which human beings may acquire knowledge of

theological truths...we do not share the conviction of some Christians that theological knowledge is impossible apart from special revelation.⁷

The theology supposedly developed from human autonomy is labeled "rational." Of course, they never get around to defining their key terms. Thus such terms as "nature," "natural," "reason," "rational," "general revelation," "free will," "common sense," etc., are mere psychological tools used to manipulate the emotions of naïve Evangelicals. They are like the flags that are waved at football games. They stir your emotions without defining anything. As long as no one demands they define exactly what they mean by such terms as "nature," they are safe.

William Lane Craig

William Lane Craig's chapter in Part 1 is only four pages long, and yet he uses the words "rational," "rationalistic," "reason," "rationalism," 17 times! His faith is a "rational faith." He describes those like himself as "theological rationalists" who believe in "the all sufficiency of human reason." He supports "the pursuit of knowledge by means of unfettered human reason alone." He does not mention the Reformation or its founding principle of *sola scriptura*.

The Howe Brothers

In their chapter, Tom and Rich Howe first appealed to "common sense." Of course, we are not impressed by such an appeal because one man's common sense is another man's idiocy. What is common sense to me may not be common sense to you. It is a relative and cultural phenomenon.

The Howes then claim to be able to discover truth "by human reason alone and without any relation to divine revelation".⁸ They cite a Jesuit book that has a chart they used. It states that man is sufficient in and of himself without God or His Word to figure out most doctrines.

Like Aquinas, they admit that there are a few minor things, such as the Trinity, that reason could never figure out in a million years. These few things can be known only through special revelation.

The brothers also reveal that they have accepted the humanistic dichotomy between faith/grace and reason/nature that was originally developed by Muslim apologists and then adopted by Aquinas.

⁷ Beckwith, [To Everyone an Answer](#) 16.

⁸ Howe and Howe, [To Everyone an Answer](#) 26.

Special Revelation Reduced to Faith

Instead of “reason” versus “revelation,” they reduce divine revelation to man’s subjective faith in revelation. If they were consistent, they should have reduced human reason to man’s subjective faith in reason. But in order to pretend that reason is objective, they do not reduce reason to man’s subjective faith in reason.

Frank Pastora

I called the “Biola Hour” and went on the air with the host, Frank Pastora, who described himself as “J. P. Moreland lite.” He had stated that the issue before us was “faith or reason.” I asked him several questions.

Whose faith and whose reason are you talking about? Is it not *man’s* faith and *man’s* reason? Are you asking only to choose what part of *man* we want to make the origin of truth, justice, morals, meaning, and beauty? Isn’t the real issue man versus God; reason versus revelation? He had no answer to this line of questions.

Greg Koukl

Koukl is a disciple of Craig and Moreland and uses his Sunday afternoon radio talk show to indoctrinate his listeners with Jesuit natural theology. On one show he interviewed a Catholic author named J. Budziszewski who wrote a book entitled, What We Can't Not Know.

He and Koukl argued that we do not need the Bible to find morality. Human reason and common sense are sufficient in and of themselves to prove abortion, homosexuality, etc., are ethically wrong. We do not even need the Bible to discover the Ten Commandments!

I was so aghast at such nonsense that I ordered the book and read it. Budziszewski does indeed claim to find morality independent of and apart from the Bible! As a loyal Catholic, he rejects those who go to the Bible alone for their theology and morality.

It is thus no surprise to find Koukl’s chapter in To Everyone an Answer less than helpful.⁹ He appeals to the works of Peter Kreeft as his authority. Who is he? Other contributors also appeal to Kreeft and his writings as their authority for their apologetics.

The Apostate Peter Kreeft

Peter Kreeft was raised in a Protestant home but renounced the gospel of salvation by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone,

⁹ Koukl, To Everyone an Answer 47-56.

according to Scripture alone. He converted to Roman Catholicism and ended up teaching at a Catholic college.

Despite the fact that he denies the gospel and has fallen away from “the faith once and for all delivered unto the saints,” he is being heavily promoted by “evangelical” natural theologians; and through their influence, IVP, at one time a Christian publisher, has published a number of his books. These books are used as textbooks in such schools as Biola University.

In his book, Ecumenical Jihad, Kreeft argues that Buddha, Confucius, Muhammad, Plato, Socrates, etc., all made it to heaven without hearing or believing in Jesus Christ. But the Protestant Reformers, such as Luther, ended up in hell!

He argues that everyone who goes to heaven unites around the worship of Mary. She is the unifying force for all religions. His idolatrous and blasphemous teachings are clearly condemned by Scripture, and his false gospel of a works-based salvation through Mary will land people in hell, not heaven.

With such heretical teachings, would any real born-again, Bible-believing Christian recommend him as his authority in theology? I don't think so. Yet this is what Gregory Koukl, Tom Howe, Richard Howe, and Witherington III do in this volume. What accord has Christ with Baal; the temple of devils with the temple of God; Athens with Jerusalem?

Craig Hazen's Jesus

Did the prophets, apostles or the Lord Jesus ever appeal to “common sense” as the basis of truth or morality? No. Did they ever appeal to human “reason” or “rationality”? No. They appealed to the Scriptures as the basis of their teachings. They used such phrases as “as it is written” “according to the Law and Prophets,” etc.

The prophets, Jesus, and the Apostles never appealed to such things as reason or common sense as the basis of truth or morals. As a matter of fact, Paul condemned such methods when he said,

May it never be! Rather, let God be found true, though every man be found a liar, as it is written, “That Thou mightest be justified in Thy words, and mightest prevail when Thou art judged. (Romans 3:4)

μη γένοιτο· γινέσθω δὲ ὁ θεὸς ἀληθής, πᾶς δὲ ἄνθρωπος ψεύστης, καθὼς γέγραπται, “Ὅπως ἂν δικαιωθῆς ἐν τοῖς λόγοις σου καὶ νικήσεις ἐν τῷ κρίνεσθαί σε.

Paul set up a situation where the entire human race says that something is true (i.e. common sense), when God in His Word says it is false. In this situation, common sense and reason contradict the Bible. Who will triumph in the end? Who is lying and who is speaking the truth?

Paul says that if we must choose between what is self-evident, intuitive, universal, common sense, and reason to most people and what the Bible says, we are to go with the Bible as true and reject the common sense and reason of humanity as lies.

This reality has never dawned upon Hazen. He claims in his chapter that Jesus, like Socrates and Plato, used “reasoned argumentation” as the basis of truth and morality. Of course, one looks in vain for any exegesis from Hazen. His footnote tells us to look for the biblical evidence in the works of his fellow natural theologians. But when we looked them up, they also failed to provide any exegetical demonstrations where Jesus argued like Plato or Aristotle.

R. Douglas Geivett

Geivett begins by telling us that he learned his natural theology “at the knee” of Norm Geisler, whom he describes as “an unrepentant Thomist.”¹⁰ Geivett is thus a perfect example of someone who went to an “evangelical” school (Dallas Seminary), where he was indoctrinated with Jesuit theology by a professor (Geisler) directly trained by the Jesuits (Loyola), and now is teaching this same Jesuit theology in another evangelical school (Talbot) to his students.

At Talbot, Geivett has spent his time developing “a viable program of natural theology”¹¹ in opposition to and independent of biblical theology. If his chapter is any indication of what he is teaching his students at Talbot, we have warrant to fear their apostasy.

His task is to define and defend the “Kalam Cosmological Argument.” He correctly tells us that it was William Lane Craig who popularized this particular argument for the existence of God. To his credit, he admits that Craig did not invent the argument. Who then developed it? Where did it come from?

The word “Kalam” sounds Muslim because that it is exactly what it is. It was an argument developed by Muslim apologists during the Middle Ages *against Christianity*. Its purpose was to prove the existence of the

¹⁰ Geivett, *To Everyone an Answer* 61.

¹¹ Geivett 62.

god of Islam, Allah, whom we have demonstrated elsewhere was originally the Moon-god of Arab paganism.

Ask Yourself a Question

The reader must stop and ask himself a question at this point. If the Kalam argument was originally developed by those who hated Jesus Christ, who denied that He died on the cross, who denied that He was the Son of God, who rejected the triune God of the Bible, who believed that the surest path to Paradise was to kill infidels like Christians, to prove the existence of a pagan demon god called "Allah," does this strike you as somewhat odd to find Christians using it to prove the existence of the Christian God?

If the Muslim argument is valid, then it disproves the God of the Bible and proves the god of the Qur'an. If the Muslims were right, then the Christians were wrong! But if the Kalam argument is invalid, then it cannot be used to disprove Christianity or to prove Islam.

Of course, these implications are never faced by those who promote the Kalam argument. But then, they are always using arguments that were originally developed by pagans, Jews, Catholics, and cultists to attack Jesus and His gospel. How they manage to pull this off is a study in abnormal psychology and not within our immediate concern.

Geivett defines the Kalam argument as "the claim that the universe began to exist." This claim is "more intuitively accessible" than the claim that it did not have a beginning.¹² The key word is "intuitively."

The Kalam argument is based upon the humanistic dogma that "man is the measure of all things," including whether the universe is eternal or it had a beginning. But what aspect of man is abstracted and made into the Archimedean point?

In this case, it is the "normal" man's "metaphysical intuition"¹³ that tells him the universe is an "effect" and that every effect requires a cause; thus there must be a cause that brought about the effect which we call the universe. This cause is God.

Hello, Earth to Mars!

Now, what in the world is this metaphysical intuition that tells us all these things? Geivett has a tough time defining exactly what he means by

¹² Geivett 64.

¹³ Geivett 70.

metaphysical intuition because he is describing an emotional experience in which he has “direct rational awareness” of these things.¹⁴

Following the European tradition of rationalistic, intuition-based claims, Geivett explains that intuition is a “faculty of cognition” that is universal in all “normal” people. It is the ability to apprehend the “the so-called truths of reason.”¹⁵

That Geivett is trying to describe a subjective experience in which one “feels” that an idea is “true” in some kind of psychological flash or insight is seen by his use of such psychological terms as “confidence,” “awareness,” and “expectation.”¹⁶

What Makes Sense to Whom?

People in the Judeo-Christian West grew up with such biblical ideas as:

- the universe we experience every day is not an illusion but is real;
- matter is real;
- the body is good;
- pain, sickness, and death are real and not an illusion;
- the universe is not divine;
- the universe had a beginning and will have an end;
- the unity and dignity of man; etc.

Yet, if we go to the East, which has a Buddhist or Hindu cultural base, the “common sense” of the people tells them:

- the universe we experience every day is an illusion and is not real;
- matter does not exist;
- the body is evil;
- pain, sickness, and death are not real and are only illusions;
- the universe is divine;
- it is eternal and has no beginning;
- it will never end; etc.

¹⁴ Geivett 70.

¹⁵ Geivett 70.

¹⁶ Geivett 71.

What is self-evident, universal and intuitively true to an Asian is not what is self-evident, universal, and intuitively true to a Westerner. To a Westerner who has a Christian background, it is obvious that things have a beginning and an end. But for most cultures throughout human history, it was obvious to them that the world was eternal and had no beginning.

Aristotle is a good example. His reason, intuition, and common sense told him that the world was eternal and thus never had a beginning. He did not believe in a Creation *ex nihilo* in any sense whatsoever.

Now, Aristotle represents what the majority of human beings have believed down through the centuries in nearly every culture. The concept that the universe is one, and that it is an effect for which there must be a divine cause, is an idea held by a small minority of people in the Christian West due to biblical instruction.

The Conceit of Racism

Given the fact that what Western Christians “intuitively” believe due to biblical influence is not something known or accepted by the majority of humanity elsewhere in the world, it is sheer racism of the worse sort to say,

...our intuitions about such things seem to supply a premise...We have the intuition...Our intuition tells us.¹⁷

“Intuition” is a slippery psychological term whose meaning is *relative* to the time and culture of people. One man’s “intuition” is another man’s folly.

In order to escape the charge of relativism, Geivett defines an intuition as an idea that is “common to all normally functioning human persons.”¹⁸

One natural theologian was bold enough to say that when he claimed a certain idea was self-evident, intuitive, and universal, he was excluding the savages and barbarians of the third world! If something “feels” true to a white, Western European, well, then it is true. If the other races don’t see it that way, too bad for them. They aren’t “normal” anyway and what they “feel” is true doesn’t count.

Listen to Geivett again:

Reasonable belief is guided by what makes the most sense to believe.¹⁹

¹⁷ Geivett 69.

¹⁸ Geivett 70.

Stop and think about what he said. “Reasonable belief” is determined by “what makes the most sense” to YOU. Do you understand the implications of what he said?

The Fly in the Ointment

The “fly in the ointment” is that “what makes the most sense to believe” changes from culture to culture, from age to age, from one religion to another. What makes sense to a middle-class, white, evangelical Christian living in suburbia America doesn’t make any sense to a poor Hindu living in a mud hut along the river Ganges. Thus what constitutes “reasonable belief” is relative and subjective being determined by the surrounding culture. How then can it be the Archimedean point and the Origin of truth, justice, morals, meaning, and beauty? It is only a finite particular in search of an infinite universal to explain it!

At the end of his chapter, Geivett admits that even if the Muslim Kalam argument was valid, it still does not prove the existence of the God of the Bible. He quotes Draper, an agnostic philosopher, who said,

- This argument does not get all the way to God's existence.²⁰

This is the final fatal flaw of the Kalam argument and all the other arguments put forth by natural theologians and philosophers. They claim that their goal is to demonstrate, on some rational basis, the existence and attributes of the God of the Bible. But that goal can never be reached. You cannot make the jump from the finite to the infinite, the particular to the universal, what *is* to what *ought* to be, the impersonal to the personal, matter to spirit, etc.

I am reminded of the carrot hung on a stick in front of some poor jackass. No matter how hard and fast the jackass runs, he never eats the carrot because it is always just out of reach!

The natural theologian is that poor jackass who is trying to eat the carrot of truth, justice, morals, meaning, and beauty. I admire his zeal and his sincerity; but, in the end, the carrot is always out of his reach. The attempt to find God without God is a fruitless enterprise.

¹⁹ Geivett 73.

²⁰ Geivett 76.

Dembski's Designs

William Dembski had the unfortunate task of trying to whip the dead horse of arguments based on specific designs found in nature. He correctly begins with the famous William Paley and his watch illustration from a book he wrote in 1802.

If Paley is so great, as natural theologians boast, I have always wondered why they don't just reprint his book and use it as a textbook? I purchased a copy of Paley's book and found out why they don't use it today. His arguments were tied to the culture and science of his day. But Western culture and science have moved on and no longer teach the principles upon which Paley based his arguments.

Since Paley's arguments were based on ideas that are now dismissed, his book does not work today. Modern natural theologians have to switch his arguments from old science to new science, from Newton to Einstein, from geometry to quantum mechanics, etc.

Paley assumed the Newtonian worldview of a mechanical universal run by immutable scientific laws. He thus based his arguments on the Newtonian model of the universe. But Einstein demonstrated that Newton was wrong. Einstein's theory of relativity has swept aside Newtonian physics and deposited it in the dustbin of history. Thus those theories and arguments based on the Newtonian worldview should be put into the dumpster along with Newton. But modern natural theologians ignore these salient facts and never deal with these issues. They will have to face the music on this issue eventually.

The argument from manifest design has several fatal flaws that are rarely discussed.

1) The first flaw is the mass of gratuitous assumptions that must be "given" to the natural theologian in order for the argument to work. In other words, he expects you to give him the rope by which he will hang you. You have to assume:

- a. the Western European concept of "design" before you go out to look for it;
- b. the "designs" you find are not just projections from your own cultural and religious prejudices;
- c. finding five or ten things that "look" like or "feel" like they were designed gives you the right to leap to the conclusion that the

entire universe is one vast design and, hence, an effect looking for a cause to explain it;

- d. finite designs point to only one Infinite Divine Designer, i.e. God;
- e. good effects can be traced back to a good Cause, i.e. a good Designer.

2) The second flaw is that even if the “cause-effect” model is valid on some level, the only “effects” that anyone has ever seen are *finite*. Since a “cause” need only be equal to or slightly greater than its effect, the argument from design can only generate a *finite* cause for each *finite* effect.

3) It does not matter how many finite particulars you pile up, like the Tower of Babel, you will never reach heaven, i.e. to an Infinite Being.

4) Why must we assume that there is only *one* cause for everything? Why can't we trace things back to a multitude of gods and goddesses like Aristotle and other pagan philosophers?

5) If it is valid to argue from finite good effects back to an Infinite Good Cause, then is it equally valid to argue from finite evil effects back to an Infinite Evil Cause? Are there two Designers, one good and the other evil?

6) Since we encounter events that seem to be random and in conflict with other things, do we trace those back to random causes that contradict each other?

7) How do we make the jump from what *is* to what *ought* to be? In other words, how can we squeeze morality out of rock? The natural theologians do not seem concerned with their blind leap of faith on this issue.

8) Why do they assume that manifest design that conveys information of a high order logically implies the existence of an omni-attribute Deity like the one revealed in the Bible?

9) Isn't it possible that manifest design is proof that some really smart aliens seeded this planet with life and have been guiding our evolution? Could it be that there is so much chaos on this planet due to sabotage by other aliens, who are in conflict with the ones who originally terraformed this planet?

10) Lastly, after getting you all excited with great expectations that finally we have a solid rational proof that God exists, honest natural theologians, like Dembski, let you down at the end by sheepishly admitting

that the argument for design is actually a flop because it doesn't prove the existence of the God revealed in Scripture!

Who is the Designer?

As a Christian I hold that the Christian God is the ultimate source of design behind the universe....But there's no way for design inferences based on features of the natural world to reach that conclusion.²¹

It is neither valid nor useful to promise something but then turn around and in the end admit it cannot be done. Natural theologians admit that they cannot demonstrate the existence of the God of the Bible. The most they can do is to demonstrate the existence of some "thing" that has some "divine attributes." This is what makes natural theology a waste of time. When the rubber meets the road they cannot produce a valid proof for the existence of the God who is there.

The Thomist David Beck

Dr. Beck chose to handle the cosmological argument. Emanuel Kant shot that horse years ago and left its carcass where it fell. But in the early 1960s, it was resurrected by the Jesuits at Fordham University. They dressed it up with some new terminology, put a pretty ribbon on its tail, and hoped that no one would notice that it was dead. Catholic philosophers such as Gilson, Maritain, Bertocci, Tecelli, etc., have labored long and hard to convince people that it has been successfully resurrected.

In 1974 Geisler took the lead in introducing the new Jesuit form of the argument in his book, Philosophy of Religion. Those influenced by him have gone on to defend it in countless books and journal articles.

Beck traces the cosmological argument back to Aquinas, and then from him to the Muslim apologists. He then traces their argument back to Aristotle, and from him to Plato, and then all the way back to Parmenides.²² This is truly amazing.

