

THE CHRISTIAN STUDENT IN THE MODERN UNIVERSITY

by Stuart Fowler

A series of five lectures sponsored by the Monash Christian Radical Club and the Evangelical Union at Monash University, Melbourne, Australia, 1973.

LECTURE 1: FISH OUT OF WATER or SALT IN THE PICKLES

*For ever, LORD,
Thy word stands firm in the heavens.*

*Throughout all ages
Is thy faithfulness*

*Thou hast established the earth
So that it stands secure.*

*According to the ordinances decreed by thee
They still stand today,
For all of them are thy servants.*

*If thy law had not been my delight
I would have perished in my humiliation.*

*Never will I forget thy precepts
For by them thou hast given me life.*

*To thee, thee alone, I belong;
Liberate me,
For I have consulted thy precepts.*

*For me the hostile ones waited eagerly
Those who are hostile to God and his people
They waited eagerly to wipe me out.*

Thy testimonies I consider attentively.

*To all completeness I see an end;
Spacious beyond description is thy commandment.*

*O, how I love thy law; It is my study all day long.
Because of thy commandments I am wiser than my opponents
For they are continually with me.*

*I have more insight than all my teachers.
For thy testimonies are my study.*

*I have more perception, than the ancients,
For I pay close attention to thy precepts.*

*I have avoided every evil course of conduct
In my regard for thy word.*

*I have not deviated from thy decrees,
For thou, yes, thou thyself hast been my teacher.*

*How pleasant to my taste are your sayings,
More pleasant than honey to my mouth. {1}*

*From thy precepts I get understanding, Therefore I hate every false way.
Thy word is a lamp for my feet, And a light for my pathway.*

Psalm 119:81-105

'I have more insight than all my teachers, for thy testimonies are my study. I have more perception than the ancients, for I pay close attention to thy precepts'.

How can the Christian student maintain this confession in the modern university? How can it be maintained by the student as meaningful confession, and not just pious

sentiment?

This is the challenge set before every Christian who steps into the academic world of the university. It is a challenge that cannot be evaded without a denial of our Christian confession.

To meet this challenge we need, first of all, a critical understanding of the university. We need something more than the superficial impression that satisfies many, even among those whose whole working life is spent in the university. We need a critical awareness of the religious roots of the modern university.

THE MODERN UNIVERSITY

A Vice-Chancellor of Oxford University described the task of the University as a heaven-bound crusade on behalf of knowledge, truth, and virtue, 'with Christ our leader and Christ our inspiration'¹. That was over three hundred years ago, and many things have changed since then not least the nature of the university.

The modern university is frankly secular.² It operates on the assumption that religious faith, (belief or non-belief in God, has no relevance to the task of the university. The university is thought to be able to operate from a position of religious neutrality.

It is not denied that some sort of religious faith is important to many. In recognition of this the university ready to officially sanction the work of chaplains and religious bodies, and is prepared to provide for a religious centre on campus.

But all this is on the periphery, required because students, and staff, are also people. The central task of the university, its real work, concerns the secular area of life where Christian, Moslem, Jew, Hindu, atheist and agnostic, together with the followers of every other faith and non-faith, meet on common ground in pursuit of common goal.

The modern university likes to think of its task in terms of 'objectivity'. It is considered possible, and, for the university task, desirable, to isolate 'the objective facts' from the variables of the thinking subject; to isolate \that is observed, as fact, from the feelings, opinion, judgments; and pre-suppositions of the observer. {2}

Although the possibility of this strict objectivity has not passed without challenge in recent years, it remains a characteristic assumption of the modern university, even though all would not pursue it with the relentless zeal of Jacques Monod, the Nobel Prize winning

1 an oration by John Owen at the Comitia in July, 1954. Quoted from 'the Oxford Orations of Dr. John Owen' edited by Peter Toon (Gospel) Communications, 1971.

2 The reference is to Australian universities. In some other countries there are universities conducted by religious bodies with an explicit religious commitment. Even in many of these, however, what is said here is applicable in large measure. Very often the religious component in such universities is an extra added to the secular, 'objective' component that is shared with the confessedly secular universities.

geneticist and director of the Pasteur Institute, Paris, who confesses the objectivity principle as 'the only source of real truth'.

It seems that, in this way, the university can avoid the contentious religious issue, but if we look more closely we find that this secular commitment leads to an anthropocentric (centred in man) orientation. In the modern university, as university, man is Lord.

If the task of the university is defined, it is defined in terms of providing higher education and furthering the pursuit of learning and knowledge. In the modern university, by its very adoption of a religiously neutral stance, this task is committed to autonomous man. It becomes not only man's task, but the task of man who must make his own rules. Whatever gods there may be, they make no difference to the quest for knowledge in the secular field of the modern university. Here man is self-sufficient.

Some evangelical Christians support the rightness of this approach to the university task. Frank H.T. Rhodes, for example, insists that 'every scientist must set himself the goal of making the assumption 'God' superfluous in his field'. Rhodes does not believe that God is superfluous in man's life, or that God is just an hypothesis. He wants only to say that whether or not God exists is quite superfluous and irrelevant to the scientific task.³

Yet we should not miss the point that this anthropocentric orientation involves a religious commitment. It is religious be-cause it concerns the central religious issue of the origin of meaning. At least for theoretical thought, the origin of meaning is in man, or, at least, is accessible to man operating independently of God and his Word. There is no need to go beyond man.

It should not be thought that this confidence in autonomous man is the result of compelling philosophical thought or of scientific analysis and investigation. It is the fundamental conviction to which man commits himself out of the religious core of his existence before he ever begins to think philosophically or scientifically.

Monod calls it 'an axiomatic value', and stresses that 'the positing of the principle of objectivity as the condition of true knowledge constitutes an ethical choice and not a judgment reached from knowledge, since, according to the postulate's own terms, there cannot have been any 'true' knowledge prior to this arbitral choice'.⁴

Face to face with the Christian faith we can only call this 'ethical choice' an idolatrous confession of faith. God, a Creator and Redeemer, has revealed himself as the sole Origin of all meaning so that the fear of him is the first principle of all knowledge. To posit any other principle as the key to knowledge, {3} whether over the whole field of knowledge

³ The reference is to Australian universities. In some other countries there are universities conducted by religious bodies with an explicit religious commitment. Even in many of these, however, what is said here is applicable in large measure. Very often the religious component in such universities is an extra added to the secular, 'objective' component that is shared with the confessedly secular universities.

⁴ Jacques Monod: CHANGE AND NECESSITY (Collins 1972) p.163

or only over some part of that field, is simply a religious choice of the creature in place of the Creator.

In spite of its endeavours to maintain religious neutrality, therefore, the modern university does not escape the issue of religious commitment. It does commit itself to a religious direction in its activity and, in spite of the acceptance of this direction by many Christians, it is the antithesis of the Christian confession that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge⁵.

A third characteristic of the modern university, closely related to the first two, is its incoherence. The religious faith in man to which, in general, the university is committed, splits up into numerous factions more diverse than the various denominations of Christians.

There are the rationalistic factions and the irrationalistic factions. There are the positivists, the realists, the idealists, the marxists, the pragmatists, and variations of all these. For some, the positivists, the key to knowledge is the scientific method. For others, the Marxists, the key is the historical dialectic. For still others, the pragmatists, the key is autonomous reflective thought. So we might go on.

There are many, probably the majority, in the university who have never articulated the religious commitment underlying their work, Many Christians also come into this category. The postulate of objectivity and religious neutrality is so taken for granted that the underlying religious commitment remains hidden, and an approach to the academic task is adopted without giving any thought to the religious assumptions on which it is founded.

The lack of articulation in so many conspires to hide but cannot remove the diversity of religious commitment in the university underneath the facade of objectivity the university lacks unity. It is a vast melting pot of ideas where nothing ever fuses together. It remains incoherent, directionless.

It must be so, since nothing but religious commitment can give unity to human life, At the very core of his existence, man is religious, committed to the service of God or of a creature deified⁶.

Serving as a shelter for every variety of anthropocentric religious commitment, the university as such has no commitment other than the provision of shelter for the whole modern pantheon.

For this reason the university is not, and never can be, an educational community. It can never be more than a loose agglomeration of individuals.

For the average student, who sees the university as a path to a career, this incoherence will

5 Prov. 1:7

6 Romans 1:18-23

not be experienced as a problem. To the student who is both concerned for something more {4} than individual self interest and is aware of the social significance of the modern university, the incoherence can be the source of frustration and alarm. Since it is built into the very structure of the university there often appears no way of hope except in a radical assault on the existing university structure. It is little wonder that the modern university so readily sprouts revolution.⁷

THE CHRISTIAN STUDENT

The average Christian student when he, or she, first walks, into this environment is likely to feel like a fish out of water. How much he will feel like this will depend on his preparation for entering the university world, but few will avoid the reaction altogether. But, short of dropping out, the Christian student has no option but to find a working relationship with university as he finds it. This is done in various ways.

Some, sooner or later, abandon their faith. Finding so much in the world of scholarship that challenges the faith in which they have been nurtured, or, at least makes it superfluous, they opt out of that faith.