Aristotle used a form of the cosmological argument to prove (sic) the necessary existence of some "thing" he called "Thought Thinking Itself." But "it" only knows itself. Whatever "it" is, "it" is not the God of the Bible.

²¹ Dembski, To Everyone an Answer 94.

²² Beck, To Everyone an Answer 101.

Parmenides argued for the necessary existence of non-personal “being” as opposed to Heraclites’ “becoming.” While Hindus will appreciate the necessary existence of non-personal being, Christians believe in a personal God who loves and cares for us.

Down through the centuries the cosmological argument has been used by many different philosophers and religions to prove (sic) the necessary existence of many different kinds of contradictory deities: finite and infinite, one and many, personal and non-personal, omniscient and ignorant, etc.

Beck refers us to Richard Gale, who has argued that the “god” who necessarily exists is time-bound and cannot know the future. This finite deity does not even know what he (or she, or it) will or will not do in the future. He is frequently disappointed and frustrated with unforeseen events.

If an argument proves anything and everything, including totally contradictory ideas, it proves nothing. If it were valid, it would produce only one necessary personal omni-Being who is God by nature – anything less than that is a waste of time.

To his credit, Beck admits that the worldview of Parmenides, Aristotle, etc, included an eternal universe. Since Thomas Aquinas was following them down the yellow brick road, he had to admit the possibility that the universe exists in infinite time.²³

What is important for Christians to understand is that the cosmological argument does not and cannot deliver the goods. To his credit, Beck admits that the argument,

...by itself, does not uniquely identify God in its conclusion.²⁴

Stop and ask yourself: “If an argument does not in the end prove the existence of the biblical God, why are they wasting my time with fruitless enterprises, and my money with worthless books?”

The Same for the Rest of the Chapters

What do we say about the rest of the chapters in the book? They are uneven at best and disappointing at worse. Copan, Craig, Corduan, Habermas, Moreland, Nash, Groothius, Bauman, Beckwith, Clark, and

²³ Beck 105.


²⁴ Beck 104.

Zacharias do their best to resurrect the same old tired arguments invented by pagan thinkers to prove the existence of pagan deities. These arguments were developed in the context of a pagan worldview that is a total contradiction of the biblical worldview.

Conclusion

Like the Medieval alchemists who claimed to change lead into gold, modern, humanistic natural theologians claim to be able to take pagan arguments and turn them into Christian evidences. But after over 40 years of studying their best and brightest attempts, I have yet to find anything that ushers me into the presence of the God who is there and is not silent. The world with all its philosophical arguments never found God.

All these so-called “rational” arguments lead to false gods of whom the Bible says, “You shall have no other gods before me” (Exo. 20:3).

We are forbidden to worship the gods of Parmenides, Plato, Aristotle, Muhammad, etc. There is only one God, one Way, and one Name revealed in the pages of Scripture whereby we must be saved. 

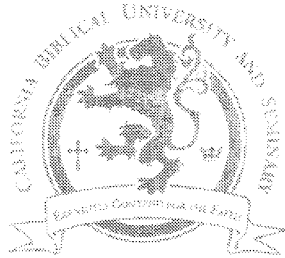
To the Triune Majesty be all the glory,

Father, Son, and Spirit divine.

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An Investigation into Contemporary Apologetic Systems

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Throughout the history of Christianity, people from all fields of study, educational backgrounds, ethnicities, ages, and sexes have set forth challenges to discredit the Christian faith. As new challenges have been brought to the forefront, so too, Christian apologists have come forth throughout the ages to take on these challenges and to fulfill the command given by the apostle Peter of “always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you” (1 Peter 3:15). Through the field of apologetics¹ these Christian apologists have sought to establish a “... philosophical defense of the Christian faith.”² Although these apologists have agreed upon the *need* for apologetics, they have not agreed upon *how* apologetics should be done.

¹ The word apologetics is a transliteration of the Greek word *apologia* into English. This term originally referred to a legal defense given by a defendant in a courtroom.

² Dr. Ronald H. Nash, Faith and Reason (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1988) 14.

“That is, they disagree about how the apologist goes about his task—about the kinds of arguments that can and should be employed and about the way the apologist should engage the unbeliever in apologetic discourse.”³

Key Methodological Issues in Contemporary Apologetics

Through this disagreement over the “best strategy to use in defending the faith,”⁴ Christian apologists have proposed a variety of apologetic methodologies. Although there is no universal agreement as to how these methodologies should be classified, the following issues are central in the debate over how one should carry out apologetics.⁵ First, apologists disagree as to the epistemological starting point for apologetics. In particular, Christian apologists continue to debate whether natural theology or biblical revelation should be the point at which apologetics begin. John Frame highlights the controversy surrounding this issue:

Some theologians present apologetics as if it were almost an exception to this commitment [commitment to the Lordship of Christ]. They tell us that when we argue with unbelievers, we should not argue on the basis of criteria or standards derived from the Bible. To argue that way, they say, would be biased. We should rather present to the unbeliever an unbiased argument, one that makes no religious assumptions pro or con, one that is neutral. We should, on this view, use criteria and standards that the unbeliever himself can accept. So logic, facts, experience, reason, and such become the sources of truth. Divine revelation, especially Scripture, is systematically excluded.⁶

In regard to this issue, Frame recognizes the Bible as the starting point in carrying out a defense of the Christian faith. However, others apologists, such as J.P. Moreland, appeal to natural theology as the point in which apologetics begins. This view is reflected in his apologetic work entitled, *Scaling the Secular City*. Rather than starting with the Bible as his epistemological starting point, Moreland utilizes logic, reasoning, history,

³ Steven B. Cowan, *Five Views on Apologetics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 2000) 9.

⁴ Cowan 9.

⁵ Steven B. Cowan addresses these issues (and others) to an extent in the work he edited entitled, *Five Views on Apologetics*. See the following pages: 376-81.

⁶ John M. Frame, *Apologetics to the Glory of God An Introduction* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 1994) 4.

and experience as means to demonstrate the truth of Christianity. In the conclusion to his book he makes the following remark:

The preceding chapters have been an attempt to defend the rationality of belief in the Christian God by offering evidence that this belief is at least rationally permissible and, indeed, rationally obligatory. Chapters 1-4 considered various aspects of the world and argued that they are best explained by postulating the existence of a personal God. Chapters 5-6 focused on the historical claims of the New Testament regarding the life, teachings, and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth.⁷

Beyond debating the epistemological starting point of apologetics, Christian apologists also disagree over the role that negative and positive apologetics should have in one's apologetic methodology. Some apologists argue that both should be employed, while other apologists place a greater stress upon one or the other. For instance, Alvin Plantinga, who has been labeled as a "reformed epistemological" apologist, mainly focuses upon defensive (negative) apologetics. Since he believes that it is rational for a person to believe many things without the support of evidence or argument, Plantinga does not place a strong emphasis upon positive apologetics.⁸ For instance, Plantinga argues that a belief in God is properly basic. "As she [Reformed epistemologist] sees it, belief in God is perfectly proper and rational, perfectly justified and in order, even if it is not accepted on the basis of such arguments, even if the believer doesn't know of any such arguments, and even if in fact there *aren't* any such arguments."⁹ In contrast, other apologists, such as John Warwick Montgomery, place a greater emphasis upon offensive (positive) apologetics. Consider the following remark that he makes in the preface of one of his books, "Christian faith *is* founded on fact. The message of this book is simply that the time is now more than ripe for the church to present that faith evidentially and courageously."¹⁰

⁷ J. P. Moreland, Scaling the Secular City: A Defense of Christianity (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1987) 249.

⁸ It should be noted that Plantinga does not reject the use of arguments and evidence. In fact, Plantinga has constructed a modern version of the ontological argument. The point Plantinga is making is that arguments and evidence are not necessary conditions for a person to hold to a belief that is rational.

⁹ Alvin Plantinga, "Reformed Epistemology," A Companion to Philosophy of Religion, eds. Philip L. Quinn and Charles Taliaferro (Malden, Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers, 1999) 385.

¹⁰ John Warwick Montgomery, Faith Founded on Fact Essays in Evidential Apologetics (Newburgh, IN: Trinity Press, 1978) xiv.

Although there is disagreement over the necessity of both positive and negative apologetics, most apologists of all approaches agree that there is a place for defending the Christian faith against objections and providing positive reasons for Christianity. The main contention among these apologists is over the implementation of positive apologetics. In particular, apologists disagree as to the role that positive evidence plays in bringing one to the Christian faith; the value that theistic arguments (and other positive evidences) have in apologetics; and the ability of obtaining religious certainty. Steven B. Cowan, in the conclusion to the book he edited entitled *Five Views on Apologetic* notes this point of contention:

As pointed out above, the five methodologists¹¹ give disparate evaluations of the degree of usefulness of theistic arguments and Christian evidences. Though all of the contributors would say that such arguments cannot bring a person to saving faith in Christ, they differ over whether they ought to be persuasive in doing so. That is, there is a disagreement over whether or not a person who understands, say, the cosmological argument has sufficient reason to accept the argument's conclusion.¹²

A Unique Apologetic Approach by Robert Morey

In light of this debate, Christian apologist Dr. Robert Morey has attempted to establish a unique apologetic approach that rejects the basic dichotomy, which he sees as defining the evidential and presuppositional schools of apologetics. He believes that this present dichotomy between evidentialism and presuppositionalism is based upon the erroneous humanistic dichotomy between mind/matter, nature/grace and upper story/lower story. In this dichotomy, Morey views the presuppositionalist as emphasizing the upper story where his apologetics primarily addresses ideas and philosophical assumptions, while, in contrast, the evidentialist as emphasizing the lower story in his apologetics as he primarily addresses issues of facts, science and logic. Since apologists limit themselves to one area (upper story or lower story), Morey contends that this leaves their apologetic approach deficient in relating to a wide spectrum of people. For instance, Morey notes that the apologetic approach of Cornelius Van

¹¹ The five methodologists that he is referring to are the following: William Lane Craig (The Classical Method); Gary R. Habermas (The Evidential Method); Paul D. Feinberg (The Cumulative Case Method); John M. Frame (The Presuppositional Method); and Kelly James Clark (The Reformed Epistemological Method).

¹² Cowan 378.

Til speaks only to the philosophic person; the apologetics of John Warwick Montgomery speaks to the scientific person; Francis Schaeffer's apologetic approach appeals to the existentialists; while the apologetic methodology of Gordon Clark is attractive to those students of logic. Instead of having an apologetic methodology that is relevant only to one group of people, Morey argues that one should conform his approach to the particular individual. Since the Bible confronts people at every level of their lives and thought, Morey feels that our apologetics should do the same.¹³

Not only does Robert Morey believe that one's apologetic approach should be person-relative, but he also contends that one's apologetic approach should be comprehensive in scope. Instead of focusing solely upon fighting the cults and the occult, as many apologetic ministries have traditionally done, Morey argues that one should widen his apologetic domain: "Just as the Lordship of Christ is over all of life, apologetics must defend ALL that God has revealed in Scripture. Thus apologetics must be involved in developing a comprehensive *world and life view* that enables Christians to defend whatever Truth is under attack."¹⁴

The Purpose of the Investigation

The purpose of this study is to carry out a critical appraisal and evaluation into the apologetic methodology of Robert Morey. In particular, I will examine his apologetic methodology in light of the key metapologetic issues¹⁵ that are being debated by contemporary Christian apologists on how one should carry out a defense of the faith.

The Goals of the Investigation

Through this research I will seek to accomplish the following goals: (1) to present a critical and accurate appraisal of the apologetic methodology of Robert Morey; (2) to accurately document Robert Morey's view on key methodological issues that are being debated in contemporary Christian apologetics; (3) to present strengths of Robert Morey's apologetic approach.

¹³ See Robert Morey's article, "An Introduction to Christian Apologetics," [The Encyclopedia of Practical Christianity](#) (Las Vegas: Christian Scholars Press, 2003) 517.

¹⁴ Robert Morey, [Apologetics and the Whole Counsel of God](#) (Faith Defenders, 2004). <<http://www.faithdefenders.com/files/sermon/apolo1.html>> (accessed 29th November, 2004).

¹⁵ Metapologetic issues refer to those theoretical issues (i.e. epistemology) that a person's method of apologetics is built upon. See Kenneth Boa and Robert Bowman's book, [Faith Has its Reasons](#) 19-20; 60-63.

The Central Questions of the Investigation

Since investigations are guided by questions, the main question of this investigation is the following: What is the apologetic methodology of Robert Morey? In answering this question, other subsidiary questions will be answered in the process: (1) What is the role of natural theology in Robert Morey's apologetics? (2) What is the role of revealed theology in Robert Morey's apologetics? (3) What distinction does Morey make between general revelation and natural theology? (4) What role does positive and negative apologetics play in Robert Morey's apologetics? (5) What are some of the strengths of Robert Morey's apologetics? These are only the most general questions, but they will be sufficient enough in directing this investigation to its intended goal.

The Relevance of the Investigation

An effective means in refining one's own apologetic skills is to study the apologetic method of prominent Christian apologists. A study on the apologetic approach of Robert Morey will not only prove to be valuable in refining one's apologetic skills, but it will also prove to be valuable in contributing the following to contemporary Christian apologetics: (1) **This study will add to our knowledge of Christian apologetics as practiced in postmodern America and contribute to scholarly literature.** Robert Morey has written numerous books on apologetic subjects. His main focus has been in the areas of Islamic studies, cults and theological issues. Some of his works have not only been endorsed by some of the leading Christian scholars in the country, but his works have also introduced unique areas of research. Consider the following examples of his contributions: First, Morey has been on the cutting edge in defending the Christian faith against Islam. He has been the first scholar who has carried out extensive research on the pagan origins of Islam. The conclusions that he has reached from this research have been utilized by some of the top apologists, such as Norman Geisler and William Lane Craig. Second, in his work on the Trinity, Morey was the first scholar who fully documented the teachings on the Messiah from the Aramaic Targums and the Dead Sea Scrolls, and he carried out groundbreaking research on the Greek text of Arius. Finally, Morey is presently carrying out unique research on natural theology. By examining the roots of natural theology and its impact upon contemporary Christian apologetics, Morey's original research has brought the apologetic approach of many evangelical Christians into question. Even though he has not received widespread notoriety, Morey

has been on the frontlines in defending the Christian faith. A better understanding of his apologetic approach would add a significant contribution to the scholarly literature available in carrying out apologetics in postmodern America.


(2) This study will show the uniqueness of Robert Morey's approach to apologetics, especially in light of the current controversy over how one should carry out apologetics. Morey defines his approach as "doxological apologetics." In this approach he attempts to establish an apologetic methodology that is purely exegetical in nature. In particular, his approach is unique in that he synthesizes the apologetic approach of his mentors Walter Martin, Cornelius Van Til, Francis Schaeffer and Gordon Clark.

(3) This study will provide a grounded theoretical approach to the value of the apologetic method of Robert Morey. In an e-mail that I received from Robert Morey, he stated the following: "I am unique in that I believe that the present dichotomy between evidentialism and presuppositionalism is erroneous because it is founded upon the humanistic dichotomy between mind/matter, form/essence, nature/grace, nature/freedom, faith/facts, upper story/lower story, theoretical/pretheoretical, etc. Since I do not accept the humanist dichotomy, therefore I refuse to be placed in either the presuppositional or evidential camp. I rise above the dichotomy and represent a third way of doing apologetics, which I call doxological apologetics." Since Morey appeals to a unique way of doing apologetics, it would be of value to see if his apologetic methodology is beneficial to contemporary apologetics.

(4) This study will help other Christian apologists sharpen their own apologetic method for advancing the gospel in our pluralistic society. "Iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another" (Proverbs 27:17). By examining the apologetic approach of Robert Morey and learning from his many years of experience, Christian apologists will be able to refine their own apologetic method for advancing the gospel in our pluralistic society.

(5) This study will also add insightful knowledge on how one should carry out apologetics. Through this study, valuable perspectives will be added into the key methodological issues that separate contemporary apologists in defending the faith.

Chapter Summary

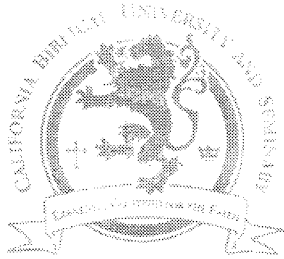
In the first chapter of this study, three main objectives were accomplished. First, a brief overview was given in regard to the current debate among Christian apologists regarding what constitutes a proper methodology. This brief overview introduced us to the central issues of contention among apologists as to how apologetics should be done. Within this contemporary scene, there was also a brief look at the apologetic approach of Robert Morey. Second, the intended purpose of this study was set forth. This purpose was noted in the discussion on the goals and central questions of the investigation. Finally, the relevance of this investigation was noted. In light of this background, the next objective of this study will be an examination into the apologetic methodology of Robert Morey. 

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The Divine Essence/Energy Dichotomy

FROM A RESPONSE TO EASTERN ORTHODOXY

© DR. ROBERT A. MOREY

One of the pillars of Eastern Orthodoxy is its distinction or dichotomy between the “essence” of God and “energy” of God. Using this philosophical distinction, Orthodox theologians claim that man can participate in the divine energy without participating in the divine essence. Man can become God in the sense of merging with His energies, but man does not become God in the sense of merging with His being or essence.¹

¹ The dichotomy or distinction between the energies of God and essence of God is found in most Orthodox reference works. The following is a small sample of theologians who use this dichotomy: Peter Gillquist, ed., The Orthodox Study Bible (Nashville: Nelson, 1993) 560; Aristotle Papanikolaou, Being with God (Notre Dame: Notre Dame Press, 2006) 24-30; Constantine Cavarnos, Orthodoxy and Philosophy (Belmont, MA: Institute for Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies, 2003) 69f; Georgios Mantzaridis, The Deification of Man (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1984) 127; Georges Florovsky, “Creation and Redemption,” The Collected Works of Georges Florovsky, vol. 2 (Belmont, MA: Norland, 1976); Meyendorff, Study of Gregory Palamas (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press,

The energy/essence dichotomy is an attempt to solve the problem of the incarnate transcendence and immanence. Papanikolaou explains,

The challenge for theology is how to conceptualize this divine-human communion with the God who is simultaneously transcendent and immanent. For Lossky, the Eastern patristic tradition has met this challenge with the essence/energies distinction. One cannot overemphasize the importance of this distinction to contemporary Eastern Orthodox theology. The impulse to defend this distinction, Lossky argues, stems from Palamas' unwillingness to compromise the Eastern patristic notion of deification. It was a dogmatic basis for union with God, which impelled the Eastern Church to formulate her teaching on the distinction between God's essence and His energies.²

According to the Orthodox dichotomy, God's essence and energy are totally separate, like two airtight containers. Thus man can "become God" in the sense of becoming one with His energy without becoming one with His essence or being. By this dichotomy, pantheism is avoided. But is "essence versus energy" a valid concept?