Other accommodate their faith. They modify and adjust their faith in order to harmonise it at every point with the world of secular learning. They tailor their faith to suit their learning. The result can only be a more or less secular faith.

Still others isolate their faith. There are various ways of doing this. One is the way taken by Frank H.T. Rhodes in the article quoted earlier. He sees faith and science two ways of seeing the one object, just like a view of a building from the front and from the back. Inevitably, the object looks quite different in two views. In a similar way we may expect faith to give us a view of the world that lacks quite different to the view given us by science. This should not worry us, since, like the back and front view of the building, they may be expected to differ but this does not mean contradiction. We need not try to reconcile them but just accept them both.

Science gives us the objective view; the view of man who takes the position of a detached observer. Faith gives us the subjective view; the view of man who takes the position of a participant. Although these views are sometimes quite different, they are both valid.

If we take this way we can go all the way with secular learning, though we will still have to choose which of the several ways we are going to go along with. Probably we will end up taking the way most commonly thought to be the right way in our particular field of study, or in the circle of scholars in which we move.

⁷ It is not only students who see the problem of incoherence in the modern university. Emeritus Professor Basil Fletcher, of the University of Leeds, for example, devotes a chapter to the problem in his book, 'Universities in the Modern World', (Pergamon Press 1968). Fletcher, who can hardly be called revolutionary in his approach, offers no real solution, but he does recognise the problem and suggests avenues that might be further explored in search of an answer

Another way of isolating faith is to use the fact-values distinction, or something of this sort. In taking this way we concede that facts, in themselves, are neutral, valueless. Facts, {5} even when combined in a factual system, are just facts. They provide the basic knowledge common to all men. Up to this point we concede the validity of the objectivity principle.

However, we will insist that man cannot live with bare facts without falling into emptiness. So we will insist that the objective facts of learning must be given values. As Christians we want to give the facts values that are drawn from our Christian faith. Our faith, however, does not affect the fact as facts. It only adds another dimension, the value dimension.

This approach has a special appeal for many evangelical Christians. The idea of the valueless fact has such wide support in the modern university that, by adopting it, the Christian at once establishes a rapport with his university associates. In addition it gives the Christian a basis for rejecting anything that threatens his faith. So, for example, he can, if he wishes, reject evolutionary theories on the grounds that they go beyond the facts to a subjective valuation of the facts. The same can be done with any other threats to faith without abandoning the large area of common ground in objective fact he shares with the rest of the university world. The position may become uncomfortable at times but need never be unbearable.

Of course, the Christian who takes the way of isolating his faith, whether in one of these ways or in some other way, is not wanting to shut his Christian faith out of his life in the university. He is not wanting to hide his faith from his university associates. Often he is quite bold in witnessing to his personal faith within the university and may be active in various forms of evangelistic activity among his university associates. He may be quick to challenge particular theories, such as evolution, which he sees as a threat to faith.

What he wants is to isolate his faith from his studies, or from some central core of his studies, so that he can live with the secular, anthropocentric university and its scholarship.

All three of these approaches - abandonment, accommodation, and isolation, have one thing in common. None of them challenges the basic structure of the university or of the scholarship it promotes. Their common concern is to find a basis for working more or less harmoniously within the existing framework.

Leaving out the first alternative, the other two do enable the Christian student to survive, in some fashion, in the modern university. They save him from the sudden death that is likely to overcome the fish out of water, and enable him to swim around, more or less comfortably, along with all the other fish in the university pool.

But, can the Christian be true to his calling and confession by just being another fish in the pool, even if he is a fish with distinctive markings? Is he not rather called to be like salt in the pickles, penetrating the whole with a distinctive presence that transforms its

whole character?⁸ {6}

CONFESSING CHRIST IN THE UNIVERSITY

The Christian is called to confess Jesus as Lord⁹. He is called to this confession in the university as much as anywhere else. Every Christian will agree on this.

But is our confession of Christ's lordship adequate if we do not confess that he is Lord - Master, King, Ruler - in the very central task of the university? Is not the whole creation made subject to Christ as its King? Have not all things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, been 'created through him and for him'? Do not all things hold together in him? Does not scripture very plainly say that Christ is the effective Head of all things made, without any exception whatsoever, so; that everything made is subject to his Lordship?¹⁰

How then can we enter any agreement to recognise the independent, autonomous sovereignty of men over any part of the creation Yet, this is just what we do when we agree to recognise the validity of theoretical thought that rejects the Word of God as the ordering principle of the creation; when we agree with the modern university in recognising religiously neutral areas of scholarship.

According to the scriptures, the creation is held together in Christ, upheld by his powerful word¹¹. It is the Word of God that orders the whole creation. God is not a 'God of the gaps' who intervenes every now and then in a self-regulating universe. In all their activity all the heavens and the earth are his servants, doing his will according to His Word.¹² They all fulfil his Word¹³.

Scripture forbids every attempt to declare any part of the creation outside the ordering scope of the Word of God. All, without any exceptions, serves God according to the ordinances of His Word.

An adequate confession of Christ in the university, therefore, requires the confession that he is Lord, not only over the individuals, but also in the whole of scholarly task. It requires the meaningful confession that the norms of learning, the mathematical norms, the psychological norms, the historical norms, the biological norms, the juridical norms, the philosophical norms, are all norms of the "Word of God; that mathematics as much as ethics, and sociology as much as theology, are ordered by the Word of God.

It requires the confession, in word and deed, that, whatever insight men may have, by God's grace, while disobediently turning their back on God's Word, he who pays attention to that Word will have insight beyond them all, insight not just in certain areas of life but

8 Matt. 5:13

9 Matt. 10:32,33 Rom. 10:9

10 Eph. 1:20-22

11 Heb. 1:3

12 Ps. 119:89-91; Dan. 4:35

13 Ps. 103:19-22, 148:7-8

everywhere, including all the areas of study in the university. The Word of God is the light, and must be confessed to be the light, in all man's pathway, including that part of his pathway that leads through mathematics, history, philosophy, sociology, economics, and every other area of theoretical thought. {7}

To make this confession means a confrontation with the controlling principles of the modern university. It means calling in question the very assumptions on which it is built. For this reason it means a challenge to the existing system that is more radical than any challenge the radical left is capable of making.

It cannot be a confrontation of mere protest, but must be the challenge of a viable educational alternative. At the same time it need not be, indeed, it must not be, an alternative isolated from the existing university structure but one that bears witness to that structure of what scholarship ought to be.

This is not a task for individuals, however enthusiastic and zealous. It is not a task for students alone. It is a task for the Christian community, for the body of Christ, with the rich diversity of its gifts functioning together as educational community, engaging first in communal educational reflection, and then in educational, communal action.

Although the Christian student is not the whole story in this, he does have a significant role to play. The first, and foremost task for the Christian student is to gain an understanding of his, and her, calling as student. The idolatrous forces that we have seen to be at work in the university have thoroughly confused the nature of that calling bringing, as a result, false tensions into the life of the university.

We will not gain insight into the student's calling by sifting through and selecting from the current ideas. We will not gain it by solitary reflection. The necessary insight and understanding in this, as in every other matter, will come only as, taking seriously our membership in the body, we come together one with another for serious communal reflection in the light of the Word of God.

If Christian students in today's universities can gain this insight into their own calling, and apply it in the life of the university, they will be making a major contribution to the desperately needed confession of Christ in the university. They will be on the way to meaningful confession that does justice to the words of scripture with which we began. {8}

LECTURE 2: HOLY WORDS ARE NOT GOD WORDS

'Just as the One who called you is holy, be holy in all your way of life'. 1 Peter 1:15.

Holiness is the way of life of the Christian. 'The holy ones' is one of the most common names for Christians in the N.T. ('saints' - 'holy ones'). Without holiness no-one shall see the Lord¹⁴. As God is holy, so his people are to be holy.

Although we are 'saints by calling'¹⁵ prior to any action of ours, holiness as a way of life does not come to us automatically because we are Christians. We have to chase it¹⁶. We have to make conscious effort to live holy lives. As holy ones by divine calling, we must make the effort to live up to our holy reputation.

We do not do this by adding a holy dimension to a life that is otherwise after the pattern of the unbelieving world. Our speech does not become holy because we use a liberal sprinkling of pious jargon, 'Gold Words'. Our actions do not become holy because they are accompanied with much prayer and Bible reading; and we set about them with pious intention.

'Make them holy in the truth; thy word is truth'¹⁷, is what the Lord Jesus had to say about the way to holiness. Holy ones are those whose lives are lived in the truth that is revealed to men in God's Word. They are those who, in all their living, 'do the truth'¹⁸, which is to say that they act in obedient response to the Word of God. This, and this alone, is the holy way of life to which we are all called.

We should not miss the point that our whole way of life is to be holy. Holiness does not concern only a moral-faith dimension of our lives. It is a religious term describing a relationship to God. Whatever is holy is devoted to God. It is this that makes it holy. The Christian is devoted to God in the wholeness of his existence, by the sacrificial offering of Christ once for all¹⁹, and in view of this sacrificial sanctification, is called to live his life, in the wholeness of human existence, as a God-devoted life.

This God-devoted living will lead us to moral purity, but moral purity is not holiness. If it is true heart purity, and not just conforming to expected moral standards, it is still only {9} the fruit of holiness in one aspect of our lives. Holiness remains an empty thing if it stops here.

God-devoted living will also lead us to speak to men about their personal relationship

14 Heb. 12:14,

15 Rom. 1:7

16 Heb. 12:14

17 John 17:17

18 John 3:1

19 Heb. 10:10

with God, but zeal in this sort of witnessing is not holiness. If it is the fruit of wholehearted love to God, and not just doing the thing Christians are expected to do, this sort of witnessing is still no more than the working out of holiness in one small area of life. Holiness, and witness is superficial if it goes no further than this.

The holiness to which we are called is God devoted living in every area and every corner of life. Nothing we do may not be holy, devoted to God. The calling of the Christian minister is not, in itself, any more holy than that of the banker, the engineer, the teacher, the scientist, the sociologist, the labourer. Going to church, reading the Bible, praying, preaching, are no more holy activities in themselves than eating our break-fast, playing squash, selling washing machines, studying Marx, painting a house, or a work of art.

The study of theology is no more a holy activity than the study of politics, or of philosophy, or of biology, or of economics

All these activities are holy or unholy depending on whether they are God devoted, that is, whether they are an obedient response to the Word of God. The work of an engineer is holy if he is working in willing, obedient response to God's word, while the work of a minister is unholy, profane, if it lacks this willing, obedient response to the Word of God. Every Christian is called with a holy calling²⁰, which he is to work out in practical holiness in all he does in all the wide diversity of human life.

What does this mean specifically for the Christian student in the university? How do our studies become holy?

It is clear that they can be holy only as they are in the truth revealed in God's Word; as they are studiously pursued under the conscious direction of the Word of God. But what does this really mean for me as a student in the practical situation of the modern university?

THE COSMOS AS MEANINGFUL STRUCTURE

In the light of scripture we, as students seeking a holy way of academic study, will see that the cosmos is structured and meaningful. It is not a meaningless jumble out of which we must create order. The cosmos, all of it, is creation. Man is creation and is surrounded by creation wherever he looks. This creation, just because it is creation, is meaningful.

{10}

"This is the word of the Lord
who created the heavens
- he is God!
who formed the earth and made it;
he established it firmly;
he did not create it a chaos,
he formed it to be inhabited:

20 2 Tim. 1:9

'I am the Lord, and there is no other''

Isaiah 45:18

(translation by Christopher R.
North)²¹

The structure of the cosmos is ordered by the Word of God. In Christ, the living, eternal Word, the cosmos Yields together.²² It stands secure, firm, ordered by the ordinances of God's word²³.

As creation the cosmos is meaningful, expressing the glory of God. 'The heavens declare the glory of God'²⁴ 'O, Yahweh, Our Lord, how majestic is thy name in all the earth'²⁵ The cosmos is meaningful because it is revelation. This is the very heart of all created reality. It does not just carry meaning, it is meaning because it is revelation.

Man's life, therefore, is lived in the context of revelation. This revelation is an integral revelation. It is the revelation of the Word of God who became flesh and lived among men as the man Jesus of Nazareth, whose testimony is declared by the whole creation and is written in the scriptures of the Old and New Testaments.

The Christian who wishes his studies to be holy must approach them aware that he is dealing with meaningful structure. Not only what he studies, but the studying activity itself belongs to the meaningful structures of creation. At the same time he must work with the conscious recognition that meaning is revelation; there is no meaning that is not revealed meaning.

MAN'S FORMATIVE POWER

We also find, by the light of scripture, that man has formative power in the cosmos. The cosmos is not structured like a huge machine to which man must accommodate himself. Neither is man's role like the technician who sits at a control panel pushing buttons to achieve the desired result.

When God created the earth, he delivered it to man to manage and develop. In agricultural language man is to cultivate and care for the earth.²⁶ His task is not just that of a conservationist or of a guardian, but that of a developer.

God delivered the creation to man ordered, meaningful, and pregnant with possibility. It was structured and meaningful but not static or determined. It is man's task to realize the possibilities with which the creation is pregnant. He is to unfold the meaning of creation, and, for this task, he is {11} given power over the earth²⁷.

21 Taken from 'The Second Isaiah' (Oxford-1864)

22 Col. 1:17

23 Ps. 119:89-91

24 Ps. 19:1

25 Ps. 8:1

26 Gen. 2:15,

27 Gen. 1:28, Ps. 8:6-8

The rich diversity of meaning, therefore, unfolds before the formative activity of man. This unfolding takes place, not just before one sort of human activity - e.g. science, or theology but in all the many sided activities of man's life.

In this meaning-unfolding task man is free; and responsible but he is not autonomous. He is always subject to the Word of God revealed as the law for the creation, the ordering principle of the cosmos to which man in the exercise of his formative power is also always subject.

This law for the creation should not be reduced in our thought to moral law and moral norms. It has a moral aspect, but it also has an economic, a judicial, a psychological, a mathematical, a kinematic, an aesthetic, aspect, and others not mentioned. It is the law that orders the whole creation in all its rich, coherent, diversity.

Forever, lord,
Thy word stands firm in the heavens.

Throughout all ages
Is thy faithfulness.

Thou hast established the earth
So that it stands secure.

According to the ordinances decreed by thee
They still stand today,
For all of them are thy servants.

Psalm 119:89-91

Since revelation is the contest of man's life he never escapes from this revelation that is the law for the whole creation. All he does, throughout his whole life, is in response to this law. So far as he responds obediently, he uses his formative power constructively, and so far as he responds disobediently, acting in opposition to the law for the creation, he uses his formative power destructively.

KNOWLEDGE AND THE UNIVERSITY

It is unfortunate that the task of the university is so often thought of, without qualification, as the search for knowledge. This reflects the over-valuing of the analytical, logical function that has been common in modern Western thought.

What takes place in the university is important in the unfolding of meaning, but it is neither the way to knowledge, nor a way that is superior to other ways of knowing.

The medical student who has learned all that the university has to teach him will have learned a good deal about the female homo sapiens, but there may well be a real sense in which he does {12} not know a woman, and if he does it was not the university that gave

him that knowledge.²⁸

The science student who has the most comprehensive grasp of animal biology and psychology, may not have begun to know dogs like the dog lover or the bush stockman.

Knowledge is far more comprehensive than what is learned at the university. What the university is about is the important, yet rather limited, task of gaining insight into the structure of created reality by theoretical analysis. This contributes to our knowledge, but it is neither the beginning and end of knowledge nor a superior road to knowledge that takes priority over all others.

The university should sharpen our understanding of the o cosmos, but if, because its limited role is not recognised, theoretical analysis is given precedence over others ways of knowing, the result can only be a serious distortion instead of clarification.

So, for example, if we regard theology as the high road to knowledge of God and of man in his relation to God, so that any man who wants to know God really well must study theology, or sit at the feet of the theologian, the result can only be more or less blurring of our knowledge of God and of the world. This does not mean that the theoretical analysis that we call theology is not important, but only that, as a human theoretical activity, it can never be the key to knowledge.

To take another example, we will never know man if we look to psychology as the way to know man. Psychology is significant and helpful in our understanding of men, but it cannot bring us to know men. It can do no more than bring before us one aspect of men as it is opened up before theoretical analysis.

In our university studies theoretical analysis causes the integrality of the creation to open out into a variety of aspects, or modalities. We are concerned here not with the concrete 'what' but with the 'how' of created reality.

Man does not create these aspects, or modalities, by his thought. They belong to the inner structure of creation bound to the law of the Creator which, according to that law, open out only before the human analytical function. It is these modalities, or aspects of creation, that become the subject of university student as biology, sociology, physics, psychology, economics, theology, jurisprudence etc. Philosophy attempts a theoretical amount of the relationship of these specialties to one another and to life in general.

THE WORD OF GOD IN THE UNIVERSITY

In chasing after holiness in the university, the Christian student will recognise, consciously and continually, the Word of God, revealed both in scripture and in the whole creations as the ordering principle of the cosmos. He will pursue his studies {13} in the conviction that theoretical analysis can give true understanding and insight only as the law of God for the creation is respected in the academic task.

28 See Gen. 4:1,17

Because we are all men, upheld in our humanity by the grace of God in Christ in spite of our self-destroying sin, living in a cosmos that is held together by the Word of God, believer and unbeliever have a common perception of a great many states of affairs. We all agree that a cricket ball thrown in the air will fall to the ground; that grass is green; that a certain person has blue eyes; that a certain combination of chemicals will produce a given reaction.

There is also agreement in symbolising many states of affairs in the form of laws, or rules, as with the mathematical tables, grammatical rules, or the law of gravity. It is worth noting that what we call the law of gravity, for example, is not the same thing as the law of God for the creation. It is the human expression in verbal symbols of a state of affairs ordered by the divine law. The law of God for the creation should never be confused with the human symbolisation.