Where did this dichotomy originate? Every idea has a history, and thus the origin of a concept can be documented.

The idea of deification is acknowledged by both Orthodox and non-Orthodox scholars as originating in neo-Platonic Greek philosophy.³

Greek philosophy, specifically Plato, has a central place in religious history in general and the Neo-platonic Christian tradition in particular. Plato, in the context of early Greek religion and contemplative spirituality, makes the idea of deification – or the participation of human beings in the divine nature - open to all through personal contemplation and the development of the soul. Deification is a neglected but essential theme in Greek philosophy.⁴

The continuity of Greek philosophy, particularly Plato, and [Eastern] Christianity is well established. The Eastern fathers made much use of Plato. However, scholars should examine deification more carefully not

1987); Michael J. Christensen and Jeffery A. Wittung, eds., Partakers of the Divine Nature (Teaneck, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2007).

² Papanikolaou 25.

³ See: Deirdre Carabine, The Unknown God: Negative Theology in the Platonic Tradition: Plato to Eriugena (Louvain: Peters Press, 1995); Martin Werner, The Foundation of Christian Thought (NY: Harper, 1957) 168.

⁴ Christensen, et al, 47.

in its Hellenistic context but also in earlier Hellenistic thought (c. 550-323 BC).⁵

We find this notion of deification in ancient Greek thought perhaps more than is commonly assumed. The topic of deification naturally overlaps with questions of immortalization or attainment of a blessed afterlife...In Greek religion, a hero (heros) was a mortal who became a minor deity after death, was worshipped and could exert power in the world (bearing comparison with a Christian saint).⁶

Plato and Aristotle divided the world into two distinct levels:

Plato: matter and mind

Aristotle: form and essence

- Plato's "matter" was Heraclitus' dynamic world of becoming. It was a world of constantly moving matter and energies.
- Plato's "mind" was Parmenides' world of static being or essence. It was devoid of movement or change and thus did not contain energies.

Parmenides:	<u>Being</u>	Plato:	<u>Mind</u>
Heraclitus:	Becoming		Matter

- Aristotle followed with his own dichotomy.

Essence
Form

He then developed this into the dichotomy:

Essence
Energies

⁵ Christensen, et al, 48.

⁶ Christensen, et al, 48-49.

In this pagan Greek worldview, to participate in essence is different from participating in energy. However, without neo-Platonic philosophy, the dichotomy of essence versus energy is meaningless.

The distinction or dichotomy of essence/energy is invalid for the following reasons:

First, the God of the Bible is not pure being or essence devoid of energy or power. He is the living God who is described in Scripture as a “consuming fire” (Heb. 10:29). Divine energy is essential to God’s being or essence. Thus God has “essential energy.”

A god devoid of essential energies is a dead god, reduced to Parmenides’ lifeless static Being. The “energies” of God cannot be separated from His “essence.”

This becomes clear when you ask Orthodox thinkers,

- Are uncreatedness and eternity essential attributes of the being or essence of God?
- Can God be GOD in essence if He is a created being?
- If God is GOD in essence because He is uncreated and eternal, and His energies are uncreated and eternal, then are not His energies part of His divine essence and being?
- Thus, how can you become one with God’s energies without becoming one with His essence?

There is no way to escape the self-contradiction inherent in the energy versus essence dichotomy. The attempt to describe both the energy and essence of God as “divine” violates laws of logic such as the law of non-contradiction. Papanikolaou explains,

If the energies are God, then everything is God. If everything is not God, then the energies are less than God. It does seem, however, to violate a basic law of logic, the law of non-contradiction.⁷

The law of non-contradiction states that “A” cannot be “non-A.” The Orthodox position is clearly in conflict with this law of logic. The following dialogue will illustrate this point:

⁷ Papanikolaou 27.

Christian: What is deification?

Orthodox: The ultimate goal of man is to become God.

Christian: But wasn't that the lie of the devil in the Garden?

Orthodox: No. Satan was not lying when he promised Eve that she could become God. He was speaking the truth. The lie was telling her that disobedience could bring it about.

Christian: But the idea that man can become God comes from Hinduism and Buddhism. Isn't deification just another name for pantheism?

Orthodox: No. We Orthodox make the distinction between becoming one with the energies of God and becoming one with the essence of God. We teach that we can become one with the energies of God without becoming one with His essence. In this way we escape the charge of pantheism. We become God when we become one with the energies of God.

Christian: The energy versus essence dichotomy is an interesting idea. Is the energy of God "divine?"

Orthodox: Yes, the energy of God is divine, because becoming one with it means becoming God.

Christian: Is this divine energy uncreated or created?

Orthodox: It is uncreated and eternal.

Christian: But is not being uncreated and eternal part of the essence of God? Can God be GOD if He is not uncreated and eternal?

Orthodox: Yes, being uncreated and eternal is part of the essence of God.

Christian: How can you say that divine energy is not part of divine essence when it is uncreated and eternal?

Orthodox: Deification is one of the great mysteries of the Orthodox Faith because it goes beyond human language and logic. It is a mystical experience that transcends thought itself.

Christian: So, your doctrine of deification is based upon an irrational and meaningless energy/essence dichotomy. If the energies of God are "divine," then they have to be God in essence. You are saying that A and non-A are true at the same time.

Second, the "energy versus essence" dichotomy gained popularity in Orthodoxy through the works of Dionysius the Areopagite, who made the distinction between the *enoseis* and *proodoi*.

Although the Orthodox Church proclaimed Dionysius as a "pillar of Orthodoxy," his works were exposed in the nineteenth century as a fraud invented by a sixth-century Syrian monk.

Teachings found in the bogus works of Dionysius are nothing more than "Platonism with a tinge of Christianity." Since this "pillar" of orthodoxy turned out to be rotten, why should we believe its teachings?

Third, in the fourteenth century, "Saint" Gregory Palamas based the Orthodox doctrines of deification and apophaticism on the works of Dionysius. His teachings set the essence/energies dichotomy in Orthodox theology.

Ever since Palamas, Orthodox theology has remained committed to this pagan Platonic concept as the basis of its doctrines of deification and apophaticism.

According to Lossky, it is a distinction which receives further clarification in the thought of Dionysius with his distinction between *enoseis* and *proodoi*, but is given a kind of doctrinal precision in the thought of Gregory Palamas.⁸

Fourth, it does not bother some Orthodox theologians that they teach Platonic philosophy. Some are proud of their dependence on ancient

⁸ Papanikolaou 25.

Greek philosophy, even though the Bible clearly condemns Greek philosophy in Colossians 2:8.

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 Messiah.

βλέπετε μή τις ὑμᾶς ἔσται ὁ συλαγωγῶν διὰ τῆς φιλοσοφίας καὶ κενῆς ἀπάτης κατὰ τὴν παράδοσιν τῶν ἀνθρώπων, κατὰ τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου καὶ οὐ κατὰ Χριστόν·

Paul condemns philosophy because it is “empty” of truth and full of “deception.” It is worthless He also condemned “tradition.” Unfortunately, the two sources of Orthodox theology are philosophy and tradition!

Fifth, many Orthodox theologians such as Lossky admit that man becoming one with the energies of God without becoming one with His essence violates laws of logic, such as the law of non-contradiction.


Lossky tries to escape the problem by claiming that deification is a mystical union with the energetic being of God and goes beyond logic. But Aristotle Papanikolaou pointed out,

Mystical union with God is real union and communion with the divine life, with God’s very being and nothing less.⁹

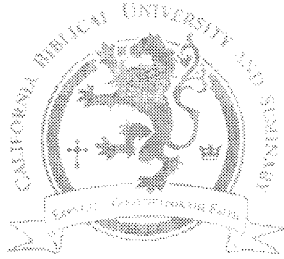
Revealed theology does indeed go beyond human comprehension (Eph. 3:19; Phil. 4:7), but this is not the same thing as contradicting the laws of logic. While the teachings of Scripture go *beyond* man’s ability to fully understand or comprehend the things of God, they do not contradict human reason *per se*.

⁹ Papanikolaou 24.

Conclusion

The essence/energies dichotomy utilized by Eastern Orthodoxy to escape the charge of pantheism in its doctrine of deification is meaningless because it is based on the mind/matter dichotomy of classic Greek philosophy. The pre-Christian pagan doctrine of apotheosis is the true origin of the Orthodox doctrine of deification. 

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Epistemic Circularity, Christian Virtue, and Truth

© DR. RICHARD OSTELLA

I. Introduction

This paper aims to show that human beings obtain truth by means of a process of epistemological circularity that is virtuous. This means that the way to truth is unclear to those who approach it without Christian virtue. In a word, the key to the process of coming to know the truth is submission. As Pascal put it, there are two extremes to avoid with respect to our powers of cognition as rational creatures: “to exclude reason, to admit nothing but reason.”¹ Accordingly, he gives a marvelously concise definition of Christianity, “Submission and the use of reason; that is what makes true Christianity.”²

¹ Cited by Thomas V. Morris, Making Sense of it all: Pascal and the Meaning of Life (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992) 81.

² Morris 81.

What then is involved in a submissive use of reason in coming to know the truth? To answer this question we will stipulate some definitions, introduce the notion of epistemic circularity, discuss some key passages of Scripture, make some applications, and give some concluding remarks.

II. Key terms

Definition of some key terms will help put epistemic circularity into perspective. The key terms are truth, knowledge, autonomy, and circularity. By stipulating the meaning of these terms, we limit our task and put certain structural notions in place as reference points for our main objective. Obviously, then, support for these definitions lies outside the scope of this paper.

1. Truth

Truth refers to the actual state of affairs with regard to God and the world (all He created and controls). Thus, it refers to what is in fact the case regarding all that exists, regarding God (defined by Scripture) and everything else (all that He made) that constitutes the metaphysical make up of all that is real. It is the actual state of affairs, as God knows it in perfect self-knowledge and perfect knowledge of all that He created and controls. In this light, Jesus is the truth (Jn. 14.6) in that He embodies and reveals the truth (the metaphysical state of affairs), in human terms (as a human being with complete humanity, being fully God and fully man) for human knowledge regarding God, the world, and His relationship to the now fallen world.

2. Knowledge

Knowledge refers to knowing the truth or understanding the actual state of affairs in the world, which is God's creation that operates under His rule, and is dependent on Him. Thus, to have true knowledge or knowledge of the truth means a person understands something about the real world (the real world that God created) without error or contradiction. On one hand, it means there is conformity to what God knows is the truth about Himself and all things. On the other hand, this understanding is coherent in accord with God's coherent understanding of all things. Naturally, it is incomplete knowledge of what God knows; hence, knowledge involves process; it involves "coming to know." Although man is not omniscient, he still may know things truly though not exhaustively.

Incomplete knowledge that corresponds with the mind of God, at some humanly finite point, must cohere with exhaustive knowledge of all things; because God's knowledge and revelation is perfectly and completely coherent. At bottom is the fact that God is true in all He knows and reveals, so, there can be no contradiction in His thoughts; otherwise, something false would be present, and that is impossible.

Of course, one must believe what he claims to know or it would not be knowledge. In this sense, knowledge involves assenting to the truth of something and relying upon it in some way. The fact that people may believe things that stand in contradiction to one another shows that believing, though necessary for knowledge, is not sufficient for it. Contradictory things cannot both be true, thus, when two people contradict each other, someone believes what is false (perhaps both do so) and believing what is false is not true knowledge. Knowledge involves true belief. Furthermore, holding true belief is not sufficient for knowledge because someone may believe something that turns out to be true on some arbitrary basis. It may turn out that a person's firm belief that he will win at the gambling table is true, but a belief grounded in arbitrariness is surely not knowledge. Nor is it knowledge if we arrive at a true conclusion through invalid argument form. Therefore, philosophers speak of knowledge as justified true belief (JTB). This indicates that there must be some evidence or good argument based on good evidence that grounds (rationally justifies) true belief.

The philosophical definition of knowledge as justified true belief (JTB) functions within the context of philosophical disagreement, with an orientation to propositions. JTB is surely necessary in some contexts, in contexts where disagreements abound and important implications are at stake. However, not all knowledge has the three ingredients of justification, truth, and belief. I can know that I have pain in my back, that God is my Father, and that the blue-feathered thing in front of me is a blue jay, without being able to justify these beliefs. How could I prove that I have back pain? To whom would I offer such proof? Must I offer it to the doctor to whom I give testimony of my pain? Why is it even necessary to prove it (outside any legal context)? These questions reveal a practical dimension to knowledge that JTB does not govern or even address.³

³ Cf. Edmond Gettier, *Analysis* 23 (1963): 121-23. Gettier's challenge to JTB is significant. Alvin Plantinga builds on Gettier's examples to ground his view that we attain sufficiency in knowledge when we have warrant, but establishing the conditions for warrant is not an easy task, *Warrant and Proper Belief* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993) 31-40.

Notably, a Christian epistemology goes beyond JTB in more than one way. It transcends the narrow philosophical definition, claiming, as we shall see, that JTB may be necessary for knowledge in *some* cases, but *it is not sufficient in any case* because it lacks the single ingredient that is both necessary and sufficient for knowledge. The goal here, therefore, is to show that in the rich biblical notion of knowledge, submission to God is that ingredient (necessary and sufficient for knowing truly, rightly, properly). We need to say more about submission, but for the moment, it is enough to note that “submission” is an umbrella term that includes such things as: acknowledgment, assent, reliance, commitment, obedience, and love. In this paper, Christian virtue refers primarily to submission.

3. Autonomy

Autonomy is a term that designates the claim or practice of independence from God. It is claiming or functioning epistemologically in some way independent of Christ. It is man-centered or world-centered regarding the standard of truth. In various ways, this outlook denies God’s voice in creation and Scripture. As we shall see, the assertion by human beings of autonomy is the central problem of epistemology. It is the problem for human understanding of God, man, and the world since the fall.

Submission to God contrasts with autonomy. It refers to acknowledgement of God’s Word in Scripture as the ultimate standard of truth; it indicates the refusal to operate in any way independent of Christ in the pursuit of truth. Operating according to this standard is teleological; it is a goal that man must pursue in a process that aims at restoration in the image of God by sinner-saints. The consequence of autonomy is deception, and the consequence of submission, along with avoiding deception, is growth in knowledge.

4. Circularity

In trying to exercise wisdom with respect to how people know things, and in trying to do so in a Christian way (thus, in trying to develop a Christian philosophy regarding epistemology), it will become evident that circularity is inevitable. Rather, the challenging claim is that in a Christian theory of knowledge, people must begin with knowledge of God and His world in order to know God and His world (properly and truly) and to grow in this knowledge (properly and truly). It is *epistemic* circularity because it

is a function of human knowing. We can now give some development to the notion of epistemic circularity.

III. The notion of epistemic circularity

Epistemic circularity refers to the Christian claim that in order for human beings to know *God* or to know *anything* that God has created, they must submit themselves to God, rejecting autonomy. This needs clarification in the following four ways. 1) First, to access truth, man must submit to what God has revealed through His creation and through Scripture (Scripture is a restorative word from God that is necessary because of man's fall into sin). 2) Moreover, epistemic circularity means that knowledge is the possession of all people because God revealed it to them in such a way that they know Him in knowing His world (Ps. 19.1-6; Rom. 1.18-25). The foundation of coming to knowledge of the truth is the fact that knowledge has *already been granted*; man must already know (and *he does in fact already know*) in order to grow in knowledge by data gathering and rational extrapolation. 3) However, the knowledge of God that people possess in knowing His creation is darkened because of the sin of attempted autonomy, rebellion, and insubordination (they are "darkened in their understanding," Eph. 4.18). They suppress what they know of the world and, through it, of God (Rom. 1.18). What they know because of God's revelation granting them knowledge (knowledge that they clearly perceive, Rom. 1.20), they do not understand because they have exchanged the truth of God for a lie (Rom. 1.23). What they know is now under a cloud of utter darkness. 4) Therefore, *if man is going to know anything in truth he must submit to what he knows but denies*. Before the fall, knowledge of the world and of God (of God through the world, and of the world in knowing God) did not have the encumbrance of insubordination (asserted autonomy and willful disobedience). Since the fall, insubordination blocks man's knowledge of the world and of God through it.

What then is epistemic circularity in this context? The circularity is that man must begin with the knowledge of God and the world that he possesses by God's gift, in order to know God and the world in an ever-expanding way. He must acknowledge what he knows of God and God's creation in order to grow in knowledge. Critically, he must submit to God (to Him personally in knowing His world) in order to know Him. Therefore, the great problem of knowledge is not human fallibility but human culpability, because sinful man suppresses what he knows of God and the

world by God's gift. The problem is not some abstract intellectual deficiency. Instead, the problem is ethical; it is a concrete personal unwillingness to submit to God. Hence, human disobedience breaks the circle of knowledge, and man seeks to build a house of knowledge on the foundation of his denial, denying that he knows God and His world by His gift in every act of human discovery.

Pointedly, the supposed "advance" into the knowledge of good and evil (Gen. 3.5) plunged the human family into radical ignorance. It is so radical that fallen man can know *nothing* in truth without submission to the voice of God. Does this mean that the natural man does not understand that $2 + 2 = 4$? A simple answer that gets to the heart of this paper is that things add up quite differently for believer and unbeliever regarding this formula. The Christian has true knowledge of this equation and he is justified in believing it while the non-Christian does not have true knowledge of it, and he is not justified in believing it. Granted, he has some kind of knowledge of this formula: he does "know" that $2 + 2$ does not equal five, but four. However, it is not true knowledge because true knowledge involves submission to God in the act of knowing.

To be sure, the formula *per se* ($2 + 2 = 4$) is not ethically qualified. Furthermore, the claim here is not that the knowing person is ethically qualified, say, as a responsible person in his intellectual pursuits. What I am claiming is that a person's knowledge is ethically qualified. That is, knowing things (knowing objects, knowing what *it* is) is not only personal knowledge (knowing by a responsible person), but it is also interpersonal in that it inescapably involves a relationship with God with respect to every fact that human beings come to know. Therefore, as we shall argue below, there is no bare "I-it" (subject-object) dimension to knowledge. Knowledge is an integral aspect of a human being's personal relationship with God. Therefore, if we deny (or simply neglect and deny by default) the interpersonal dimension of our knowing, if we thus claim some kind of autonomy in our thoughts, then all of our "knowledge" is lost in great darkness (Mat. 6.23).

True knowledge is not simply seeing something "out there" in the world in such a way that what is in the mind is coherent (that is, consistent with other things embraced in the mind) and conforms to what is out there. Coherence and conformity are *necessary* but not sufficient for growth in true knowledge. In this connection, it is important to distinguish between how a person *begins* to know the truth properly and how he or she *grows* in knowing the truth properly. Submission is the only requirement that is both necessary and sufficient for the knowing process

to begin (for a person to enter the epistemic circle). True knowledge is ethically and personally qualified and stands in contrast to distorted knowledge. Knowledge that man suppresses is real “knowledge,” but it exists in a heavy fog of denial, in the denial of what man knows of God and the world by God’s gift.