This wide agreement concerning particular states of affairs should not be allowed to obscure the fundamental difference in understanding or mislead us into an acceptance of the idea of neutral, valueless facts.

For the Christian studying in a holy way these states of affairs can never be anything but the realization in time of the law of God for the creation. They can never be bare, isolated, brute fact. They are always meaningful states of affairs which, in their integral coherence in the rich diversity of creation, point away from the creation to the Author of all meaning.

We do not add faith-meaning to bare, neutral facts, nor do we bring the facts together in a logical system in order to give them meaning. We confess that, as creation, every state of affairs - every fact - IS meaningful, not in isolation, for it never is in isolation, but in the unbreakable coherence of all things in Christ.

The unbeliever, of course, cannot agree with this understanding because it undermines his deepest religious convictions. Yet he cannot live with meaningless, valueless facts. Even when he insists that facts are, of themselves, valueless and meaningless, he can never leave things there but must find some way to give them meaning. Having turned his back on God he can do nothing but turn to the creation for the necessary source of meaning.

The result is the falsifying of meaning by the deification of the creation in one way or another, a falsifying that is continually confronting the student in the modern university. The confusing thing is that there are so many different ways in which this falsifying is carried out. {14}

Some have tried to use mathematics as the key to meaning constructing a mathematical model of the cosmos. Others, quite commonly among modern scientists, have made the logical-analytical functioning of man the key to meaning. Quite explicit, consistently worked out examples of this on the contemporary scene can be found in the writings of B.F. Skinner and Jacques Monod.

Others again use history as the key to meaning. Herbert Marcuse, the leading thinker of the New Left, for example, sees the meaning of every state of affairs in terms of the historical dialectic.

All these are exalting some aspect, or modality, that opens out before theoretical thought, or theoretical thought itself, to the role of the Origin of meaning for the creation. Others, despairing of meaning through theoretical thoughts place the key to meaning in the existentially free man.

Whether one of these ways is followed, or some other, everyone who rejects the Word of God as the ordering principle of the creation must take something from the creation and exalt it to the place of God as the Origin of meaning. This deifying of the creation twists the cosmos out of shape in human thought so that the meaning of every state of affairs is falsified.

It is futile to suppose that we can reject the Word of God as the ordering principle of the creation, even for a moment, and avoid this falsification. Facts cannot hang in the air. If they are not seen in the coherence of the Word of God they will be falsified by fitting them into a system constructed by the absolutisation of some aspect of the creation. The Christian student, who walks the way of holiness in his study therefore, will reject every attempt to elevate any aspect of the creation to the role of ordering principle. history, logical analysis, economics, mathematics, psychology, all must take their place under the Word of God by which the whole cosmos is ordered and in which alone is the key to meaning.

At the same time the Christian student should be noted by his attitude to man's formative task in the creation. He will see man neither as caught in a machine nor as doing what he likes with the world in autonomous freedom. He will recognise that, in his formative role, man is bound by the norms of God's Word, made known to man in the integral revelation of scripture and all creation.

He will know that man CAN use his formative power destructively by disregarding the revealed norms. He will therefore want, in his study, to gain insight not only into the way things are but the way they ought to be.

He will be concerned, as student, to gain insight in to the norms that open out before theoretical analysis in the light of the Word of God. He will know that these norms are revealed norms, known only by the light of God's Word. {15}

He will not expect to find these norms spelled out in scripture. He will not forget that scripture and creation form one integral revelation, and he will not forget man's responsible task in searching out and spelling out the norms by the light of scripture. At the same time, he will not forget that scripture has the key role of opening the eyes of man's understanding. Working with the creation in theoretical analysis by the light of scripture, therefore, he will expect to discern the norms of the Word of God which tell him what ought to be in man's formative activity.

The norms he will look for will not be exclusively, or preeminently, moral norms. He will not make his studies holy by applying moral and theological insights to them. So, for example, he will not produce a holy economic theory by respect for principles of fairness and honesty. Similarly, politics will not be sanctified by personal, or collective moral integrity.

A leader of government, for example, may be a man of unexcelled moral integrity, and a man of great piety, yet, by a policy of unilateral disarmament, in defiance of the norm that qualifies the state as the bearer of the power of the sword for the wellbeing of its citizens, he may prove a power for evil bringing destruction on his government and possibly the nation. Or, with similar moral integrity, he may take an equally destructive course by using the power of the sword to enforce his party's code of morality, in defiance of the norm that limits the authority of the state to public justice.

When the student of politics should be looking for is the POLITICAL norms, the student of economics, the ECONOMIC norms, the student of jurisprudence, the JURIDICAL NORMS, and so in every area of study.

We do not lack Christians attempting to bring moral and theological insights to bear on the problems of modern life, but this sort of approach, by its lop-sidedness, can never yield really helpful and meaningful answers. What is needed is men and women who will use their various gifts in communal endeavour, and in humble submission to Christ as Lord, working by the light of the Word of God to increase our understanding of the norms for man's activity in all its many aided diversity so that we can point the way to constructive, holy action in a sick world. In no other way can we be true to him whom we confess as our Lord and who is himself the Healer and Redeemer of man's whole life.

{16}

LECTURE 3: GETTING AT THE ROOTS

'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God'. Matthew 4:4

'Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole of men'. Ecclesiastes 12:13

"For in him we live and move and are", Acts 17:28

"From him and through him and to him are all things" Rom. 11:36

Life, at its roots, is religious. Life, begins in religion, is shaped by religion, and takes its direction from religion. In this pregnant sense, life is religion. If we want to get at the roots of life and thought we must expose the religious roots.

Religion is not to be confused with cultic activity. Cultic activity - the ritual of worship, of liturgy, of prayers and devotions and Bible reading - is a self-conscious expression of the inner religious commitment. It is the expression of religious commitment in that we may call the faith aspect of life.

Religion, however, cannot be reduced to cultic activity. Cultic activity is not even the only way in which religion may be expressed self-consciously.

Neither should religion be confused with theology and dogma. In theology theoretical thought is directed to the faith aspect of life, while in dogma the believing community confessed its faith. Theology and dogmatic confession are religious activities, but religion may no more be reduced to these than to cultic activity.

Neither is religion the sum total of these faith-activities, dogmatic confession cultic activity, and theology. Religion is not a dimension of life but is the very root of life. Even if a man ruts all these explicit faith activities out of his life, he does not cut religion out of his life.

In God man lives, and moves, and is. All things that exist not only originate from God but exist always through him and are directed to him.

When man turns from God he cannot live in a religious vacuum, for he cannot cut himself adrift from the law-order of the Creator. He must find, as the focal point of his life and thought, a substitute for God. Since nothing exists except God and the Creation he can find this substitute only by deifying the creature, in one form or another, to fashion out of the creation a God-substitute. Whether he calls this God-substitute 'God', and whether he calls his commitment to it, 'religion', is immaterial.

'Knowing God' - from his creation - 'they did not honour him as God or give thanks, but

their thinking became futile and their foolish heart was darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the likeness of corruptible man and birds and beasts and creeping things'. Romans 1:21,22 {17}

Man's religious commitment, whether to God or to a God - substitute, is not, at its roots, an intellectual commitment, or of an emotional commitment, or a volitional commitment. It is the commitment of the whole man at the innermost core of his humanity, commonly called, in scripture, the heart.

"With the heart man believes to righteousness" and "From the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, slanders". When man turns from God it is because his heart turns away and, in turning to God, his heart is opened. In salvation God gives his people one heart and one way that they may fear me always... and I will put the fear of me in their heart".²⁹

All man does is the expression of the religious commitment that has taken hold of him in his heart, the innermost core of his existence. Religion is never peripheral and incidental but central and crucial to all man's thought and action.

UNCOVERING THE ROOTS

The true nature of the religious commitment is if ten obscured. Even a formally correct cultic activity may disguise idolatry.

"This people draw near with their words, and honour me with their lipservice, but they remove their hearts far from me"³⁰

In today's secular world the very existence of the religious root is often hidden. Large areas of life and study are regarded as religiously neutral, without religious roots. It is thought that we have devised ways to keep religion out of these areas. In spite of its wide acceptance this idea of the religiously neutral areas is an illusion.

The first task of the Christian student, therefore, must be to uncover the religious roots of the thought he encounters. Modern thought must be subject to a radical, religious critique.

There are, in the final analysis, only two directions that religion can take in the heart of man. There are only two religious driving forces that can take hold of man's life. Man's life is either directed in wholehearted love toward God, or is turned away from God in apostasy to focus, in one way or another, on the creation.

This central religious driving force in man's life discloses itself as a religious basic motive, or ground motive. The religious ground motive of the life devoted to God in Christ can be nothing else but the integral motive of the divine word revelation, which may be expressed as creation, fall and redemption by Christ Jesus in the communion of

²⁹ Rom. 10:10, Matthe 15:19, Deut. 30:17, Acts 16:14, Jer. 32:39,40

³⁰ Is. 29:13 compare also Is. 58:1-5

the Holy Spirit. {18}

This central religious driving force in man's life discloses itself as a religious basic active, or ground motive. The religious ground motive of the life devoted to God in Christ can be nothing else but the integral motive of the divine word-revelation, which may be expressed as creation, fall, and redemption by Christ Jesus in the communion of the Holy Spirit.

The apostate spirit, on the other hand, reveals itself in more than one ground-motive. Having broken with the "Word of God that gives coherence to the creation, apostate thought inevitably fragments. Having set itself against the divine order, apostate thought can only break itself against that order.

Man can never break away from God's law for the creation. Even in apostasy from God he is bound to that law. When, therefore, man in apostasy attempts to construct a model of the cosmos he is able to produce a model without inner contradictions. His model lacks cohesion because he has rejected the "Word of God which is, whether he likes it or not, the ordering principle of the cosmos to which his apostate thought is still bound. The result is a constant fragmentation in apostate thought.

RELIGIOUS SYNTHESIS

The situation is complicated further by religious synthesis, the attempt to synthesis, in one way or another, the biblical ground-motive and an apostate ground-motive.

The earliest systematic attempt at this sort of religious synthesis was the Gnostic synthesis of the first century after Christ. The Gnostics, as a movement within Christendom distinct from its explicitly pagan forms, were 'these Christians who, in a swift advance, attempted to capture Christianity for Hellenic culture, and Hellenic culture for Christianity'³¹.

Gnosticism was rejected by the Church as an heretical sect, but the leaven of synthesis remained in the church, until, working gradually, by the end of medieval times it was the accepted working method for the Christian scholar.

It was the great scholastic, Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) who worked out in fine detail the type of synthesis that gained the official endorsement of the Church.

At its roots, the Monistic synthesis attempted to bring together the biblical ground-motive and the pagan ground-motive of Greek philosophy, with a special emphasis on Aristotle.

Thomas did not adopt Aristotelianism in gusto and uncritically. He re-interpreted Aristotle in terms of Christian dogma while retaining the basic Aristotelian concepts and working principles. As a result, scripture and Christian dogma came to be read through Aristotelian spectacles, coloured as those spectacles were by the form matter religious motive of pagan Greek thought.

In the thought of Thomas Aquinas, the integral biblical ground-motive is replaced by the

31 Adolph Harnack: History of Dogma Vol. 1 p. 228

synthetic ground-motive of {19} nature and grace. The integral direction of thought to the unity of meaning in God revealed in Jesus Christ is replaced by a religious dialectic that can never be resolved, for the Biblical ground motive will not blend with any other.

The Thomistic synthesis proposes a realm of nature where all men can know truth by 'the light of reason' which Thomas described as a 'kind of reflected likeness in us of the uncreated truth'³². Because this light of reason, this reflection of uncreated truth, is not dimmed in man as a sinner, in this realm of nature all men, believer and unbeliever alike, stand on an equal footing in the search for truth. Even a knowledge of God, incomplete yet true so far as it goes, may be obtained by this means.

Alongside this realm of nature Thomas proposed a realm of grace beyond the reach of natural reason. This is the realm of faith, the Bible, of the Church, of Christian dogma and of theology. Here the believer, and only the believer, comes into contact with those higher truths, not obtainable by the light of reason, coming to him by special revelation and necessary for a complete view of life.

These two realms were seen as sub-structure and super-structure. Nature undergirds grace and grace crowns nature. Nature, without grace is imperfect, deficient, and grace, without nature, must float meaninglessly in the air.

This synthesis effectively put large areas of life, the whole of the realm of nature, outside the authority of the Word of God. In matters of scholarship everything outside theology was placed in the realm of nature where the light of reason is sufficient.

Even in the realm of grace, where the Word of God was held to be important, that Word came through spectacles coloured by Aristotelianism.

By the sixteenth century the Thomistic religious synthesis was coming under heavy fire, both from the forces of the Renaissance and humanism, and, from within the Christian community itself, from nominalism. It is significant, however, that the attacks of nominalism from within the Christian community, spearheaded by William of Ockham, while vigorously assailing scholasticism, did not challenge the synthetic religious ground motive of nature and grace.

It was in this atmosphere that the Reformation came as a call to men to renewed obedience. With their cry of 'Sola Scriptura: by Scripture alone' the Reformers called men to submit all human opinions, judgments, doctrines and systems to the test of scripture. Because of this radical biblical spirit, the Reformation, in practice, broken with the apostate ground motive of the nature-grace synthesis but, as the heat of battle died down and the post Reformation Protestant world set about {20} consolidating and theoretically articulating its position, it returned to the nature-grace scheme.

It did not return to medieval scholasticism. Too much of this had been burned away by the biblical faith rekindled in the Reformation for the heirs of the Reformation to return to it.

³² Thomas Aquinas: Truth Vol. 11 Question xi Article 1

However, they saw in the nature-grace scheme a useful tool for giving theoretical expression to their faith. By the mid-seventeenth century the religious synthesis of nature and grace, with appropriate modification, was firmly established as the religious ground-motive of Protestant thought.

In the new Protestant scheme the 'light of nature', or 'the law of nature' shows all men the way in the natural realm. This light of nature is 'the light which is natural and necessary unto rational creatures'³³. It belongs to every reasonable man as man. Only in supernatural matters of faith is the light of nature no longer sufficient. Here, in the higher realm of grace, the scriptural revelation shows the way. In temporal matters the light of nature suffices. In eternal matters the light of scripture is essential.

Originally the ground motive of nature and grace aimed at a synthesis of biblical revelation and Greek, specially Aristotelianism fell into disfavour, it proved equally adaptable to the various streams of modern humanistic thought. As a result, scholarship that is rooted in the nature-grace religious ground-motive may produce results that look very little like either Thomism or post-Reformation Protestant scholarship. A close examination of the roots, however, will expose the same nature-grace motive as the common driving force.

The influence of religious synthesis has been heavy. It has produced the idea that truth can be captured in logical propositions and has give us an intellectual-moral image of God. In alliance with positivism it has produced the idea that the truthfulness of scripture is to be defended in terms of scientific accuracy, and, when allied with irrationalism, has produced situation ethics.

Religious synthesis has robbed the Christian community of its world shaking dynamic. Robbed of the radical and integral driving force of the biblical ground-motive, the Christian community has been largely reduced to hopping from one foot to another in order to keep pace with the ever-changing fashions of humanistic thought without losing hold on the faith.

The initiative, and the power of Christian witness, can be re-captured only decisive and self-conscious rejection of the apostate nature-grace motive in favour of the integral Christian motive. {21}

RATIONALISM

From the fires of the Renaissance and the Reformation a new world emerged. It was a world in which man was openly central. God and religion were not formally rejected, but were pushed into a corner in favour of autonomous man. In this broad sense we may call the new age humanistic.

The spirit of the emerging new world is epitomised in the famous 'cogito ergo sum' of Rene Descartes (1596-1650). Confronted with an engulfing scepticism in which he could be sure of nothing and could find no stable ground on which to stand, Descartes finally

33 John Owen Works of John Owen Vol. 13 p. 509

found certainty in his own scepticism. He concluded that, while he might doubt all else, he could not doubt that he doubted. Hence his statement, 'cogito ergo sum' - 'I think, therefore I am'.

Descartes, like the other early leaders in the emerging new world, was neither an atheist nor an agnostic. From his starting point within himself he proceeded to 'prove' the idea of God as a necessary idea. However, the foundation of all certainty and all knowledge, for Descartes, is in man. Even his God is more of a mathematical construction of human thought than the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. In words of Peter Lawrence, God 'existed now only by grace and favour of the secular human intellect'³⁴ It is the human reason that is supreme.

The central character of this new movement of thought, which was to capture the Western world, was its rationalism. By rationalism we mean the placing of the key to knowledge and to life's meaning in the human reason equipped with a prioris. A prioris are concepts or notions that are built into the reason prior to all experience, as, for example, the notion of good, of truth, of justice, of God. These built-in notions, a prioris, are the axiomatic foundation of all thought and are common to all reasonable men.

Entangled in the nature grace motive, Christian thought could offer no effective resistance to this rationalism, and, before long, it began to accommodate to it. No Christian, of course, could grant to a priori reason the key to all knowledge. Life must be more than reason can discover, but the realm of nature was readily handed over to rationalism provided faith's rights were not challenged in the realm of grace.

Though meeting little resistance from without, rationalism soon revealed its own inner tensions. At first it gave a dominant place to a mathematically-oriented science. This soon proved too constrictive and gave way to a more broadly based rationalism, a practical, rather than a scientific rationalism. Leading figures in this practicalistic movement were Hume, Voltaire, and Rousseau. An important outcome was the French Revolution.

However, the inner tension not being resolved, the search for a resolution led to idealism, a new form of rationalism {22} fathered by Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), and taken up by many others. Kant's idealism was an ingenious system in which life was divided into a sphere of nature in which science is supreme, and a sphere of freedom in which the free, autonomous human personality is supreme. Science, theoretical reason, is the key to knowledge in the sensible world of nature, while free human personality is the key to moral values and to faith which, in Kant, is an extension of morality. The two realms are completely independent of each other. 'The concept of freedom determines nothing in respect of the theoretical cognition of nature; and the concept of nature likewise nothing in respect of the practical laws of freedom'³⁵. They are joined in man by the human faculty of judgment.