Submission to God is necessary for true knowledge, and when it is present, true knowledge is present (it is thus also sufficient for knowing properly and truly). This is the case for the beginning of knowledge but not for growing in it. For growth in knowledge, submission is necessary but not sufficient because other things are also necessary such as: critical thinking, open-minded humility, and the principles of JTB.

True knowledge is like a truly good act in a rich biblical sense of what is good. To help a little old woman cross a street is a “good deed,” but if the one helping does not do this act from a heart of love for God and for the glory of God, then despite the conformity here with the standard of a good act, the action is not good in a full biblical sense. The claim that unbelievers (those who do not believe in Christ by submitting to His authority) do not have true knowledge of the formula $2 + 2 = 4$ does not deny that they may have some of the ingredients necessary for knowledge. However, it means that they lack one ingredient that is necessary for knowledge in all cases: submission to God in the act of knowing. If we focus, as we do in this paper, on the beginning of knowledge and on what is required to get the ball rolling, then we should note that submission to God is not only necessary, but it is also sufficient for true knowledge. To know the truth is a much richer reality than a quantitative thing. The goal, therefore, is to capture some of what a biblical and *qualitative* conception of knowledge means. Here we face the need to defend epistemic circularity, as we discuss what it means. To that task, we now turn.

IV. Biblical support for epistemic circularity

We will now cover the biblical meaning of knowledge in five points. Each point will add another weight to a scale until the full weight of the argument becomes evident. A Christian view of coming to true knowledge by epistemic circularity comes to expression in Scripture when we consider the following passages: 1 Timothy 6.3-5, Colossians 2.1-10, 1 Corinthians 13.1-2, Romans 1.18, Matthew 6.22-23, and 1 Corinthians 2.14.

1. Understanding nothing and deprived of the truth

A good place to begin to set forth a Christian conception of epistemic circularity is 1 Timothy 6.3-5.

If anyone teaches a different doctrine and does not agree with the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the teaching that accords with godliness, ⁴ he is puffed up with conceit and understands nothing (μηδέν ἐπιστάμενος). He has an unhealthy craving for controversy and for quarrels about words, which produce envy, dissension, slander, evil suspicions, ⁵ and constant friction among people who are depraved in mind and deprived of the truth, imagining that godliness is a means of gain.

This example of a false teacher presents a case in point regarding knowledge of the truth that helps us understand epistemic circularity. With all that he knows and teaches, remarkably, he “understands nothing” (he knows nothing; he is epistemologically empty). These people (false teachers and their disciples) are in epistemological darkness because of disobedience to the sound words of the Lord Jesus Christ. Together with their disciples, they are “depraved in mind” and “deprived of the truth” (v. 5). There is an intellectual side to this condition but it is inseparably ethical because it does not accord with godliness (v. 3). They are epistemologically empty because what they “know” does not conform to the teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ (it is μὴ προσέρχεται, it does not even *come near to* His teaching), nor does it accord with godliness (it is out of accord with teaching that is “respect for God” oriented).

From this starting point, we can state the essence of a Christian epistemology. In the most fundamental sense, unless there is humble submission to the words of Christ, (ultimately the Scriptures of OT and NT) and thus to God speaking in Scripture through Christ by the Holy Spirit, there is no worthwhile epistemology, there is no understanding of anything, and there is no access to the truth. It is bold to affirm that a form of “knowledge” exists in an epistemological void.

What then is required to access the truth and to understand things, to have true knowledge or knowledge of truth? Submission to God’s speech is required. Thus God must speak. He must reveal Himself, His will, and His mind regarding things, and man must hear His voice in a virtuous way; man must follow God in humble submission to image Him, with the goal of godliness. If we enquire about how human knowing begins, we can put this requirement for accessing truth in better light.

How then does knowing begin? The answer to this question presupposes the fact that fallen man is in the extraordinary condition of understanding nothing and of being without truth. It presupposes the problem of sin and man's need because of the fall. Granted, man's knowledge is always incomplete. Hence, the fact of process is unavoidable, but the problem within view here is not human fallibility but human culpability.

Thus, the question has two dimensions. How does knowing begin? How does knowing continue? For both questions, the answer is that knowing begins and knowing continues by God speaking and man submitting to God's speech. This epistemological answer relates to the definitive and progressive renewal of man created in the image of God; but fallen from it and in need of restoration to that image and likeness (Eph. 4.24; Col 3.10). The answer is humble submission to the words of Christ. Personal submission to Him is required. We must submit to His voice wherever He speaks because God always speaks with authority.⁴

Now we can see the circularity in relation to Scripture. Man must line up his thoughts with the words of Christ for teaching and living in a God-like way ("If anyone teaches a different doctrine and does not agree with the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the teaching that accords with godliness, he is puffed up with conceit and understands nothing," 1 Tim. 6.3). In a word, there must be submission to the words of Christ, to His speaking, in order to attain knowledge. It is not a matter of coming to know to ground submission (not initially or foundationally for beginning to know, nor for continuing to grow in knowledge). There must be submission to what is spoken in order to avoid being in a state of understanding nothing (the state of epistemological emptiness).

The "Knowledge" that people have of things (doctrine, teaching, thoughts, imaginings, and corresponding conduct to which the knowledge is inseparably bonded) is not actual knowledge in a rich biblical sense of the term when it does not accord with the words of Christ. That is, what they know, what they have thoughts about, and what they grasp in their minds or imagine is true are all void of truth in the full sense of the term.

Does this refer to those thoughts that do not line up with the words of Christ in contrast to other thoughts that do so line up? No, the language

⁴ Cornelius Van Til, *Christian Apologetics* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, 1976) 33.

here is much more radical than that. Because their thinking does not accord with Christ, they know *nothing*.

How can this be so? This brings us to a significant epistemological problem. Being out of accord with the words of Christ must involve something more than having points of discord. It is deeper than that. It is not simply a matter of quantity. If the point here merely concerns pieces of information that are out of accord, then there would not be utter epistemological emptiness (false teachers would know some things; there would be partial or incomplete knowledge). Given man's finitude, all human "knowledge" is incomplete in a quantitative sense. However, the idea here is that the amount of knowledge one has that is true, right, and proper knowledge is such because the person who has it meets the requirement of submission to God, by submission to the words of Christ.

Of what then is Paul speaking when he mentions the disagreement with the sounds words of Christ? What is at work in the different doctrine that is not according to image-bearing godliness? It is a posture of heart. It is a frame of mind affecting all their thoughts. Their understanding is empty (they understand nothing, v. 4), they are depraved in mind, and they are deprived of truth (v. 5, the teachers are in the same category as the people they teach). Because Paul speaks of a mindset, it is difficult to restrict the ignorance in view to religious matters or biblical teaching (cf. Eph. 4.17-18, they are darkened in their understanding; Rom. 1.18-25, they exchanged the truth of God that they know by means of created factuality for a lie).

Even if we interpret Paul's words to Timothy in a restricted sense (limited to biblical understanding), the point of epistemic circularity remains: if teachers (or students) of Scripture do not submit to God speaking in Scripture, then all that they "know" of Scripture is "deprived of truth" (1 Tim. 6.5), and they in fact understand none of it (6.4). Unless a person submits to God's voice in Scripture, he cannot understand anything that God says in any portion of the sixty-six books of the Bible. For example, he may "know" that Adam is the first human being, but his knowledge of this fact is deprived of truth; he totally misunderstands it.

2. The assertion of human autonomy

In Colossians, Paul sheds more light on the "frame of mind" (1 Tim. 6.4) of those "deprived of truth" (1 Tim 6.5).

For I want you to know how great a struggle I have for you and for those at Laodicea and for all who have not seen me face to face, ² that their

hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, to reach all the riches of full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of God's mystery, which is Christ, ³ in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. ⁴ I say this in order that no one may delude you with plausible arguments. ⁵ For though I am absent in body, yet I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good order and the firmness of your faith in Christ. ⁶ Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, ⁷ rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving. ⁸ See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits [stoicei/a, principles] of the world, and not according to Christ. ⁹ For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, ¹⁰ and you have been filled in him, who is the head of all rule and authority (Col. 2.1-10).

The mindset in view involves the pursuit of wisdom (the empty and deceitful pursuit of wisdom or claims to wisdom) in a way that is "not according to Christ" (v.8). In view is the standard of a philosophy (v. 8) that advances its claims by plausible but deceitful arguments (v. 4). The standard on which this philosophy grounds itself is twofold: "the traditions of men" and "the elementary principles of this world."⁵ In these two phrases, we have man-centeredness not God-centeredness and creature-centeredness instead of Creator-centeredness respectively. In that these people "do not depend on Christ," they involve a principle of autonomy and self-sufficiency. The philosophy of life comprised of wisdom and knowledge (v. 4) in a belief system (v. 7), and based on plausible arguments (v. 4) has a standard to which it conforms. In terms of the two main standards of truth (often at odds and often working together in the history of philosophy), rationalism and empiricism, the standard of truth about which Paul warns is the autonomy of human reason and the self-sufficiency (autonomy) of human experience.

The two passages (1 Tim. 6 and Col. 2) fill each other out. Therefore, the mindset that disqualifies even partial knowledge from true knowledge is the assertion of, and commitment to, human autonomy. This is the ultimate presupposition of the non-Christian worldview. It governs all that people grasp with the mind, it deceives, and it deprives of truth in such a radical way that those who commit themselves to human autonomy know

⁵ There is some ambiguity regarding the "principles" of this world because we only have access to Paul's meaning through his refutation of the false teaching in view. Nevertheless, the warning about asserted autonomy is clear.

nothing (especially in their reasoning or arguing, Col. 2.4). In modern application, this warning alerts us to the danger of the Cartesian principle of belief in: the self-sufficiency of human reason and experience in the pursuit of knowledge and wisdom.

On the other hand, to acknowledge dependency on Christ everywhere is the consistently Christian position. Paul is telling us how to avoid deception. If we operate on a man-centered or creature-centered presupposition, which is simply the presupposition of human autonomy, then we will be susceptible to deception. If we accept the autonomy meat grinder, then whatever goes in at the top comes out at the bottom as “autonomous ground beef.” Caution: there is danger here for believers in Christ. This is a warning to guard against a man-centered outlook in which autonomous self-sufficiency is a harmful remnant of the believer’s sinful past.

Commitment to human autonomy leads away from truth. It prevents access to true knowledge. It locks man in the darkness of epistemological emptiness (1 Tim. 6.3). Thus, insubordination to God or lack of submission to the words of Christ bars man from true knowledge.

Is this darkness simply something spiritual? That is, does it refer to spiritual truths in contrast to the general factuality of the “real” world? The problem here is that the darkness is so great, so radical, that those in this condition “understand nothing.” We cannot restrict the darkness to a spiritual compartment over against a physical compartment of reality. The only two “compartments” of reality that exist are the self-sufficient God and everything that He created. Consequently, knowing a frog in a pond is a spiritual act; just as knowing God is a spiritual act because we know God by means of the expression He gives of Himself in created things.

3. Meaningless noises that amount to nothing

From 1 Corinthians 13.1-2, we derive a precondition for intelligible communication between human beings and between human beings and God: love (i.e. Christian virtue): “If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. ² And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.”

Without love, I am a clanging cymbal or a noisy gong and I am nothing. Speech (v.1) and knowledge (v.2) without love are nothing more than meaningless noises that amount to nothing. This applies to all levels of

speech and thought from the words of the mechanic to those of the philosopher. A clanging makes no sense. The sound a clanging object produces is meaningless. The understanding that lies behind "communication" is so far from truth and knowledge that it reduces the personal "communicator" to nothing. The things known, the knower, and the attempted communication of knowledge are all nothing; they are all meaningless.

If I *am* a noisy gong or a clanging symbol then my speech is meaningless noise. If I *am* nothing then my knowledge, understanding, and even faith are meaningless. Therefore, the "knowledge" I have is in a profound sense not knowledge at all. It is not true and it fails to attain to truth. We have to call it false knowledge, distorted knowledge, or relative knowledge. In a sense that sounds extreme to say the least, Paul categorically classifies knowledge without love as something unintelligible.

Is this simply exaggerated rhetoric to make a point? Scripture calls this unintelligible something "knowledge" at the same time that it refers to it as meaninglessness and nothingness. Obviously, both ideas are here in 1 Corinthians 13 since that which is meaningless is what someone may understand, namely, all mysteries and all knowledge. Granted, there is a rhetorical point in speaking about *all* mysteries and *all* knowledge but this is a powerful *a fortiori*. It argues that what pertains to all knowledge must be the case with regard to any knowledge that anyone may possess. Otherwise, the point Paul is making would have no relevance to anyone because everyone must admit to having imperfect knowledge.

The force of this claim (that Scripture refers to the unintelligible something as knowledge) stands even despite the fact that the comparison in verse one is between meaninglessness and speech and not between meaninglessness and knowledge (i.e. understanding). Two points show why this is the case. First, speech is the communication of thought and understanding. It is difficult to take Paul here as referring to elevated (angelic) speech in some kind of disjunction from analogously elevated (universal) understanding. Second, and most important, the meaninglessness of speech is parallel with the nothingness of understanding because they both apply to what "I am." Therefore, speech that expresses understanding and understanding that comes to expression in speech are together unintelligible because they both reveal what I am without love. This is not simply exaggeration. Paul is making a far-reaching claim about knowing the truth.

Why call this a case in point of epistemic circularity? We can call this epistemic circularity because the precise knowledge in view does not

come by reasoning from premises to conclusions. It does not even come by experience through our sense perceiving faculties though there is no exclusion here of reason or experience from growing in knowledge. Our rational and empirical faculties are necessary for growth in knowledge, but they are not sufficient. Love is what is sufficient for knowledge. Ultimately, the love in view is love for God. Love for our neighbor manifests the love of God “shed abroad in our hearts” (KJV, Rom. 5.5). Our love has its cause in His love for us: we love Him because He first loved us (1 Jn. 4.19). Without love for God (that overflows to others), all that we “know” and attempt to communicate is unintelligible, we understand nothing (1 Tim. 6.3), and we are, therefore, in epistemological darkness, utter darkness.

4. Romans 1.18

¹⁸ For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. ¹⁹ For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. ²⁰ For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. ²¹ For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. ²² Claiming to be wise, they became fools, ²³ and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles. ²⁴ Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, ²⁵ because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.

This text shows that man knows God and His world by God’s gift (what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them, v. 19), but he suppresses what he knows by his unrighteousness (v. 18). The knowledge that is in reality darkness (knowing things but understanding nothing) is much larger than some kind of partial knowledge of spiritual things in contrast to the remaining things in the field of knowledge. This cannot be the case because there is no metaphysical realm of spiritual truth that exists in contrast to a metaphysical realm composed of the rest of reality.

All knowledge is thinking God's knowledge after Him (even knowing error correctly). Therefore, man knows nothing without knowing God in knowing it. So intellectual darkness, when it occurs, must cover the entire realm of truth.

Thus, being in epistemological darkness is like being physically blind. *Mutatis mutandis*, it is like being deaf or mute. Recall that in 1 Corinthians 13, Paul makes a connection between meaningless thoughts and meaningless speech. Being mute simply goes a step further because not just the sounds are meaningless; the distance from intelligibility is so great that there is no perception of sound (unbelievers are deaf), and there is no utterance of sound in communicating speech. Moreover, when a person receives definitive restoration in the image of God, the new creation in the image of God occurs by the action of God that is analogous to, and illustrated by, the healing of people who are blind, deaf, and mute. Fallen man's epistemological condition is such that He cannot see, hear, or speak the truth of God that surrounds him within reach of his sense perceiving faculties.

Are we to restrict the impact of these analogies to spiritual things? More precisely, should we restrict the impact of these analogies to a spiritual dimension of metaphysics in contrast to a physical dimension of metaphysics? Are we to divide the knowledge of metaphysical reality between knowledge of the Creator and knowledge of His creation?

The answer to all of these questions is no because every created fact is a communication from God, as Psalm 19.1-6 indicates.

The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork. ² Day to day pours out speech, and night to night reveals knowledge. ³ There is no speech, nor are there words, whose voice is not heard. ⁴ Their measuring line goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. In them he has set a tent for the sun, ⁵ which comes out like a bridegroom leaving his chamber, and, like a strong man, runs its course with joy. ⁶ Its rising is from the end of the heavens, and its circuit to the end of them, and there is nothing hidden from its heat.

This Psalm helps us understand the references to the creation in Romans 1. We should note that the things of the created order in their existence in time have a voice and they speak in words through all the earth. Heavens and sky "proclaim his handiwork" (v. 1). The day and night cycles pour out speech and reveal knowledge (v. 2). Consequently, no place on earth lacks the warmth of God's speech, just as no place from

east to west lacks the warmth of the sun (v. 6). Moreover, God controls every fact for the good of His people (Rom. 8.28). All of history is the unfolding of His plan (Eph. 1.11). Every event is a providentially governed stage in the realization of God's plan.⁶

In a word, all that God created and controls is theology. Theology is literally God's speech ("theo-logos," God speaking or God's speech). He speaks in Scripture and in creation. Granted, we call the study of God's speech by the same term, theology. In a derived sense and in distinction from God's own action of speaking, theology is man's study of God's speech (God's speech is infallible and man's speaking about God's speech is obviously fallible). Because God speaks in Scripture and in created reality, there is an inseparable connection between metaphysics, epistemology, and ethics. Metaphysically speaking, the world *is* God's speech (this answers the "what is it?" question). The *content* of knowledge (epistemological substance) in all fields of study is therefore God's speech. Finally, God speaks with authority wherever He speaks; so, man *ought* to receive all that he studies in science, in the broadest sense of the term, for the glory of God in humble submission with awe, thanksgiving, praise, and love.

Again, consider the epistemic circularity that is present here. In all acts of coming to know, man confronts the face of God and hears the voice of God. He has the obligation to acknowledge that this is the case and He is to learn with that mindset, or he misses the point of it all. If he denies (neglects, does not acknowledge) the voice of God that he hears in created factuality, then his "knowledge" is cast into utter darkness.

What then is necessary and sufficient for knowledge? The conditions for knowledge are not truth and justification regarding beliefs (JTB); these conditions may be necessary at times, but they are not sufficient. Instead, one condition is both necessary and sufficient. It is humble submission to the voice of God (unpacked as awe, praise, thanksgiving) regarding any fact; it is humble submission of the perceiving/reasoning image bearer to what God clearly causes him to know. Presupposed, understandably, are the metaphysical realities present by God's creative work that include man's God-given faculties for perceiving, experiencing, and reflecting on God's voice in creation. However, that which is necessary and sufficient

⁶ Cf. Cornelius Van Til, The Defense of the Faith (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, 1967), 11. "The facts and laws of the world are what they are because of God's plan with respect to them. Therefore his knowledge of the world is involved in his plan for the world. Thus his knowledge of the facts and laws of the world precede the existence of the world."

for human knowledge of any fact is a humble heart that submits to that fact as the language of God, the voice of God, and a communication from God, which man is to receive and use for the glory of God.

5. Matthew 6.22-23

What solves the problem of the great darkness that Jesus speaks of in Matthew 6? "The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light, ²³ but if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!" Context deals with the choice of love for God over all earthly things (v. 24). The consequence of the unloving heart (the bad heart illustrated by the bad eye) is that the inner man lives in extreme darkness like the darkness of a blind person. Physical blindness illustrates the blindness of the natural man (of man in his fallen, abnormal, and actually *unnatural* condition). This great blindness extends farther than physical blindness; it goes deeper than physical blindness. A person could be physically blind yet have a good eye of the heart. In that case, he is not in great darkness even though the body may have difficulty functioning.

What then is the nature of this great darkness? How does it relate to physical objects that the person with a bad eye cannot see? Because Jesus speaks of the deepest seat of perception and function, the darkness is total. He can see nothing. It is not the case that he can see the sunrise and sunset but not see spiritual things. He cannot see anything. Although he looks at the sun, perceives it, and reflects upon it, he does not see it. He is in total darkness! This is so because the darkness is at the deepest center of the inner person, and it is so because the sunrise and sunset are spiritual things, no less than matters of the kingdom of God such as the new birth.

In John 3, for example, Jesus says that Nicodemus cannot understand earthly things (3.12). This means that he cannot see (v. 3), believe (vs. 12, 15), understand (v.10), receive (v. 11), come to (v. 20), speak (v. 11), bear witness to (v. 11) know (vs. 8, 11) and do (v. 21). What is it that he cannot understand? He cannot understand-believe-receive the kingdom (v. 3), heavenly things (v. 12), Christ (vs. 15, 18), the name of the only Son of God (v. 18), light (vs. 20-21), what is true (v. 21), and earthly things (v. 12). Evidently, the things of the kingdom or "spiritual" things include both earthly and heavenly things; included are light and truth, which in a word means that knowledge is in view, particularly the knowledge of God (Jn.1.1-18). Nicodemus does not understand birth and the blowing of the

wind (3.4-8). He does not understand the lesser (the less difficult to grasp, the earthly) so, *a fortiori*, how much more difficult must it be for him to understand that which is greater (more difficult to grasp, the heavenly). It is so difficult that it is impossible for he is in darkness. He cannot see unless God gives him eyes to see by the sovereign work of the Holy Spirit who works “where he will” (3.8).

Interestingly, Christ enlightens all fallen men (Jn. 1.9), but still no one knows Him (1.10) or receives Him (1.11). Thus, though there is an enlightenment granted to all people, they are in darkness and cannot know either earthly or heavenly things. They are in total epistemological darkness and “how great is the darkness!” (Mat. 6.23).

The only way out of this darkness, this epistemological darkness, is by making the choice of love for God above all earthly things (Mat. 6.24, “no one can serve two masters, for...he will hate the one and love the other”). The choice of love for God is a choice to serve Him in relation to all earthly things. There can be no sacred-secular compartmentalizing of human life. Money cannot be master; man must subordinate money to God and all it represents regarding our possessions. We must sell all that we have and subordinate it to the kingdom (Mat. 13.44). Then, having met the precondition for knowledge, a sinner has freedom from his former darkness and can understand both earthly and heavenly things. Then, the journey of true discovery begins.

6. 1 Corinthians 2.14

The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.

When we hear that the natural man cannot understand the things of the Spirit because they are spiritually discerned (1 Cor. 2.14), we must take this as a reference to more than a narrow section of reality, the spiritual section. Like Jesus, Paul speaks in a broader vein. To be sure, the center of Pauline theology is “Jesus Christ and him crucified” (1 Cor. 2.2). However, it includes the wisdom, thoughts and mind of God (2.7, 11, 16) related to “what God has prepared for those who love him” (2.9, note the place of love for God in relation to understanding His thoughts or thinking His thoughts after Him), and to “all things” (2.15). We cannot restrict the reference to “all things” to all *spiritual* things. This is because the things prepared for those who love God include the resurrection of the *body*

associated, with the placing of *all things* in subjection under Christ (1 Cor. 15.20-28). Of course, there is an emphasis on matters of redemption, because without redemption, there is no release from epistemological darkness; but clearly, the darkness pertains to the center of human existence at the depth of man's being. Therefore, fallen and unredeemed man knows nothing in a way that meets the test of truth. He is in ignorance or epistemological darkness that is astounding in its density.

V. Application

Our perceiving faculties are afflicted with an abnormal condition in which everything is yellow to the jaundiced eye.⁷ If the world out there to behold is not blue tinted, but if the lens of the eye is blue tinted, then the eye will see everything incorrectly and the knowledge gained will be distorted and false at every point. From this angle, what we know by sense perception in some combination with reason is nothing more than epistemological blackness. All that we know is fool's gold. The view we have of the facts of science and the systems of thought into which we put them are such that we understand nothing, we are nothing, our speaking is meaningless, and we gain nothing by them. This means that there is no justification for what the natural man believes. He asserts the self-sufficiency of human reason and experience. This starting point in the quest for truth bars him from true knowledge.

Some illustrations will help unpack the fullness of true knowledge before we draw together some conclusions.

1. The number one tennis player in the world

If we deny or simply do not acknowledge the Creator when we experience the beauty of a leaf or the radiance of a sunset, then we do not understand the communication. We miss the point. *We do not know what we experience and know.* We cannot help but know the things that we perceive with our eyes like a sunset. However, if we see but do not understand then we know in some sense and we do not know in another sense. This "tension" about human knowledge is complex, and it pertains to the rich biblical notion of knowing.

⁷ K. Scott Oliphant, "Epistemology and Christian Belief," Westminster Theological Journal (Spring 2001): 179.

Because of what it takes to have true knowledge, we can affirm that a non-Christian Roger Federer, though number one in the world of tennis, does not understand tennis. He does not know what he is doing (he does not know it, he does not know himself in his experience of it, and he does not understand his doing of it). If we grant this perspective as an ultimate perspective that is biblical, then we ask this question, "What difference does it make in the real world?" Because of God's common love (Mat.5.44-45) and the fact of a remnant image of God in fallen man (Gen. 9.6; James 3.9). Christian and non-Christian tennis playing may overlap in nature or quality and there may be some actual overlap in the knowledge that each player has of the game. Obviously, the non-Christian may come to an understanding of the game "narrowly conceived" that excels Christian understanding. That said, we must think broadly about the game of tennis. Whether acknowledged or not, the one who takes up the game takes up a sacred task. Playing tennis is not secular in contrast to something sacred like reading Scripture. All the facts that a tennis player learns are indirect words of a message from God to His image bearer. These words share God's thoughts with man so that man can think God's thoughts after Him. This sharing is for communication, for co-union, and therefore it is an invitation to fellowship with God (Ps. 19.1-6; of course, redemption requires God's restorative word that the Psalm goes on to explain). The world where man plays is the kingdom of God (the field is the kingdom, Mat.13) whether we are thinking of a country, city, or stadium. The principles of gravity, inertia, friction, and geometry that govern the activity of all participants are nuances of God's wisdom. We grapple with God's wisdom when we study the relationship of string tension to weather conditions, court surface, and ball speed. How can someone have wisdom or true knowledge of tennis if they do not acknowledge God's kingdom and speech? How can they know the game if they do not know (acknowledge what they know but suppress) that tennis *is* an expression of divine speech that calls to fellowship with God and obedience to Him? All of the principles, details, and nuances of factuality that make up the game of tennis (narrowly and broadly conceived) are words in a message from the Creator to His creature. They are components of communication that are there for our understanding. If the communication is not received for what it is and used in obedience to the Speaker, then it is not understood. The game of tennis is not known. The number one tennis player does remarkable things *in the dark* because, though fallen, he is still the image of God, but he does many remarkable things in the dark.

What are the implications of this view of knowledge? Could I still speak like this if I were to play against Federer at Wimbledon? Could I look across the court and say, “Roger, you do not know the game of tennis”? Could I say, “you serve and volley in ‘tennis-ological’ darkness (in epistemological darkness)”? If there is true knowledge of the game, then the player will enjoy it, and every bit of enjoyment will lead to thanksgiving to the triune God. Every marvel and every challenge will lead to a sense of awe at the wisdom of God, and it will encourage praise to the God of such wisdom. Experiencing tennis (or biology, or mechanical engineering) will mean experiencing an invitation from the Lord to fellowship with Him. Accordingly, the tennis player will acknowledge God’s voice and submit to His will in the way he plays the game. He will seek to please the Lord in the attitude with which he plays and put to good use all his earnings. He will not do his tennis work on Sunday unless he has assurance from His risen Sabbath king that such work is fitting on the Lord’s Day.

2. Blue Jays and the knowledge of God

Epistemic circularity can be “fleshed out” by consideration of our personal experiences with animals. While typing these words, blue jays came within inches of my laptop to take peanuts I put there. I enjoyed watching them, in effect, sneak up on me, grab the peanuts and scurry off. Then one came, took a peanut, hopped on the chair, dropped it to the ground and left. I picked it up and placed it on table again. Eventually, he (or one of his friends), came back, picked up the nut, then dropped it, and stayed a while looking at me as if to say, “What is going on?”

When he flew away, I asked myself the same question, “What is going on?” I picked up the nut and shook it; it did not rattle; the shell had not been broken, but there was nothing inside. That is why the jay left it in wonderment. I can only marvel at this ability to perceive the value of a peanut on the part of a blue jay. I can only wonder, and take delight in seeing this evaluation, and devaluation of the peanut. I can only marvel in the Lord as I experience this gift to the human family, to me. This awesome creature displays the wisdom of God in an interesting and delightful way.

Surely, I must conclude that this created thing is God’s voice that among other things expresses a warm invitation to fellowship with Him. He invites me to have even more delight in Him as He shares His thoughts with me in this way. Thus, I know Him, it, and myself in the same act. I know the thoughts of the Lord and see the delightful wisdom of my Creator. I know it (the jay, a sunset) as His word to me inviting me to

fellowship, calling me to learn more of His creation, and through the creation to learn more of Him. Marvelously, I know myself as a person in personal contact and relationship with the Lord. I know myself as someone loved by the Lord, and because I can think His thoughts after Him, I know myself as His image bearer, able to image His thoughts in my thoughts, to reflect them in a creaturely way, as His creation myself, but still able to reflect them. Since He speaks to me in this way (showing love, warmly inviting to fellowship, indicating my image bearing ability) and since He speaks with authority as my Creator, I must also conclude that I have obligations before Him. I have the obligation to learn more and more of the world aiming to reflect His wisdom in my understanding of it. Here I have the deepest foundation for learning the three R's; this teaching grounds a philosophy of education that knows no limits in either scope or enthusiasm. Learning about blue jays, flowers, color, and shape is a duty that I have to God and a delightful, fulfilling, and satisfying duty it is as well. Moreover, I have the obligation in my knowledge to acknowledge Him, to acknowledge His speaking to me, to welcome it, to praise Him for it and for what it reveals about Him. As His image bearer, I have the obligation to receive His communication to me as clearly and correctly as I am able, and to use it for Him, to reflect Him (to be what I am before Him), and thus to use it for His glory.

However, the delight of my experience of the Lord turns to dismay when I try to glorify Him but find myself failing to do so. I forget to acknowledge Him in all my ways; I forget that the blue jay is His gift to me, which He gives me to enjoy and to know in knowing Him for His glory. In other words, I see myself as a sinner, an ingrate surrounded by the marvelous gifts of God. My sins block my vision of the world around me, turning the brightness of the sun into the darkness of night. In this condition, I am a blind man walking around stumbling over the facts of life. I am so in the dark that I cannot hear or even speak. I am blind, deaf, and mute regarding the facts of life that I sense but cannot understand.

At this point in my experience, I need the rest of Psalm 19 about God's speech. I need to hear about the "creation-speech" of the Lord to understand better, how it is that I confront the face of God in every fact surrounding me (19.1-6), but I also need to hear the good news that the rest of the Psalm conveys to sinners like me:

⁷ The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple; ⁸ the precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the LORD is pure,

enlightening the eyes; ⁹ the fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; the rules of the LORD are true, and righteous altogether. ¹⁰ More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb. ¹¹ Moreover, by them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward. ¹² Who can discern his errors? Declare me innocent from hidden faults. ¹³ Keep back your servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me! Then I shall be blameless, and innocent of great transgression. ¹⁴ Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O LORD, my rock and my redeemer.

Here is the relief to my heart that I need, as I own up to my sins in the acknowledgment that goes with my acknowledgment of the Lord in every fact and circumstance of life. I find the answer to my sinfulness in “my rock and my redeemer.” The same Lord that speaks to me with such astounding love in His creation-speech also speaks to me in the Scriptures, in the perfect law of the Lord (v. 7). This word is a restorative word that revives the soul (v. 7) and rejoices the heart (v. 8). His commandments enlighten the eyes (v. 8); they are delightful beyond the delight of “much fine gold,” and beyond the sweetness of honey dripping from the honeycomb (v. 10).

3. Seeing stars

Another way to illustrate epistemic circularity (as defined in this paper) is to make some comments about seeing a distant star through a telescope on a clear night. To know what it is that I am seeing as I gaze heavenward, I must acknowledge God’s Word written large across the heavens. Denying or simply failing to acknowledge God’s speech is comparable to opposing or forgetting the fact that I see the star in another galaxy because of the telescope. Accordingly, I misperceive the object in view. In the case of the telescope, I will think that the star is something “near” within reach of the powers of human vision. I will think that the star is in one galaxy when in truth it exists in another galaxy. I may see the star at the same time that I am light years away from understanding it. On one hand, I see it, but on the other hand, I do not see it. With regard to the matter of distance, though I see the star, I am “worlds” from seeing it correctly. Likewise, if I do not see the star as a communication from God (if I blatantly deny this truth or simply neglect to affirm it), then I am light years away from understanding and knowing it. I do not know what it is as to its metaphysical makeup; I totally miss the point regarding what it is. I

am so far away from seeing it in truth that my view of the stars amounts to darkness, and great is that darkness.

Moreover, if I miss the fact that the star is a medium of communication from God through His creation, then I miss the point of the information regarding every detail that I think I understand about the star. This is the case because the content of every fact is theology as God's indirect act of speaking. In turn, I fail to know and understand the call to fellowship that God extends to all people (and thus to me) in the act of sharing His thoughts with human beings through created things. Because He shares His thoughts with His image bearers, then the communication is a warm and loving invitation to human beings everywhere to draw near to Him. If I do not know and acknowledge the Speaker who reveals Himself in the facts of stars and all other things, then I do not have an intimate knowledge of the star I see. Because it is a revelation of God (His self-revealing speech), then I must know Him in knowing it. Knowledge involves personal relationship with God. The person lives in radical tension that grows in his grasp of things that invite him to fellowship with God, if he does so without fellowship with God.

The personal dimension of true knowledge means that to know a star includes grasping it in the mind, with thanksgiving to God, for the warm display of wisdom that He shares with human beings. How could I *know* that the star is God's word to me, and thus know it truly, if I do not receive the experience of knowing it with joy and thankfulness to Him?

Finally, as His image, I have the design of reflecting and glorifying God. This fact governs the use to which I must put what I learn, if it is to yield true knowledge. Do I know what poison is if I drink it to quench my thirst? Do I know what a razor blade is if I run my fingertips over its sharp edges for fun? To know the facts in truth, I must know how to use that which I know. If I am to know any particular thing, then, in how I discover it and make use of what I discover about it, I must obey God's commandments, love my neighbor, and seek to glorify God in thought, word, and deed.

4. Coming to know and growth in knowing as a Christian

If submission is both necessary and sufficient for true knowledge, then how can it be that Christians disagree with one another in their interpretations of the Bible? The answer to this question is that in the cases of disagreement there are deficiencies regarding many things that

are necessary for knowledge. For example, critical thinking is a requirement in Christian discipleship. Disciples have the duty to test all things and to hold fast to the good (1 Thess. 4.25). This is just to say that Christian love is to abound in knowledge seasoned by discernment (Phil. 1-9-11). Accordingly, different levels of growth in critical thinking skill that come by practicing open dialogue will lead to different conclusions. Where conclusions contradict one another, someone lacks a necessary requirement for growth in true knowledge.

How does submission function as both necessary and sufficient for knowledge in a definitive sense and in a progressive sense? The example of a professed belief in Christ may help make this point. Consider the person who “knows” and states the truth that Jesus is Lord. However, if he does not commit himself to Christ from the depths of his heart (if he does not choose Christ above all earthly things), then he does not know the truth that Jesus is Lord. Thus, a person can only say (from the heart) that Jesus is Lord by the Spirit’s enlightenment (1 Cor. 12.3). Now, to focus on Christian development, growth in knowledge requires both a submissive heart and a meditative process of testing all things. Christians come up short in both of these requirements; they must grow in both, and as they do, they will arrive at different stages of true knowledge. Recognition of this fundamental fact is critical for growing love between believers with differences that are sometimes contradictory, and sometimes not, but merely cases of semantics, at other times.

Therefore, by submission to the voice of God (in Scripture and in creation), the believer has true knowledge of God, but this does not mean that he knows God exhaustively, or that he automatically knows all the teachings of the Bible. Submission is necessary and sufficient to know God truly and to begin the journey of coming to know Him progressively. Of course, presupposed in the necessity of submission to God, at every step on the Christian journey, is the hearing of God’s voice in creation and Scripture. Many things are necessary for righteous hearing, such as critical thinking and careful gathering of information (good rational extrapolation and good empirical judgment). Both are necessary in a Christian understanding of the glory of God, by hearing His declarations through creation and in Scripture. However, excellent logical skill and acute powers of observation are not sufficient for knowing God or His world. Knowing God and His world are inseparable. To know God, we must know Him through His creation because it is through the creation that God reveals Himself to us. To know the creation, we must know God because the creation is His personal and self-revealing speech. Therefore,

unless we submit ourselves (our data gathering and reasoning selves) to God and to the authority of His speech, then we know neither God nor His world.