At first idealism triumphed but, before long it also gave way before a rising positivism.

34 Peter Lawrence: Daughter of time - Quadrant Vol. XV No. 3

35 Immanuel Kant: Critique of Judgment (Oxford, Eng. Trans. 1952) p.37

Like all the other streams of thought before it, idealism continued to be an influence, and to claim adherents, but it lost the place of dominance to positivism.

Positivism is commonly associated with the name of August Comte (1798-1857), but the positivistic movement extends far beyond the limited range of Comte's system. Under such names as empiricism, neo-positivism, logical empiricism, analytic philosophy, it has been a dominant stream, probably the most influential single stream, in the Western world in the past one hundred years.

Out of positivism grew Marxism which married an economic positivism to the idea of the historical dialectic. The influence of Marxist thought should not be thought to be confined to 'Marxist circles'. It has had a powerful influence on the theory and practice in modern society.

The essence of positivism is a revised rationalism in which a priori concepts are replaced by a priori method. Positivism rejects the older rationalism with its universal truths. Instead it proposes, as an axiomatic assumption, that reason, prior to all experience, is equipped with the scientific method as the key to knowledge. The a priori, the unquestionable assumption, of the new positivistic rationalism is the scientific method, the objectivity principle.

It should be noted that the modern faith in the scientific method as the key to knowledge is not based on empirical investigation but is the a priori assumption of positivistic rationalism resting on nothing but autonomous human subjectivity. Like all rationalism, positivism is, at roots, subjectivistic.

Rationalism has had a great appeal to many Christians. In its older form it appeals to many because of its insistence on universally valid notions of good, of truth, of right. Its insistence on order and constancy in the cosmos seems to make it the natural ally of Christianity. At least it seems to provide a congenial atmosphere for Christian witness. {23} Still others find it attractive to make spine form of alliance with positivism as a way of establishing the validity of the Christian faith. Analytic philosophy is seen by some today as valuable for this purpose with its stress on the verification principles.

Especially in the face of a rising irrationalism, many Christians feel that, at least, rationalism is to be preferred. If it did nothing else it gave some foothold for the Christian faith in men's minds.

Before we go along this road, however, let us remember the religious roots of rationalism. Let us remember that all its constants, its absolutes, its universal and eternal truths, its certainties find their rise, not from the Word of God, but from human reason. Its confidence is not confidence in the Word of God, who is faithful, but in the a prioris of human legislation at its roots, rationalism, in all its forms, deifies the creature.

Before we go along this road, however, let us remember the religious roots of rationalism. Let us remember that all its constants, its absolutes, its universal and eternal truths, its certainties find their rise, not from the Word of God, but from human reason. Its

confidence is not confidence in the Word God who is faithful, but in the a prioris of human legislation. At its roots, rationalism, in all its forms, deifies the creature.

IRRATIONALISM

The apostate spirits of rationalism have given rise, in this century, to the aggressive spirits of irrationalism. Irrationalism does not repudiate reason, but it does repudiate all a prioris. For irrationalism, there is no universal truth, no common ideas or concepts, no a priori method to lead man through the maze of life. Man must find his way without anything to guide him.

Sometimes, as in the pragmatism of John Dewey, or the existentialism of Karl Jaspers, the irrationalist seeks a working relationship with positivistic science by giving to science a limited role, but, in the final issue of life, the matters that finally count, man is entirely on his own, without rules, principles, or laws to guide him. He is in a world of his own making

While more has been written by Christians about the sort of irrationalism known as existentialism, for the university student, pragmatism may well be more important, since it has had, and continues to have, a powerful influence in education theory.

It would be hardly fair to call irrationalism a philosophy of despair in contrast to rationalism. The irrationalist seems to the rationalist to have plunged into despair because he rejects the rationalistically ordered and meaningful world of the rationalist. Yet he is not without hope, false though that hope is. His hope is in the utterly free man. {24}

For many Christians it is self-evident that rationalism is better than irrationalism because it puts man under some restraint. But is "restraint good in itself? Is it good for man to be subject to laws and standards if those laws and standards are false?

To the rationalistically oriented Christian, the Christian who makes an alliance with irrationalism will seem to have taken the last step in the betrayal of the faith. What he may really be doing is seeking to recover elements of the faith that have been lost in the wilderness of rationalism.

NATURE AND FREEDOM

The Christian should never be caught up in the rationalist-irrationalist dilemma. It is the problematics of a pagan way of thought grounded in the apostate, humanistic ground-motive of nature and freedom, that has been the driving force of Western thought since the seventeenth century.

Building on the foundation of the medieval nature-grace scheme, humanistic rationalism developed the theme of nature, eliminating the idea of grace. Soon the idea of a life-dominating nature, presented an intolerable picture of a world in which man was virtually enslaved. This led to the idea of the free human personality, taking the place of the older idea of grace, as the opposing partner to nature. Ever since Western thought has exhibited a constant polar tension between these basic ideas of nature and freedom.

Sometimes, as with Hobbes in the 17th century, and B.F. Skinner in this century, the science ideal virtually swamps the ideal of the free personality, while at other times, as with the French existentialists, the freedom ideal virtually leaves no room for the science ideal. More often the two are kept in some sort of uneasy tension, with one or the other more or less dominant, unless, as in Kent, the effort is made to bring them into a fine balance.

Driven along by this apostate religious ground-motive of nature and freedom, modern thought has been unable to find a place of rest and has become more and more fragmented. It cannot be otherwise, since man's rest is in God and the coherence of life and thought is in the Word of God. {25}

LECTURE 4: "EMPTY DECEITS AND WORDLY FIRST PRINCIPLES"

"Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the traditions of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ" - Col. 2:8

Any attempts at anything more than the most superficial analysis of modern thought is commonly met with the objection that it destroys the simplicity of the gospel. Christians, it is said, need do no more than follow the simple teachings of Jesus, or the Bible.

But the fact is we do not read the Bible in a thought vacuum, but in an atmosphere already loaded with ideas and ways of looking at life and the world. In this situation the pure message of the Bible does get encrusted with empty deceits, after the traditions of men and worldly first principles. Like barnacles on a ship, they may not stop but they surely do impede the progress of the Word of God in the Christian community.

If therefore, we are really going to get to the biblical message, and avoid the pitfall warned against by Paul, we cannot evade the responsibility to disentangle the Word of God from the alien encrustations of human thought.

What Paul warns against is not philosophy as a theoretical activity, but the pursuit of knowledge that is only empty deceit because it is guided by the traditions of men and worldly first principles, and not by Christ. This sort of knowledge seeking will plunder you of your riches in Christ.

To avoid this plunder the student in the modern university must make the effort to penetrate beneath the surface of the ideas he encounters to the first principles of thought, and then test these first principles by the Word of God. Nothing can be taken for granted because it seems right, or makes sense, or is commonly taken for granted, nor will it do to try to Christianise our studies by injecting a liberal dose of morality into the empty deceits built on worldly first principles.

To evade this tank because it is difficult and daunting will guarantee that, in our studies, we will be swept along in one or the other of the streams of empty deceits that flow so strongly through the modern secular university. Our salt, so far as our studies are concerned, will have lost its saltiness.

To be the salt of the university demands effort, strenuous effort; there are no shortcuts. Let us not forget that here too we are members of the body of Christ are not called to work on this alone, but together as Christian academic community. {21}

THE BIBLE THROUGH COLOURED SPECTACLES

Let us begin by looking at an example of how the thought structures of the world in which we live can affect our understanding of the most simple Bible passage, entangling us in unbiblical conclusions. Let us take a look at one way in which the apostate religious ground-motive of nature and freedom may colour our very Bible reading.

In February 1971, at San Diego State College, there was a debate on ethics between Joseph Fletcher and John Warwick Montgomery. The transcript of this debate and the discussion that followed has been printed in a small paperback.³⁶

For Fletcher, the father of situation ethics, there is no universal, always binding ethical obligation other than the obligation to love your neighbour as yourself. While we may offer, from scripture and the experience of the Christian community, generalisations about what love to neighbour means, we have no binding rules that will determine for us in advance what love means in any given situation. Only the individual, in the situation, can decide what love means in that situation.

So, for example, it is a generalisation that sexual intercourse should be confined to marriage, but this cannot be made a universal rule. There may very well be occasions when love demands sexual intercourse outside marriage. Again, it is a generalisation that we ought to speak the truth, but this is not a binding rule because love sometimes means telling a lie.