VII. Concluding Remarks

The fact that the natural man is in total epistemological darkness has many implications. One thing we can conclude is that it is wrong to give ground to the unbeliever's claim to autonomy while trying to call him to repentance. This is a subtle point when we try to communicate to unbelievers in a way that not only communicates but also allows us to go on their turf and expose their failures and need of Christ. Surely, we have to "communicate" everyday with those outside the household of faith and surely, it is legitimate to destroy arguments where necessary in order to bring all thoughts captive to Christ (2 Cor. 10.5). However, Paul warns of the deception of philosophy that is world-centered and man-centered (Col. 2.8; cf. Eph. 5.6-8, "Let no one deceive you with empty words...at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord"). He warns against a captivity to which this mindset leads (Col. 2.8, "See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit" that is independent of Christ). Furthermore, though we must work with unbelievers according to the need of the moment (Eph. 4.29, with wisdom toward outsiders that comes to expression in gracious speech Col. 4.5-6), it is surely wrong to fan the flames of autonomy on one hand, while trying to quench these same flames in a call to repentance on the other hand. We must not cater to the assertion of autonomy by using reason as the final court of appeal by which to judge the truth of God clearly displayed in creation and Scripture. We must be alert to the smoke screen that is "let loose" when the unbeliever requires proof that this world has the triune God as Creator, and proof that He speaks clearly not only in creation but also in Scripture.

There can only be one ultimate and final standard of truth. If we grant merit to the Cartesian principle (and we must be on guard as to how we may do this in subtle and deceptive ways), we operate on thin ice rather than avoiding it. We go directly into the snare of philosophy and empty deceit. The request for evidence and proof for God involves commitment to the claim that the facts are not clear words from God that in fact make Him known to all people, and that require submission to the triune God as a key ingredient necessary and sufficient for true knowledge. We ask to be deceived, thinking perhaps that we are rationally equipped and capable to

hold our ground. This pathway is through a minefield. The only way of escape from a harmful captivity is by a disciplined mindset of devoted dependence on Christ. As Calvin put it, "Christian philosophy demands of us that we surrender our reason to the Holy Spirit."⁸ In other words, God's people find intellectual freedom in the way of submission to Christ, speaking clearly in the world He created and, in the Bible He inspired. Bondage to deception is the alternative for believers that do not remain alert and on guard in relation to the claim and the practice of autonomy.

How do we put these things to work in the academy? How to we put them to work in the factory? The full answer to these questions is beyond the scope of this paper, but we can at least note some very important principles which begin an answer.

1. Recognize the fact of epistemic circularity

We must recognize the fact of epistemic circularity, admit it, work with it, and work from it in our view of knowledge. That is, we must work with conviction regarding the fact that God has made Himself known to all people in such a way that they are without excuse for their unbelief, rebellion and sin. Thus, *the beginning of knowledge as well as its continuance is submission to what is already made known and grasped in the understanding.* We know God by divine revelation, by God's voice in creation and, because of the fall, now by God's redemptive revelation of Himself in Scripture. The fact of deaf ears does not alter the reality that fallen man knows God through His self-revelation. Being blind, deaf, and mute refers to the lack of light, sound, and speech that results from the determined rebellion against the knowledge of God that man has in his experience of every fact he encounters.

2. Note the loss of justified belief

Among other things, epistemic circularity means that it is impossible for those who cannot submit themselves to the law and authority of God (Rom. 8.7) to attain justification for any belief they may hold. They fail to have justification for belief in God that they suppress in their darkness, but they also fail to have justification for any belief about any fact. This point is astoundingly simple and profound at the same time: the unbeliever cannot construct a sound argument because he knows nothing properly or truly;

⁸ John Calvin, Golden Booklet of the True Christian Life (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1952) 22.

thus, he begins to argue with false premises that lead only to false conclusions. Simply put, every claim of knowledge regarding something (every truth claim) that he articulates fails to acknowledge, at least implicitly, if not explicitly, that it is the speech of God, an indirect personal communication from God to all human beings. The unbeliever lacks the necessary and sufficient condition to enter into the circle of true knowledge, which is submission to what he knows by God's gift but suppresses.

3. Avoid formal knowledge

The natural man's reasoning from premises to conclusions gives him a form of knowledge only. That becomes clear by evaluating his understanding by the rich biblical meaning of knowledge. The basis here is the necessary and sufficient conditions for knowing anything. The world of facts makes up the indirect speech of God. Man encounters, hears, and experiences factuality under the authority of God. It is inescapably personal. Therefore, knowing something is inseparable from hearing and harkening to the voice of God. To know a fact is to acknowledge that it is God's authoritative speech. Knowing requires thankfulness, elicits praise, and points the way to obedient service. Man must go where the facts take him. He must receive the data of sense in awe of the Creator, praise God for His marvelous wisdom that is displayed in the objects of the created world, work with the facts out of a sense of love for God, and use all that he learns to glorify God. Unless he uses his data collecting faculties and his extrapolating capacity of reason with the motive of love, according to the standard of God's speech, and for the glory of God, then all his "knowledge" is a form of knowledge that he continues to "learn" without arriving at the truth. All his understanding is *misunderstanding*.⁹ He operates in empirical and rational darkness and how great is that epistemological darkness!

4. Fear God and not man

Believers in Christ have no basis to fear the arguments of the most intellectually elite of our day. Those who oppose Christianity in their conclusions must do so because something is wrong with their premises.

⁹ Richard B. Gaffin, Jr., "Some Epistemological Reflections on 1 Cor 2:6-16," Westminster Theological Journal (Spring 1995): 116.

Apologists have the assurance that discovery of what is wrong with the arguments of unbelievers is there for the finding. It may take greater or lesser amounts of effort to find the failures and to explain them clearly in a way that communicates with unbelievers, on their turf, using their language. We step on their turf for sake of argument and for sake of love to the neighbor. This must sound viciously circular to many, but this is an assurance that rests everything on the self-attestation of God's wisdom in Christ and in Scripture.


5. Turn away from autonomy

Therefore, whatever we do in trying to pursue excellence in learning in any field of endeavor, and whatever we do in trying to share the claims of Christ with unbelievers (of the philosophical or non-philosophical bent), we must seek to do good to them. We must speak according to the need of the moment, and call them to turn away from their bottom line claim of autonomy. This of course may "turn some off" from our message, it may incur the mockery of many, but others may desire to listen on another day, and still others may believe by grace (Acts 17.32-34; cf. "those who through grace believed," Acts 18.27, because God opened their hearts as in the case of Lydia, Acts 16.14).

6. Rest on the creative work of God

Because the believer and the nonbeliever live in different cognitive universes, the only hope for fallen man, whether intellectually inclined or intellectually disinclined, is the creative work of God that causes the light of the gospel to shine in the heart (2 Cor. 4.6). It is not that we say "Yes" to the risen Lord to receive a new birth. Instead, we must be born from above in order to say, "Yes" to Christ. In order for those who hate the light (Jn. 3.20) to embrace it with love (to receive it, Jn. 1.12), as is required for true knowledge, they must be "born of God" (Jn. 1.13). Being born of God explains how those who cannot understand the kingdom of God (Jn. 3.3) are able to receive Christ and believe in His name (Jn. 1.12). Ultimately, it is by grace through the proclamation of the gospel that the Spirit brings rebels to a place of submission. He breaks the vicious circle of asserted autonomy, changes hearts of stone into hearts of flesh, and sets prisoners free from the bondage of sin and epistemological darkness. Then, having been set free, they make the choice of love for God above all earthly things; the process of growth in true knowledge begins. Finally, submission to the authoritative speech of God in both creation and

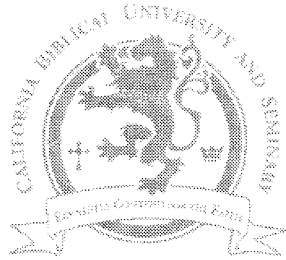
Scripture is fundamental in the Christian pursuit of excellence in all the sciences.

The remedy must address deaf ears, blind eyes, and mute tongues. Therefore, we have illustrations of restoration in the miracles of Christ regarding those afflicted in various ways by which they access the created world. The remedy is a sovereign miracle that restores eyes, ears, and tongues. The implication for our work of speaking the truth in love (Eph. 4.15), and speaking what we know to bear witness to what we have seen (Jn. 3.11), is that we throw out a lifeline to people perishing in the sea of fallen humanity. Have they drowned or are they drowning? Are they blind or going blind? Are they deaf or growing deaf? Are they mute or becoming mute? We must learn how to cast the lifeline to the dead, blind, deaf, and mute. As we do so, we depend on the surgical procedure that the Holy Spirit performs by the sword of Scripture. When He does His effectual work, epistemological darkness becomes epistemological enlightenment. 

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Personality Profiling

JUNGIAN ANALYSIS OF RICK WARREN'S SHAPE PERSONALITY PROFILING

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In the last chapter we discovered in general what Rick Warren's SHAPE program is as well as an in depth look at what he means by the S, H, A, and the E in SHAPE. The S in SHAPE refers to Spiritual Gifts that can only be possessed by a believer, as even Rick Warren asserts, meaning that only the "new man" can possess them. However, the Heart, Abilities, Personality, and Experience (the H,A,P,E in SHAPE) could apply to believers as well as non-believers. The impression is created that there is an attempt to combine the attributes of the new man (the S in SHAPE) and the old man (the H,A,P,E in SHAPE) in what Rick Warren describes as a "custom combination of capabilities." When Jesus warned us against putting new wine into old wineskins (the old man) . . . the wineskins did not burst right away, but after a season. Much, if not all, of Rick Warren's SHAPE (HAPE) is the old wineskin. So the only thing that is going to happen is that eventually, Warren's SHAPE wineskin is going to burst!

By now many of you must be asking, "If some of the teachings behind the other letters in Rick Warren's SHAPE are faulty, then how can we trust the teaching behind the remaining letter (P) in his SHAPE acronym?" Well you would be right! You can't trust it, and we will prove why! The individual letters of SHAPE as well as any value of combining all of the letters cannot be biblically defended. Even if four out of the five letters in SHAPE could be biblically defended, but one is in error, it corrupts the entire acronym. A little leaven leaveneth the *entire* lump. A little strychnine in the stew poisons the entire stew, no matter how excellent and fresh the meat, potatoes, and vegetables.

Once again I must point out that the actual personality profile questionnaire (the P in SHAPE) is not in Rick Warren's Purpose Driven Life book. Rather he gives a general description of it. In order to obtain the actual personality profile questionnaire that you take and fill out (and determine your score), you must do the same thing you did to obtain the SHAPE questionnaire. The personality questionnaire is a questionnaire within a questionnaire, in that it is embedded in the SHAPE questionnaire (the P in SHAPE). You may access one website's adaptation of it online at: <www.unl.edu/navs/resources/shape.pdf> or directly from Saddleback Church.

But before I go into detail to describe how Rick Warren's personality profile is based on Carl Jung's theories of personality, it would be very instructive to give you the background of how Carl Jung's psychology of personality found its way into evangelical Christianity. This can best be described in the following article on Myers-Briggs Temperament Indicator (MBTI), which will also clearly reveal where Rick Warren got his ideas for his personality profile embedded in his SHAPE questionnaire. We have received special permission to reprint this excellent article. We invite you to read it. It may be found in appendix C at the end of this book and documentary. It may also be accessed online at <www3.bc.sympatico.ca/st_simons/arm03.htm>.

As to the validity of the Myers-Briggs Temperament Indicator, as well as the abridged version known as the Keirsey-Bates Temperament Sorter, for determining your personality temperament, please refer to the following research article: "Measuring the MBTI . . . And Coming Up Short" at <www.work911.com/cgi-bin/links/jump.cgi?ID=4014>. The following quote summarizes Dr. Pittenger's findings:

As noted above, the Myers-Briggs™ instrument generates sixteen distinct personality profiles based on which side of the four scales one tends toward. Technically, the instrument is not supposed to be used to spew out personality profiles and pigeonhole people, but the temptation to do so seems irresistible. Providing personality tests and profiles has become a kind of entertainment on the Internet. There is also a pernicious side to these profiles: they can lead to discrimination and poor career counseling. Employers may hire, fire, or assign personnel by personality type, despite the fact that the MBTI® is not even reliable at identifying one's type. **Several studies have shown that when retested, even after intervals as short as five weeks, as many as 50 percent will be classified into a different type.** There is scant support for the belief that the MBTI® would justify such job discrimination or would be a reliable aid to someone seeking career guidance (Pittenger 1993).¹

In answer to the question as to whether Rick Warren's personality profile integrates the teachings of Carl Jung (in terms of the MBTI and the Keirsey-Bates), there are at least three places online which feature the actual SHAPE Discovery test (and at least three variations of the test . . . but both variations invoke Jung's terms: Introvert/Extrovert and Thinker/Feeler). These websites will be listed later in the chapter.

Rick Warren, in talking about the P component in The Purpose Driven Life, uses the same terminology coined by Carl Jung. Rick Warren contrasts Introvert/Extrovert and Thinker/Feeler . . . exactly the terminology and meaning promoted and intended by Carl Jung.² It is well-documented both by Carl Jung himself as well as by reputable scholars that Carl Jung obtained his personality theory by divination, necromancy, Taoism, astrology, paganism and evolution (refer to appendix C). My own correspondence with the Jung Institute in Zurich, Switzerland, confirms this. There is no question that Jung's personality theory and books constitute magic arts. Christians have no business drawing from his magic arts to minister or teach Christians to follow. It is so surprising that Rick Warren would utilize Jung's terms in order for Christians to plug this into their personality evaluation.

Believers should be aware of what the Bible says regarding *divination*:

¹ <<http://skeptdic.com/myersb.html>>

² Rick Warren, The Purpose Driven Life (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007) 245.

There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch, Or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer. For all that do these things are an abomination unto the LORD: and because of these abominations the LORD thy God doth drive them out from before thee. (Deut. 18:10-12)

Here is the *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* definition of *divination*:

The art or practice that seeks to foresee or foretell future events or **discover hidden knowledge** usually by the interpretation of omens or by the aid of supernatural powers.

What follows is an excerpt from a more comprehensive SHAPE profile, otherwise known as *Discovery Class 301*. It can be found at First United Pentecostal Church's website that uses it. The complete profile is posted at: <www.firstchurch.ca/pdf/Ministry%20301.pdf>.

The following excerpt from the SHAPE (Discovery 301) questionnaire is absolute proof of the Carl Jung rooted personality profile, or the "P" in Rick Warren's SHAPE program Discovery 301 Class. (This version of the SHAPE questionnaire is approximately 68 pages).

Class 301 – Discovering My Ministry—Page 46

It's obvious that God has not used a "cookie cutter" to stamp out people in a process of uniformity. He loves variety—just look around! There are no "right" or "wrong" temperaments. Rather, we need opposites in personality types to balance the church. Although there are many fine (and detailed!) personality assessments available, for the purpose of your ministry profile, we want you to consider just five aspects . . .

HOW DO I SEE MYSELF?

<p>Extroverted</p> <p>3 2 1</p> <p>extreme mild</p>	<p>Introverted</p> <p>1 2 3</p> <p>mild extreme</p>
<p>Thinker</p> <p>3 2 1</p> <p>extreme mild</p>	<p>Feeler</p> <p>1 2 3</p> <p>mild extreme</p>
<p>Routine</p> <p>3 2 1</p> <p>extreme mild</p>	<p>Variety</p> <p>1 2 3</p> <p>mild extreme</p>
<p>Self-Controlled</p> <p>3 2 1</p> <p>extreme mild</p>	<p>Self-Expressive</p> <p>1 2 3</p> <p>mild extreme</p>
<p>Cooperative</p> <p>3 2 1</p> <p>extreme mild</p>	<p>Competitive</p> <p>1 2 3</p> <p>mild extreme</p>

Note in particular that your personality traits are scored. These traits were derived from Carl Jung's practice of divination. The numbers assigned above were not originally used by Carl Jung (though Carl Jung practiced astrology, numerology and Ouija boards). The numbers were later introduced by Myers-Briggs, who codified these traits. Again we see numbers assigned to the Discovery 301 Class questionnaire, as seen above. Numerology is practicing or ascribing numerical values to hidden knowledge (including personality), not limited to predicting the future. Using this chart as though these numbers have some spiritual significance for a Christian is why this is numerology (a form of divination) which the Bible forbids.

Every SHAPE questionnaire adaptation online we have discovered (for which the churches credit Rick Warren's SHAPE program) uses the personality profiling derived from Carl Jung.

Another example is the First United Methodist Church in Mineola, Texas, which uses and adapts Rick Warren's SHAPE and specifically his personality profile. They state:

List your Kiersey-Bates personality type from the test:³

_____ (E or I) _____ (S or N)

_____ (T or F) _____ (J or P)

In this Jung-based personality profile, E stands for Extrovert, I stands for Introvert, S stands for Self-Expressive, N stands for Intuitive, T stands for Thinker, F stands for Feeler, J stands for Judging, and P stands for Perceiver.

If you visit the above site, you will see Warren's SHAPE questionnaire, but you will also note references to the Keirsey-Bates Temperament Sorter.

A visit to Keirsey's own website should remove any doubts that the Keirsey-Bates Temperament sorter is completely Carl Jung-based to the core, which they state by their own affirmation: <<http://keirsey.com/>>. (I have also confirmed this via e-mail with Keirsey's son whose father developed the profile). Similarly the Myers-Briggs website will authenticate the Carl Jung connection: <www.myers-briggs.org/about_mbti.basics.cfm>.

W W W

Now let's continue our examination of what Rick Warren discusses in *The Purpose Driven Life* regarding discovering your Personality (the P in your SHAPE).⁴

As fruit falls close to the tree, we can observe Rick Warren's teachings on personality being manifested throughout the world. Under the "P" in many different SHAPE sites conceived by Rick Warren, and adapted by a host of churches:

³ <http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/bojo/station3_WS.htm>.

⁴ Warren 245.

(see: [http://host73.hppc.org/hppweekly.nsf/hppweekly/03.24.02/\\$file/03-24-02.pdf](http://host73.hppc.org/hppweekly.nsf/hppweekly/03.24.02/$file/03-24-02.pdf)) > [Highland Park Presbyterian Church, Dallas, Texas, where Purpose Driven Life series are conducted] and <www.firstchurch.ca/pdf/Ministry%20301.pdf> [First Church in New Brunswick, Canada]), SHAPE states: **“Where does my personality best suit me to serve?”**

Then they quote 1 Corinthians 2:11 (LB), which says:

No one can really know what anyone else is thinking or what he is really like, except that person himself.

Note even in the erroneous Living Bible paraphrase, “what he is really like” would actually be what comes out of his heart. Often a person’s personality is observed by others. And even if the Living Translation were correct, there is nothing in it that would automatically tip us off how it would be used to show us how we are to best serve in the church.

Now let’s look at this verse in the King James Version:

For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. (1 Cor. 2:11, KJV)

Psychologists think man is body, soul, and personality. The above scripture is describing “spirit.” It is important to note that we all have unique personalities as different as a fingerprint, or as star differs from star in glory. But “spirit” and “personality” have completely different meanings.

And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Thess. 5:23, KJV)

Statements on Rick Warren’s Website

On Rick Warren’s Saddleback Church website also note, under the personality profile you fill out, that you must list “traits” and “types.” These are definitely psychology theory terms and this is determined by taking the Jung-based personality profile questionnaire.