The significant point about Fletcher's position is that it is the free acting man who gives meaning to love. Love has no meaning except the meaning I give it in the situation,

Montgomery, representing a more traditionally orthodox ethic, is horrified by all this. He sees in Fletcher's situational ethic a threat both to faith and to the whole desirable fabric of a stable society. Yet, he does not deny that to love your neighbour as yourself is the central ethical principle of scripture; he certainly believes that 'all the law is fulfilled in one word, in this, You shall love your neighbour as yourself?'³⁷

For him, however, what love means is determined once and for all by a set of moral absolutes, a series of timeless maxims that stand over and above every situation. This under-standing of love involves problems, to be sure. It leads to situations in which I have

36 Situation Ethics - true or false; Dimension Books 1972

37 Gal. 5:14

no choice but to sin; I Must sin. These situations arise when, in order to obey one of the set of moral absolutes I must disobey the other, as for example, when I can only preserve innocent life by telling a lie. Then I must tell the lie, for destroying life is worse than lying, but still, in telling the lie, I do wrong. In short I must act unlovingly (by telling a lie) in order to be loving (preserve innocent life). {27}

Another problem with this approach which Montgomery does not face is how we are to judge which is the lesser evil in such situations. It may seem simple when it is a choice between lying and taking life, but what if it is a choice between one innocent life and another? How can the moral absolutes guide me then, or do I save women and children first, and if so why? And what if it is a choice between two women?

In spite of these problems - which he does not want to evade but rather turns to good effect by saying they serve to drive us to the cross for pardon for our sins that, against all our will, we have been compelled to commit - Montgomery sticks to his guns. He can see no other way to stop the rot and preserve right moral principles and behaviour among men.

In this sort of debate it can be tempting to line up according to our theological affinities; those of a conservative trend behind Montgomery, and these of a liberal trend behind Fletcher, even if we cannot go all the way with either.

This is a pity, because it obscures the root issues; it hinders the necessary examination of first principles. Here we have two men taking the same passage of scripture but building on that seemingly simple passage two antagonistic ethics. The reason is not that one is more logical, or more consistent, but that the two men come to scripture with two antagonistic view of life which colour their reading of the scriptural passage. In these two views of life we have illustrated two of the views we considered earlier, the irrationalist and the rationalist.

Fletcher reads scripture through irrationalist spectacles. It is the essence of irrationalism that it sees the locus of meaning in the free acting man. When, therefore, Fletcher reads in the Bible that all ethical responsibility is bound up in love for neighbour he accepts this, but insists that what love means can only be decided by the free acting man, by man in the situation free of all rules, principles, or norms.

Montgomery goes to the same scripture with rationalist spectacles. It is the essence of Montgomery's type of rationalism that the locus of meaning is held to be in the a priori concepts of the human reason, thought moulds with which reason is equipped prior to all thought and experience. So Montgomery reads the love command in the Bible, and he too accepts it, but insists that its meaning can only be found in a set of rationally grasped moral absolutes. In short, he pours scripture into his pre-determined thought moulds.

This debate not only illustrates how a rationalistic or an irrationalistic standpoint will colour our reading of the Bible, but it also shows how the modern humanistic ground-motive the basic religious motive of apostate modern thought - distorts the integral biblical motive when we try to combine the two in our thought. In their attempts to unite

{28} the biblical ground-motive with the nature-freedom motive of modern humanistic thought, both Fletcher and Montgomery, each in his own way, breaks up the integral biblical motive and tears creation apart.

Fletcher, who is oriented to the freedom pole of modern thought, tears the subject side of the creation, in the form of the free human personality, loose from the law side of the creation, distorting the idea of freedom in the process. Montgomery, who is oriented to the nature pole of modern thought, tears the law side of the creation, in the form of divine moral law, loose from the subject side of the creation, distorting the divine law in the process.

This we will develop further. For the moment we just want to note that the whole Fletcher-Montgomery debate is a debate that arises; not from the war between light and darkness, but from the tension within the apostate nature-freedom motive of modern thought. It is the sort of debate that can arise between Christians only because of our attempts to synthesise the biblical faith and unbelieving human thought. A biblical ethic cannot side with either parties to the debate, but must struggle to keep the unity of the creation which it has in Christ.

OTHER TYPES OF RATIONALISM

Montgomery's type of rationalism, with many variations, still has many followers among Christians, specially those who look on themselves as strongly orthodox. It is the rationalism of the pre-determined thought mould that presses all human experience into pre-determined thought moulds that held constant regardless of man's activity. These thought moulds are neither the result of empirical investigation nor the product of study of the Bible text. They are the assumed foundations for rational thought.

In the modern secular university this older type of rationalism is generally overshadowed by the newer positivistic rationalism. This rejects all idea of predetermined thought moulds, a priori concepts, and locates the key to meaning in the scientific method. This is the new a priori, the key to meaning that is built into human reason prior to all experience. In the older rationalism, the pre-determined thought moulds built into human reason are the absolutes, the key to meaning. In the newer positivistic rationalism, the scientific method is the only absolute, and the 'objective facts' resulting from that method are the certain foundation of knowledge.

This positivistic rationalism has been drawn with an especially bold pen in two recent works, by the Nobel Prize winning geneticist, Jacques Monod, and by the Harvard behavioural psychologist, B.F. Skinner. {29}

Monod boldly declares that the systematic confrontation of logic and experience is the sole source of true knowledge³⁸ This is so, he says, because 'nature is objective', that is it is capable of being known exhaustively through logical analysis. Scientific knowledge, bound to the objectivity principle is the ultimate in knowledge. There can be no higher understanding than this. Unless man chooses this way, in ethics and faith as well as

38 Jacques Monod: *Chance and Necessity* (Collins, 1972) p.154

everywhere else, he must plunge into total darkness, says Monod. "The Kingdom above or the darkness below; it is for man to choose".³⁹

Skinner, being a behavioural psychologist, finds the hope of man is a scientific psychology. 'A scientific analysis of behaviour dispossesses autonomous man and turns the control he has been said to exert over to the environment'⁴⁰. Yet, even while he abolishes man's freedom in the name of science, Skinner is driven to recover it by saying that 'man himself may be controlled by his environment, but it is an environment wholly of his own making'⁴¹. Again, it is for man to choose, but if he will choose in his own interests he will choose submission to autonomous science.

Do we see what is happening here? The scientific method is the key to knowledge and truth. Once competent scientific analysis has spoken, there is nothing more to say.

Of course, not many would want to go so far as Monod and Skinner. Most want to preserve some room, somewhere, for the free human person. However, the influence of positivism is seen in the wide acceptance of the idea that, at least within certain limits, the scientific method holds the key to knowledge; that, in this area, science has the last word.

Many Christians have attempted an alliance, a synthesis, between this positivistic rationalism and the Christian faith. A good example can be found in a recent article by Robert T. Whitelaw, of the Virginia Polytechnic Institute.⁴²

Whitelaw's concern is to uphold the integrity of scripture against the attacks of the unbelieving world. He is firmly opposed to all forms of theological liberalism and holds vigorously to the inerrancy and infallibility of scripture as the very Word of God written.

This faith, he maintains, is founded in science and capable of scientific validation. After all, he says, 'scientific knowledge', that is, ideas 'substantiated by experiment, observable data, and sound correlation', as distinct from 'the unproven and uninformed idea of one classed as a 'scientist', is beyond all question for any reasonable man. All men must accept the verdict of science.

Therefore, says Whitelaw, the Christian faith is validated because it is rooted in actions by an almighty God in the realm of natural science that are reported in a Biblical record that satisfies all the canons of scientific evidence'. It is not true, he protests, that 'the faith which the Christian has... does not depend on science. It does. Indeed, it is just the very Fact {30} that it is grounded in scientifically attested fact that 'is precisely what makes it indestructible'.

Thus a modern Christian thinks to come to terms with the positivistic rationalism by making that rationalism the sure foundation of his faith just as Thomas Aquinas, 700 years

³⁹ Ibid. p. 167

⁴⁰ B.F. Skinner: Beyond Freedom & Dignity (Jonathan Cape 1972) p. 205

⁴¹ Ibid. p. 205,

⁴² Published in 'The banner', July 23, 1971

ago g tried to found his faith in Aristotelian philosophy. Of course, it is evident that Whitelaw, in practice, is better than White-law in theory, yet this does not alter the fact that his attempted synthesis of Christian faith with positivistic rationalism has both handed a large slice of modern life over to the sovereign authority of an autonomous science, so denying Christ's lordship in that area of life, and has reduced the authority and certainty of the Christian faith, in the final analysis, not to the faithful Word of the always faithful God, but to the scientific book and confirmed by the natural senses. No longer is scripture the - integral Word of God, but a most reliable and authentic book of science through which God's Word comes to us. No doubt Whitelaw would object that this is not at all his intention but it is clearly the result of his attempted synthesis.

What is the basis of all this faith in the scientific method that we meet so often in our modern world? Let Monod give us the answer. There is at the roots, nothing at all objective about it. It is founded in 'an axiomatic value' that is incapable of objective, scientific validation or proof.⁴³ It is self-evident to all reasonable men that the scientific method has this objective truth revealing power. So, tracing positivistic thought back to its roots, to its first principles, we find what we encounter again and again in an analysis of modern thought. In the final count, man is the authority.

Yet, Christians still suppose that, without distorting their faith, or denying it in any way, they can enter into alliances with this man-centred thought that displaces Christ from his place of sovereignty over the whole creation. 'Beware lest anyone spoil you...'