Personality (“P” in S.H.A.P.E.)

Rick Warren: “For instance, two people may have the same gift of evangelism, but if one is introverted and the other is extroverted, that gift will be expressed in different ways.”

So where is one biblical precedent that a single spiritual gift was expressed in a different way because one Christian was supposedly introverted while another was extroverted?

Woodworkers know that it’s easier to work with the grain rather than against it. In the same way, when you are forced to minister in a manner that is “out of character” for your temperament, it creates tension and discomfort, requires extra effort and energy, and produces less than the best results. This is why mimicking someone else’s ministry never works. You don’t have their personality. Besides, God made you to be you! You can learn from the examples of others, but you must filter what you learn through your own shape.

Like stained glass, our different personalities reflect God’s light in many colors and patterns. This blesses the family of God with depth and variety. It also blesses us personally. It feels good to do what God made you to do. When you minister in a manner consistent with the personality God gave you, you experience fulfillment, satisfaction, and fruitfulness.⁵

The example of a woodworker is a natural ability, not a supernatural gift, so Warren’s example cannot even be applied.

W W W

Rick Warren: “It’s obvious that God has not used a cookie cutter to stamp out people in a process of uniformity. He loves variety; just look around. And there is not a “right” or “wrong” temperament. We need opposites to *balance* the church. The personality *traits* listed below are grouped in four couplets each with two opposing tendencies.”

⁵ Warren 245-246.

What Does the Bible Have to Say About “Balance”?

Balancing or reconciling opposites is another concept of personality theory drawn directly from Carl Jung's invoking Taoism's yin and yang (female, male). Jung's terms for yin and yang were “animus” and “anima,” which Jung described as “psychological bisexuality.” In other words, he believed that all human beings are bisexual. Jung compounded his perversion by promoting evolution in this very personality theory by believing that these male/female archetypes were derived from when humans were animals. But there is no reconciliation or balancing of male/female opposites because God created man and then woman as separate entities (“male and female he created them”) and even condemned any attempt by man to blur this line or create an appearance of blurring or crossing the line such as androgyny.

The apostle Paul records:

For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet. (Rom. 1:26–27; see also Deut. 22:5 in the Old Testament where even cross-dressing was condemned.)

The boundaries between male and female, in fact, are so clearly drawn by God that God even condemned the fallen angels who left their former or natural estate to have sexual relations with women producing the giant Nephilim offspring.

The apostle Peter records:

For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment; And spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly; And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes condemned them with an overthrow, making them an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly. (2 Pet. 2:4–6)

The Book of Jude records what happened to these angels as well as how God judged Sodom and Gomorrah for committing androgynous acts:

And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day. Even as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire. (Jude 1:6–7)

So it could not be any clearer what God says about such personality theories and Jung's perverted ideas of anima and animus. I am not suggesting that Rick Warren is promoting literal androgyny. But by invoking Jung's concepts of psychological and personality profiling, he is certainly endorsing and implementing his spiritual androgyny. So it is a wonder that Mr. Warren himself did not likewise condemn Jung's false teaching, instead of promoting his wolf's personality theory in the sheep's clothing guise of Christianity.

When Evil Is Good?

Jung thought the process he called individuation would result in the reconciliation of good and evil. And the idea and method of the yin-yang is nothing more than a Chinese form of divination taken directly from the *I-Ching*. But the Bible teaches that good will *never* be reconciled with evil.

Here is how Isaiah the prophet describes this:

Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter! (Isa. 5:20)

This is exactly what Carl Jung has done by attempting to merge good with evil. But you might say: "But doesn't the Bible talk about a need for balance?" Yes! But the word is used only eight times in the Bible and its primary and recurring theme and application refers to not cheating in scales, fair wages, and to administering justice. It has everything to do with right vs. wrong, not "there is no right or wrong answer!" And it certainly has nothing to do with personality typing. Here is the proof:

A false balance is abomination to the Lord: but a just weight is his delight. (Prov. 11:1)

Divers weights are an abomination unto the Lord; and a false balance is not good. (Prov. 20:23)

W W W

Rick Warren: “Your personality will affect how and where you use your spiritual gifts and abilities.”

Show me one scripture to back up this statement. Since you allegedly have the same personality before and after you are born again, how does your personality affect how and where you use your spiritual gifts that you can't even possess until you become a Christian or new creation? The personality of the natural man does not understand the things of the Spirit. The Lord gives spiritual gifts as He deems appropriate. The idea that the personality from the old man or nature could have influence over the spirit is frightening. In fact, completely different personalities could and did use various spiritual gifts in an identical way without the personality having any impact whatsoever on the operation of the gifts.

W W W

Rick Warren: “When you minister in a manner consistent with the personality God gave you, you experience fulfillment, satisfaction, and fruitfulness.”

So personality is the template and requirement for achieving fulfillment, satisfaction, and fruitfulness? Well if this is true, you can do this without even being born again . . . just follow your natural bent or personality! No, our fruitfulness is based on how much we are plugged into the Vine (Jesus) and the Vine Dresser (Jesus). Fruitfulness is fruit of the Spirit, not the personality.

Many Christians and apostles had completely different personalities yet often had the exact same ministry, e.g., whenever they were sent out or went out two by two. But you could not get personalities which were more contrasting than Paul, Peter, and John. You could make an argument that Paul's ministry was different in that it was to the Gentiles, but what does that have to do with personality? You could argue that other apostles carried out their ministry to different geographic areas, but what does that have to do with personality?

There are at least two different temperament categories circulating among churches which use Rick Warren's SHAPE program. Some have five temperament categories and some have four. On Warren's SHAPE questionnaire on his own Saddleback Church site he left out Jung's Thinker/Feeler even though he mentions it in his *Purpose Driven Life* book when he discusses SHAPE. The profile shown previously in the chapter

which assigns numerical values to the temperaments does list Thinker/Feeler. So are there four couplets or five couplets? This is very confusing and unstandardized. And what is the biblical basis for either four or five, let alone requiring them to be balanced? And what does "balanced" mean? Balanced in the individual or balanced in the church or both? Why not ten couplets or forty or ten thousand? Are there only four temperaments because paganism teaches that there are only four? Because Carl Jung teaches that there are four?

On the personality questionnaire on Rick Warren's site he also forces a choice of one or the other, e.g., you must choose Extrovert or Introvert. And just like Jung's personality theory, everyone is either an Extrovert or Introvert. So a person taking the profile is forced into a choice of only two options. What if he doesn't see himself as either, even assuming these terms are valid? The terms themselves set up straw man arguments in which we are led to assume or believe that the premise for Warren's opposites and the ones he drew from Jung are even correct. What if a person taking this test feels he needs seventy times seven couplets to choose from and can't be straitjacketed into Rick Warren's four choices of personality couplets? The Discovery 301 curriculum shown above states that God is not a cookie cutter, yet this is precisely what Warren does in his four personality couplet choices. The only difference is that instead of one cookie cutter mold, he offers us four or five mold choices. But even if a person believed in Jung and Warren's idea of reconciliation of opposites, he might reject totally the four or five personality choices Warren proposes and subjectively select his own criteria or couplets. The fact is there are no absolute truths (or right or wrong) in this framework, but the Bible requires adherence to absolute truth.

From Rick Warren's Discovery 301 Class (otherwise known as SHAPE) questionnaire, we read:

PLUGGING IN MY PERSONALITY⁶

Please remember to record your responses on your S.H.A.P.E. profile.

Instructions: Circle one or the other "I tend to . . ."

<p style="text-align: center;">Be Extroverted</p> <p>I prefer interacting with many people and gain energy from being part of a variety of activities.</p>	<p>or</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Be Introverted</p> <p>I prefer interacting with only a few people and gain energy from quiet reflective time. I am a good listener.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Be Self-expressive</p> <p>I am more open and verbal about my thoughts and opinions. I enjoy sharing these with other people.</p>	<p>or</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Be Self-controlled</p> <p>I tend to keep my thoughts and opinions to myself.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Prefer Routine</p> <p>I am more comfortable being involved in activities where I clearly know what is expected of me. I like closure and completion before starting something new.</p>	<p>or</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Prefer Variety</p> <p>I am more fulfilled by tasks that change and maybe even have some surprises. Finishing one task before starting another is not crucial.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Be Cooperative</p> <p>As I work with others, I easily see their point of view. I like being part of a team effort.</p>	<p>or</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Be Competitive</p> <p>I like a sense of challenge. It increases my effort and helps me overcome the obstacles.</p>

⁶ <www.saddlebackfamily.com/ministry/images/discoverytool.pdf>.

Are These Opposites?

The most obvious and baffling question that strikes me and stands out upon reading this chart is the fact that I was expecting to see genuine “opposites” or antonyms in the titles or headings of all four of Warren's personality couplets. Assuming they are legitimate terms to begin with, introverts and extroverts are opposites. Routine vs. variety could be opposites, though that is arguable. But I don't think it is abundantly obvious that self-expressive is the opposite of self-control or that cooperative is the antonym of competitive. It is easy to see that black is the opposite of white, that sweet is the opposite of sour, that thick is the opposite of thin, that high is the opposite of low, that shiny is the opposite of dull. Two couplets in the chart could qualify as opposites. But to say that self-expressive is the opposite of self-control, or that cooperative is the opposite of competitive is like saying a basketball is the opposite of a potato, unless there is some kind of esoteric abstract way of interpreting these as symbols or archetypes, in which case who then determines their true meaning or application? If anything, these two allegedly opposite characteristics show things in common. For example, a person on a basketball team who is very spirited or has *esprit de corps* is one who has *both* traits of being cooperative and competitive. (What the potato and a basketball have in common is that they are both round to a certain degree). A good preacher might have *both* self-control and be self-expressive. Opposites indeed may attract, but they may be just as likely to repel or neutralize.

Introverted vs. Extroverted

There could not be a more glaring link between Jung and Warren than this Introvert/Extrovert personality typing comparison. This should drive a stake right into the heart of Rick Warren's SHAPE profile! Virtually any first-year psychology major in college, let alone a person with a Masters in psychology or counseling should immediately recognize Warren's Introvert/Extrovert terms as Carl Jung terminology for personality profiling. A discerning Christian should reject this personality theory drawn from Jung's practice of divination from these two terms in Jung's intended meaning and application!

Regarding Warren's definition of introvert, does he mean by “quiet reflective time” one who practices Richard Foster's definition of meditation? And even if Warren means a biblical sense of meditation, this would once again qualify as a good trait. But why wouldn't or couldn't

extroverts (according to Warren's definition) also practice a quiet reflective time before the Lord? Warren forces us to choose "one or the other."

Self-Expressive vs. Self-Controlled

There are other problems with being confined to the choices Warren gives you in his personality profile. Christians would understand the term "self-control" as a fruit of the Spirit. Unlike Warren's contention that there is no right or wrong to temperament traits, self-control is very much a RIGHT trait. Its opposite is not self-expressive but one *without* self-control, or one who is licentious or lawless. And why does one have to choose between self-expressive and self-controlled under Warren's schematic. Why can't a person be both? Warren defines them as opposites . . . but this is very confusing because his titles don't even match some of his definitions. Christians could and should keep opinions to themselves with things which pertain to gossiping, but they should be very verbal with their thoughts about false teaching such as the foundation and theory of this very occult/pagan-based personality theory and very much carry out Matthew 18 to expose it or any other false teaching. In this case both opposites should apply and both traits would be a "right" trait, not "there is no right or wrong temperament trait" to your personality, as Rick Warren would have us believe.

Competitive vs. Cooperative

Now it is quite remarkable that Rick Warren would say in his personality profile that there are no right or wrong answers regarding the opposite personality traits he postulates that a person must possess (so that whether you are competitive or cooperative, either answer would be acceptable), yet he contradicts himself when he states on page 158 in his *Purpose Driven Life* (on which I commented earlier).

Rick Warren quotes Matthew 5:9 (MSG): "You're blessed when you can show people how to cooperate instead of compete or fight. That's when you discover who you are and your place in God's family."

Wait a minute, I thought competing was just as viable an option for your personality trait as cooperating? So if we follow Rick Warren's direction we should never choose "competitive" on his profile if we truly want to be blessed.

Regarding Competitive vs. Cooperative, all Christians should be like Paul to compete for the prize of the high calling of God, but there is no

need to be competing with each other, at least spiritually since all Christians get the same prize of salvation.

One may ask the question: "Christians are not supposed to compete against each other are they? Isn't that self-seeking?" Some kinds of competition within the body of Christ are actually healthy. For example, canvassing or having a search committee to find a teaching elder or pastor is competitive in order to discover who is approved to function as an elder. A church choir may require auditions which are competitive. Every time you apply for a job you are competing, and if you apply for a job in a ministry you are competing with other Christians. So does this mean you are not blessed because you are competitive vs. being cooperative, according to his quotes of Matthew 5:9 (MSG)? These personality couplets by Rick Warren are supposed to be opposites. So wouldn't the opposite of cooperative be uncooperative or rebellious? And wouldn't uncompetitive be the opposite of competitive? The problem is that the same person in the choir would have been both a competitive and cooperative person . . . he or she had to compete to get in the choir, but would have to be cooperative to be in this group. But if we adhere to Rick Warren's schematic, he would have us not only believe that cooperative is the polar opposite of competitive, but that we must choose between the two. But we could be both cooperative and competitive simultaneously. So they aren't necessarily opposites, if at all. And what biblical precedent would even require this dialectic?

Routine vs. Variety

Regarding preferring Routine vs. Variety, I might prefer routine with respect to liturgy, but want variety in what I cook and when I am on vacation. I might want to complete some kinds of tasks in life before starting something new such as college or military service, but I am constantly beginning new writing projects before I finish others and have several going on at the same time which are at various stages for a host of different reasons. A person might prefer having a variety of types of jobs such as postal worker and softball coach, but want a routine for some of the individual missions in life such as the route he takes to deliver the mail. So it is nearly impossible to make an absolute choice or choices that Warren has postulated. I could not in good conscience even take such a personality profile because of all of its internal problems as well as the poor if not impossible fit to my unique personality. This personality

schematic should be rejected by its poor logic and confusion alone, let alone its occultic foundation, rendering it unbiblical.

Another huge problem with his list of opposite personality traits, even assuming they could rightfully be ascribed to any or all people, is how do we know that the choices we are forced to make in this test apply for all time to a given person? (See the above-referenced article on the problems accurate measurements in the Myers-Briggs Temperament Indicator. For example, 50 percent of those taking the test had a different personality result only weeks later.) I could be cooperative this week but competitive next week. I could be cooperative at a picnic, family gathering, or church activity or ministry, but be competitive at church softball games or Bible quizzes. Or I could change again when I got married . . . got a job, had kids. All of one's traits could be in a constant state of flux throughout your life. And again assuming these criteria can be even applied to a schematic, how is Warren so certain that the same personality traits are automatically applied to a person after they are born again as they were before they were born again? Jung devised his terms like Introvert/Extrovert and Thinker/Feeler for what he deemed a "normal" individual. So what is an abnormal person? What personality profile would Rick Warren advise that we give an abnormal person? And how and where did he acquire the criteria or empirical data?

Now let us assume for the moment that all of Warren's definitions of his personality traits are legitimate and that there really are only four or five couplets to choose from and that his couplets truly represent polar opposites. Let us also assume that we know how we are balanced and that we even know what normal means. There still remains at least one more major hurdle to even begin to qualify his personality theory to perform any real road test. That is, how does Warren determine that his couplet choices are equally weighted? After all, to balance a scale, don't you need to have equal weight on both sides? And if the weights aren't equivalent, you must add or subtract weight from one side so that the scales balance. For example, the value of a professional sports figure is determined by supply and demand and how much he is worth to a given team or the sport in general if he or she is not in a team sport. Judging in ice skating, for example, uses weighted scores. So to use this analogy, how do we know that Introvert weighted value is worth 50 percent and Extrovert weighted value is worth 50 percent? Why wouldn't Introvert personality type weigh in at 75 percent and Extrovert 25 percent? Then let us assume that Warren has it right with each of his four or five menu-driven couplets and that each of the couplets is properly weighted. How

do you then weigh each couplet choice against the weighted value of another couplet? For example, how would you know that choosing Introvert over Extrovert would weigh in equally to the next couplet of Self-Expressive vs. Self-Controlled? Do all four or five couplets weigh equally? The fact is, Warren doesn't know, he doesn't supply any empirical data to back up his claims, and he gives misapplied scriptures to support his personality schematic. The bottom line is that his personality schematic is absurd and preposterous at best and occultic at worst.

Forced Choices and Church Discipline

Now if an attendee of Rick Warren's Saddleback Church does not complete this profile they can't become a member of his church. That is still another most troubling attribute of his SHAPE questionnaire. Should the attendee take the profile, then they meet with an advisor, mentor, or church leader in charge of this program at the church for an interview to evaluate their profile to "plug" them into the "right" ministry. How is this advisor going to evaluate, let alone enforce these impossible choices in the personality profile to complete the SHAPE test for a person's service and purpose determination for God?

Finally, even if these traits were all verifiable and, in fact, do exist in bipolar pairs, so what? What could they possibly tell us about the leading of the Holy Spirit, or how to obey Christ's commands? If somehow we even needed this secret information about our personality, wouldn't God supply all our needs because we first sought the Kingdom of God? And how does this information contribute to our sanctification?

In a dialogue I had with Erik Rees, who is one of the pastors administrating SHAPE at Rick Warren's own church, Erik Rees flatly denies any connection of Rick Warren's SHAPE to Carl Jung, in spite of the terms taken right from Rick Warren's book that Carl Jung either coined or developed into his personality theory: Introvert, Extrovert, Feelers, Thinkers.⁷

In my appeal to Saddleback Church, I inserted other useful Jung terms for context and clarity (but the main terms that Rick Warren uses I retained). Here is the e-mail I received back from Pastor Erik Rees at Saddleback:

⁷ Warren 245.

SHAPE is originated by Pastor Rick Warren, our senior pastor... not Carl Jung. There are NO connections between the two and there is absolutely no reason to try to connect them." 10/19/2004

—Erik Rees

Pastor of Ministry & Small Group Leadership Development

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Here is my response to him:

Dear Erik,

I don't know why you simply can't tell the truth about Carl Jung's connection to Rick Warren's SHAPE.

Here is Carl Jung's own glossary of just some of the terms or temperament profiling you have in your SHAPE program and in Rick Warren's Purpose Driven Church which I sent you and have printed out. And this is just the tip of the iceberg. These ideas and many others are also integrated into the 12-Step program. If it were not for the 12-Step program, there would be no such thing as Celebrate Recovery.

Ego: Freud's term for the aspect of the "psyche" that processes a person's "conscious" perception of reality. In a healthy person, it also controls the "id," so that satisfaction occurs only in socially acceptable and/or personally meaningful forms, and decides when to obey or disobey the "superego."

Introvert: Jung's word for the "type" of person who normally adapts to new situations by focusing "psychic" energy inwardly (e.g., through self-reflection and inner experience). (Contrasts with "extravert.")

Extravert: Jung's word for the "type" of person who normally adapts to new situations by focusing "psychic" energy on the external object (e.g., by being immersed in a social life). (Contrasts with "introvert." Also spelled "extrovert.")

Feeling: One of the four basic "personality" functions in Jung's theory of "types." A rational process whereby judgment is based on a thing's value. (Contrasts with "thinking.")

Personality: *An individual person's unique "conscious" and "unconscious" ways of adjusting to the environment and organizing his or her life. For Jung, personality is the expression of a "Self."*

Self: *The inner core of a person's "personality." For Jung, "Self" refers to a person's whole "personality" and represents the ultimate goal of the "individuation" process.*

Soul: *The non-physical aspect of human nature, believed by Plato and many others to be immortal. Philosophers often identify it with the mind, treating it as a "thinking" substance. Theologians often associate the soul with the "spirit." (See "anima" and "psyche.")*

Thinking: *One of the four basic "personality" functions in Jung's theory of "types." A rational process whereby judgment is based on what a thing is. (Contrasts with "feeling.")*

Type: *Jung's term for the natural tendency of a person's "psychological" disposition, as determined by the way he or she deals with "psychic" en-ergy (as either an "extravert" or an "introvert") and by the person's dominant function (i.e., either "thinking," "feeling," "sensation," or "intuition"). A person's type is especially noticeable by observing how he or she copes with new or stressful situations. Subsequent theorists have shown how Jung's theory defines 16 distinct types.*

Unconscious: *The aspect of a person's "psyche" consisting of everything that is not easily accessible to the immediate field of aware-ness. Freud relates the unconscious primarily to the "id," though the "ego" and "superego" are also partially unconscious. Jung gives the unconscious both a personal aspect (unique to each individual) and a collective aspect (shared by all humans). (Contrasts with "conscious.") (www.hkbu.edu.hk/~ppp/dow/dowglos.html).*

*Kindest regards in Christ,
James Sundquist*


So, it is nothing short of astonishing that Saddleback would deny any connection to Carl Jung in their SHAPE personality profile. Many of the authors that Rick Warren recommends and/or quotes such as Richard Foster and Gary Thomas consistently are quoting and endorsing the teaching of Carl Jung.

Here is another church that uses Warren's SHAPE profile:
<[www.firstchurch.ca/pdf/Ministry %20301.pdf](http://www.firstchurch.ca/pdf/Ministry%20301.pdf)>.

This is the longest Rick Warren SHAPE questionnaire I have found to date. It is sixty-eight pages long.

Other Pagan Influences to Warren's Personality Theory

Rick Warren goes on to suggest that "Peter was a sanguine," "Paul was a choleric," and "Jeremiah was a melancholy." This is based on the Greek pagan ideas of four humors, the fourth being "phlegmatic." Rick Warren offers no scripture to prove this, and even if he did, it would have to presume that the Greek pagan philosophy and mythology on which it is based (which Paul opposed) were true. Rick Warren goes on to say that "There is no 'right' or 'wrong' temperament for ministry" . . . the exact terminology used in all of the psychological personality profile tests. But the word "phlegmatic" means sluggish, lazy, slothful, or sluggard. Definition of *phlegmatic* in *Webster Dictionary*: "Not easily excited to action or passion; cold; dull; sluggish; heavy; as, a phlegmatic person."

If being a sluggard is neither right nor wrong, then why are there six proverbs which describe it as a wicked trait vs. a righteous trait? If it is neither a positive or negative quality, then why is the word "slothful" used fifteen times throughout the Old and New Testaments? 

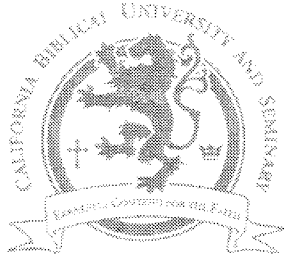
James Sundquist, BA

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An edited excerpt from [Who's Driving the Purpose Driven Church?](#)

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We Are Not in Kansas or Kiev Anymore

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When I am in my office, I am about 45 miles west of the heart of the entertainment industry in Hollywood, California. The drive takes an hour . . . or two or three, if there's traffic.

Increasingly, I am called to speak around the world in far away places such as Poland, India, Japan or the border of Laos. When I step on the plane, I find Hollywood movies and television programs. When I go into the jungle of the highlands of Thailand, I find satellite dishes run by generators connected by exposed wires that bring Hollywood entertainment into the flimsy grass huts. The children in these villages try to dress like the Hollywood stars they idolize and try to mimic their lives—right down to the smoking, drinking and sexual promiscuity.

Hollywood is not a geographic place anymore, but an entertainment industry that reaches the world. It is the United States of America's voice to people everywhere, especially the youth. As Jesus told the leading spokespeople of His day, "It's not what goes into the mouth that defiles a man, but what comes out of the mouth, this defiles a man" (Matt. 15:11,

CSB). All too often, what comes out of the mouth of our entertainment-oriented culture are movies such as *Kill Bill* and *Saw 3*.

When I drive to Hollywood to preview a movie at a screening, I visit studio executives to help them understand the influence that they are having on the children and grandchildren of the United States and the world. The good news is that many of them are listening. The type of entertainment being produced is gradually moving away from salacious, ultra-violent R-rated movies to family films with faith—movies such as *The Nativity Story*; *Charlotte's Web*; *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* and *The Pursuit of Happyness*. Even Rocky Balboa has found faith in Jesus Christ. Now, every studio is pursuing the Christian faith-based audience.

But even so, there remains a large residue of movies with rotten values in the bloodstream of the culture, and a significant number of rotten movies and television programs are still being produced. So while so much contributes to establishing society's mores, Hollywood no doubt has a secure foothold as the epicenter of what is popular and what is not. Clearly, what happens in Hollywood does not stay in Hollywood. What Lindsay Lohan wears, Justin Timberlake sings and George Clooney articulates will ripple its way not only to the heartland of America but well beyond. Indeed, the culture clash thrives from Kansas to Kiev.

Ready to Collide

Sometimes, the influence of the mass media of entertainment on far away places helps us to reflect on our own problems and vulnerabilities as well as our influence on the culture of the world. Recently, I spoke in Kiev, a city in the Ukraine that's emerging from totalitarian suppression. The pastor of the church where I preached told me that his father had been tortured for his outspoken faith in Jesus Christ in the very hotel where I was staying. Now this pastor has a megachurch of over 1,000 and a growing group of almost 200 churches. The mayor of Kiev is his Spirit-filled Christian friend. The president, whose wife is from America, is a thoughtful Christian. Business is booming.

Yet on the other hand, the Ukraine has the highest rate of AIDS/HIV, prostitutes and women sold into white slavery in Europe, and at night the streets are filled with empty alcohol bottles. In 1994, there were only 183 registered cases of HIV, but by 2004 that number had grown to more than

68,000.¹ “[The] Ukraine . . . has replaced Thailand and the Philippines as the epicenter of the global business in trafficking women,” an article from the *New York Times* noted.² While sin was no stranger when communism reigned in the Ukraine, one cannot help but notice how consumerism has adversely affected the nation’s youth.

So it is the best of times and the worst of times for the people of Kiev. They asked me to teach them media wisdom to navigate the treacherous rapids of the changing culture—a culture that seems to be at war with itself. The communist oppressor of the East has left in disgrace and the materialistic pornography of Hollywood has blatantly and seductively taken its place. Two great rivers of conflicting cultural values have converged into a raging torrent of cultural confusion. A churning flood threatens to sweep aside a bright future for the precious next generation.

How do people navigate the cultural rapids? In Japan, a home-school conference has grown phenomenally in the past few years as families consider taking their children out of schools where materialism is so rapacious that young girls are selling themselves to buy iPods. These Japanese flocked to listen to my talks on cultural wisdom in search of guidance.

What is happening, why is it happening, and how do the messages of the mass media of entertainment influence us, our children, each society and the world as a whole? Is there any hope? Can we navigate a safe passage to reach the still waters and green pastures of Christ’s kingdom?

The Decline of Nations

Observant pundits on all sides of the political spectrum have correctly noted a steady decline in the last century in the quality of culture. There has been a weakening of faith, an abandonment of values and an eroding of civility in our culture. The work of shaping our culture requires God’s wisdom to use the right tools so that He will be glorified.

In their CD *The Decline of Nations*, Dr. Ken Boa and Bill Ibsen point out three symptoms of decline: (1) *social decay*—the crisis of lawlessness, the loss of economic discipline and, finally, growing bureaucracy; (2) *cultural decay*—the decline of education, the weakening of cultural

¹ “Report on the Global AIDS Epidemic 2004,” [UNAIDS](http://www.unaids.org/en/) (2004), no. 52. <<http://www.unaids.org/en/>> (accessed December 2006).

² Michael Specter, “Traffickers’ New Cargo: Naive Slavic Women,” [The New York Times](http://www.nytimes.com) 11 Jan. 1998.

foundations, the increasing loss of respect for tradition, and the increase in materialism; and (3) *moral decay*—the rise in immorality, the decay of religious belief and the devaluation of human life.

Dr. Ken Boa and Bill Ibsen state that “symptoms of decline synergistically rot a nation from the inside out, making it vulnerable to attack from a variety of enemies.” Then they ask the critical question: What objective measures of social and cultural health can be used to determine how America is doing? To answer this question, they cite a report published in 1993 by William J. Bennett, the former U.S. Secretary of Education, who notes that between the 1960s and the 1990s there was:

- A 966 percent increase in the rate of cohabitation
- A 523 percent increase in out-of-wedlock births
- A 370 percent increase in violent crime
- A 270 percent increase in children on welfare
- A 215 percent increase in single-parent families
- A 210 percent increase in teenage suicide
- A 200 percent increase in the crime rate
- A 130 percent increase in the divorce rate
- A 75 point decrease in the average SAT score

“Improvements were made in the violent crime rate, welfare and teenage suicide in the 1990s,” Boa and Ibsen state. “However, the breakdown of the family remains of particular concern. Indicators point to nurturing relationships as a key factor to maintaining a stable society, while mass media entertainment often fills the voids left by family breakdown.”³

Such a Time as This

All too often, the prosperity of God flows into fruitless endeavors as succeeding generations begin to disregard the root of their wealth. America’s ancestors planted the seed of God’s blessing and left a rich inheritance in this land. But God has no grandchildren. He has only first-generation descendents who yield to His Spirit, live in His grace and enter His kingdom. If those children become selfish, indolent or corrupt, they eventually stew in their own sin. As God warned the Israelites:

³ Dr. Ken Boa and Bill Ibsen, [The Decline of Nations](#) (Atlanta, GA: Reflections Ministries, 2005).

Be careful that you don't forget the Lord your God by failing to keep His command—the ordinances and statutes—I am giving you today. When you eat and are full, and build beautiful houses to live in, and your herds and flocks grow large, and your silver and gold multiply, and everything else you have increases, [be careful] that your heart doesn't become proud and you forget the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the place of slavery (Deut. 8:7-18, CSB).

It is true that God's kingdom will never end and that it is advancing into the far reaches of the world. But many cultures that once embraced the values of Christianity have turned away from the Word of God as the cornerstone of their civilization. When this happens—when people forget to love God and follow after the false gods of selfish desire—they fall from His blessing. Those familiar with the Word of God know that at the end of human history there is great news. In the meantime, we will face trials and tribulations as Christian civilization ebbs and flows to all areas of the globe.

Yet in the midst of such cultural collapse, it is important to remember that God has called His people to go on His adventure into the entire world. He has called them to preach the good news that will redirect the tidal wave of conflicting cultures. His people constitute His Body, the Church, which has braved paganism and persecution to build hospitals, schools, orphanages and loving homes that have civilized societies. The Church is here for such a time as this.

In the Ukraine, the church where I preached conducts street ministries to reach the unsaved, youth ministries to rescue the rebellious, and schools to lead the children out of darkness. Other ministries at the church reach orphans and vagrants and bring the good news to performing artists. This is the grand old story of Christian faith. In the midst of cacophony, the people of God proclaim good news and restore lost souls. Where the gospel takes root, faith and peace replace animosity. Where God's grace is lifted up, war-torn lands become green pastures where children and families can flourish.

To quote from a paper titled "Ethics in Communications" from the Pontifical Council for Social Communications, "Viewed in the light of faith, the history of human communication can be seen as a long journey from Babel, site and symbol of communication's collapse (cf. Gen. 11:4-8), to Pentecost and the gift of tongues (cf. Acts 2:5-11)—communication restored by the power of the Spirit sent by the Son. Sent forth into the world to announce the good news (cf. Mt 28:19-20; Mk 16:15), the

Church has the mission of proclaiming the Gospel until the end of time. Today, she knows, that requires using media."⁴

Enough Already!

For the last few days, my e-mail box has been deluged by reviews from so-called evangelical Christian sources touting a New Age occult movie called *Conversations with God*. This movie was produced and directed by a man named Stephen Simon, who is a relentless proponent of New Age movies through his organization called the Spiritual Cinema Circle. What is strange is that this movie (to which *Movieguide*[®] gave only one star and a minus four) has received much praise from the reviewers of other evangelical movie sites. These reviews raise the question: Has the Evangelical Church gone the way of God's frozen chosen mainline denominations?

When I was in a mainline seminary in New York in the mid 1970s, the ecumenical Thursday night service was led by Hilda the White Witch, who was introduced by the bishop of New York. The Indian faker Sri Chinmoy, who claimed to be able to levitate, gave the Easter service, and the Lucifer Trust established their headquarters at the cathedral of St. John the Divine.

Most of the frozen chosen were oblivious to this occult takeover of the mainline churches. Those with a modicum of faith came to realize 25 years later (and too late) that these denominations were dead. They began to start splinter groups, which are now reviving the biblical faith.

The sea of e-mails I receive touting Luciferian movies such as *Conversations with God* is a heartbreaking déjà vu indicating that the Evangelical Church is turning into the Church of "do what you want" of Aleister Crowley. Like Telemachus, all we can say is, "Stop! And, wake up to the Good News and to the deliverance that only comes through Jesus Christ and His holy Word written."

What Can We Do?

One of the primary building blocks of the culture, the mass media, is a tool of communication, entertainment and art. Although anyone may

⁴ Pontifical Council for Social Communications, Vatican City, June 4, 2000, World Communications Day (cf. Vatican Council II, *Inter Mirifica*, 3; Pope Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 45; Pope John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, 37; Pontifical Council for Social Communications, *Communio et Progressio*, 126-134, *Aetatis Novae*, 11).

misuse a tool, most people involved in the mass media as creators, regulators and consumers are conscientious individuals who want to do the right thing, as they understand it. However, those who make up these groups often forget that their mass media choices have ethical weight and are subject to moral evaluation. Therefore, to make the right choices, they need to develop discernment and understanding.

Even many of the most astute Christians have become desensitized to cultural degradation. Many do not understand the consequences of different worldviews. They are ignorant of the persuasive power of the mass media of entertainment and do not know how to develop the discernment, knowledge, understanding and wisdom to be more than conquerors within the cultural turbulence. The good news is that there are effective ways for us and our families to learn how to be culture-wise and media-wise.

Pillars of Media Wisdom

As the director of the TV Center at City University of New York, I helped develop some of the first media literacy courses in the late 1970s. Since then, years of research have produced a very clear understanding of the best way to teach media literacy. Specifically, there are five pillars of media wisdom that will help build the culture-wise family.

Pillar 1: Understand the influence of the media on your children.

In the wake of the Columbine High School massacre, CBS president Leslie Moonves put it quite bluntly: “Anyone who thinks the media has nothing to do with this is an idiot.”⁵ The major medical associations have concluded that there is absolutely no doubt that those who are heavy viewers of violence demonstrate increased acceptance of aggressive attitudes and aggressive behavior. Of course, media is only one part of the problem—a problem that could be summed up with the sage biblical injunction, “Do not be misled: ‘Bad company corrupts good character’” (1 Cor. 15:33). As the results of thousands of studies on youth violence prove, watching media violence causes violence among children. Bad company corrupts good character—whether that bad company is gangs, peer pressure or violent television programs.

Pillar 2: Ascertain your children’s susceptibility at each stage of cognitive development.

Not only do children see the media differently at each stage of development, but also different children are susceptible to different stimuli.

As the research of the National Institute of Mental Health revealed many years ago, some children want to copy media violence, some are susceptible to other media influences, some become afraid, and many become desensitized. Just as an alcoholic would be inordinately tempted by a beer commercial, so certain types of media may tempt or influence your child at his or her specific stage of development.

Pillar 3: Teach your children how the media communicates its message.

Just as children spend the first 14 years of their lives learning grammar with respect to the written word, they also need to be taught the grammar of twenty-first-century mass media so that they can think critically about the messages being programmed for them.

Pillar 4: Help your children know the fundamentals of Christian faith.

Children need to be taught the fundamentals of Christian faith so that they can apply their beliefs and moral values to the culture and to the mass media of entertainment. Of course, parents typically have an easier time than teachers with this pillar because they can freely discuss their personal beliefs. Yet even so, it is interesting to note that cultural and media literacy and values education are two of the fastest growing areas in the academic community—a trend most likely due to the fact that educators are beginning to realize that something is amiss.

Pillar 5: Help your children learn how to ask the right questions.


When children know the right questions to ask, they can arrive at the right answers to the problems presented by the mass media of entertainment. For instance, if the hero in the movie your child is watching wins by murdering and mutilating his victims, will your children be able to question this hero's behavior, no matter how likable that character may be?

Educating the Heart

Theodore Roosevelt said that if we educate a man's mind but not his heart, we have an educated barbarian. Cultural and media wisdom involves educating the heart so that it will make the right decisions. So, how can you protect the eyes of innocence of your children and grandchildren? How can you redeem the culture?

In the following chapters, we will attempt to answer this question (and others) and lay the foundation for developing the wisdom necessary for

you to become more than conquerors over the toxic influences of the culture and the mass media of entertainment. We will unravel the debate about popular entertainment so that you can help your family and others become culture-wise. We will examine the tools you need to use to exercise discernment and make wise choices. We will help you ask the right questions to understand that moral movies, television and entertainment focus on honor, truth, loyalty and valor. We will also help you understand the nature of the fantasy and myth genres and the various critical tools necessary to develop an informed judgment about all art and entertainment. Considering the influence that the mass media of entertainment has on our culture, we believe that this book will be an extremely important and helpful tool for you, your family and even your church.

The truth of the secure hope available only in Jesus Christ is great news that needs to be shouted from the housetops. The people of God have a wonderful opportunity to manifest His grace. However, we first need to ascertain the state of cultural affairs. The work of shaping our culture requires God's wisdom to use the right tools so that He will be glorified. 

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