CONTEMPORARY IRRATIONALISM

Rationalism places its confidence in human thought bound by some fixed law, rule, or principle. Irrationalism likewise puts its faith in man, but holds that man has nothing to guide him but himself - no rule, no law, no norm. We have already seen something of what this means In the situation ethics of Joseph Fletcher.

A good example of the sort of irrationalism, distinguished as pragmatism, that is specially likely to be encountered in the academic world today, will be found in the little book, 'Teaching as a subversive activity'. In a sometimes very effective attack on traditional ideas of education, which is often helpfully thought provoking, the authors reveal their own theory of education built on two principal theses. One is that the child is a meaning maker, in a world without meaning, and the other is that education is preparation for survival. {31}

On the first, they state, quite explicitly, "To begin, with whatever structure there is to anything is a product of the cognitive processes of the structurer, i.e. the perceiver, the learner.... We do not 'get' meanings from our environment. We assign meanings.... The structure that is perceived in a subject is solely some perceived way of viewing things. The structure was made, invented, imagined, by a perceiver.' 'What each one thinks it is, is what it is'⁴⁴

43 Monod, op. cit. p. 163

44 Neil Postman and Charles Weingartner: Teaching as a subversive activity (Penguin 1971) pp. 82,95

On the second point they say 'the basic function of education... is to increase the survival prospects of the group!'⁴⁵ This may be thought to give aim and purpose, even meaning to life, but it does not, since it is only the free acting man that can determine what will increase survival prospects.

In simplified form, these are the key ideas of pragmatist irrationalism. There is the rejection of all a priori structure and meaning and the adoption of the guiding principle of practical utility, as perceived by the free acting man.

Most of the formal, scholarly attempts to synthesise Christian faith and irrationalism have been along the lines of theological liberalism - e.g. Rudolph Bultmann. Nevertheless, irrationalism has widely influenced evangelical thought. Wherever we find the content of the gospel downgraded in favour of the experiences of the gospel and wherever we find the criterion 'it works' being used to justify some course of Christian action, there we see evidences of the irrationalistic movements of thought of our modern world.

It appears that, in some cases at least, both the charismatic movement and the Jesus revolution are heavily influenced by irrationalism, but its influence is also present in more 'orthodox' evangelical circles also. In many respects, the swing to irrationalism is an understandable reaction against thought. However, it solves nothing since it is still entangles in the nature-freedom ground-motive of modern humanistic thought. It is not a movement directed by the integral biblical ground-motive of creation, fall into sin, and redemption by Christ Jesus in the communion of the Holy Spirit.

THE DEAD END

While ever we attempt to build Christian thought and scholarship by a synthesis with one or the other of the non-Christian movements of thought, we will keep on ending up in a dead end. Just how much of a dead end may be clearly seen from the booklet 'Preparing for Teaching' issued by the Association of Christian Teachers (England)

This association aims, inter alia, 'to assert Christian principles and values in education' and 'to encourage consideration of educational issues from a biblical point of view'⁴⁶. In the early pages of the booklet we read: 'The. basis of Christian action in the field of education must be in genuinely Christian thinking about education'⁴⁷

Yet, when we look into the booklet we find no Christian thinking about education. At best it attempts some Christian thinking about educators as people, but not about education. Indeed, it is insisted that 'there is no separate Christian theory of education. The substance of educational knowledge and experience is common to all, irrespective of faith., ' To which we would say that, while there may be a common experience of common states of affairs this does not remove the possibility of a Christian theory of knowledge, for there is NOT a common understanding of the meaning of that common experience and those

45 Ibid. p. 195

46 Philip May and Colin Holloway, Eds. Preparing for teaching (IVP 1972) p.44

47 Ibid p. 9

common states of affairs.

The nature-grace way of thinking, that tries to meet the thought of the unbelieving world in a religiously neutral area of nature while preserving the uniqueness of Christian faith in a separate area of grace, effectively makes any distinctively Christian thinking about education. This is neutral ground. Here man can see just as well without faith and the Word of God.

Yet, aware that Christian teachers should differ in some way from non-Christian teachers, the authors fall back from Christian thinking about education to 'the realm of fundamental evaluations of personality and purpose'⁴⁸. It is in this realm of moral values, adjacent to and sometimes overlapping, yet separate from the educational task proper that the Christian must let his light shine.

By teaching and example the Christian teacher will encourage students to develop such 'right' moral values as 'self-discipline and regard for the needs of others'⁴⁹ He will impart 'respect or honesty, truth and integrity'⁵⁰ In his teaching of arithmetic, English, social studies, science, or what have you, he will follow the path put by an unbelieving world, for this is neutral territory where neither Christ nor darkness reigns; it is no-man's land.

Yet, as we read on, we find that, even in the realm of moral values the Christian is not altogether different. 'In practice a highly-principled humanist will often not diverge from us in the details of what to do or say next'.⁵¹ This is so because right moral values are discernible to any rational person. Moral values, 'no less than the study of science or music, for example, are related to a discernible pattern in nature and society, to the way things are'⁵² The Christian may have his morality spelled out for him in the Ten Commandments and the Sermon on the Mount, but he has no exclusive claim to it. It is a morality obviously right to all right thinking men since it is related to a rational pattern in the way things are.

Do we see what has happened? Because of the attempted synthesis in a nature-grace scheme of the biblical faith with the humanistic thought of the modern world, the authors find themselves unable to say anything about education that is distinctively Christian. They are forbidden, by their own nature-grace ground-motive, from bringing the light of the Word of God is here, for they have declared that it is not needed here. So striving to be the salt of the earth they are thrown back on moral values as the only way open, but even here, they find their adopted nature-grace scheme working against them, so that, in the end, all the Christian has left to contribute is a supernaturally endorsed version of a morality obvious to all reasonable men without revelation. All the Christian teacher has is his subjective 'confidence' in God as creator and Provider' which upholds him in his fight for right moral values

48 Ibid p. 9

49 Ibid. p.15

50 Ibid. p.8

51 Ibid. p.8

52 Ibid. p.16

THE WAY AHEAD

If we are to move ahead to a truly Christian scholarship that will penetrate every corner of the university like salt we must turn our back on every attempted synthesis of Christian faith and any of the apostate streams of thought that flow through our modern universities. In scholarship, as in every other area, Christ alone must be king, holding undisputed sway, with his Word the one light to guide us on our way.

We will often learn from the findings and insights of the unbelieving world around us. Indeed, we must do this. However even while we do this we cannot go along with the scholarly streams of that world, but must chart our own course by the Word of God. {34}

LECTURE 5: 'SHARPENING OUR TOOLS'

All we have discussed so far should have made it clear that Christian scholarship cannot come from any sort of synthesis or integration of the Christian faith with a religiously neutral science or learning. Religious neutrality does not exist. Everywhere light and darkness contend for control and always either one or the other directs the course of human thought.

But it is not enough to see this. We must go on to develop a Christian alternative. We must develop a scholarship that, at the very religious roots of its thought, is directed by the integral revelation of the Word of God. We must not only confront the world of the modern university with its educational bankruptcy. We must offer a viable educational alternative.

In this one paper we can hardly even begin to do this, of course. What we can hope to do is point the way to some preliminary, and very necessary, sharpening of our tools.

SCRIPTURE AND SCHOLARSHIP

First, we need to clarify the role of scripture in the scholarly task. To do this we must make clear, in our own thinking, what scripture is. It is the Word of God written, as such unequivocally reliable in giving direction to all our life.

It is NOT any sort of text-book giving us the basic outlines for our academic studies. It is NOT a sourcebook of data for the scholar and the scientist. It is NOT any sort of supplementary source of information that gives the one who uses it the edge over other scholars by enabling him to correct the fallible information of human experience with the infallible information of scripture.

A Christian scholarship does not mean taking up the material offered by an unbelieving scholarship, searching scripture for texts that seem relevant to the subject, checking the material against these texts, and then modifying where necessary. Neither does it mean starting with the Bible by searching for all the data I can find relating to my subject in the

Bible - say on psychology, biology, anthropology - and then expanding on this from the data of experience. The Bible is not any sort of data-book, and it is a misuse of it to treat it as such.

All such approaches fail to bring us a single step closer to Christian scholarship. They leave us entangled still in religious synthesis. The Bible as Word of God, central religious driving force of our thought, is not functioning in our scholarship. We are simply trying to add a Christian factor to an essentially neutral body of knowledge.

The common data of scholarship is man's experience of {35} his temporal existence. This is common to believer and unbeliever alike because of the divine law-order of creation upheld by the word of Christ's power. In the university this experience is extended to various ways - e.g. by laboratory experiment, or by sociological field research - and, at the same time, we add to our store of the data of experience by learning of the experience of others - e.g. by hearing of the experiments of other scientists, or learning that, in the year 1600, the philosopher-astronomer, Bruno, was burnt at the stake, or by reading of the social life of the American Negro community.

But the university is concerned to do more than build up a data bank in the mind of the student. Its task is to give us a theoretical understanding of our common experience. It is here that Christian scholarship must show its distinctiveness. We confess here that it is only in the light of the Word of God, shining on our common experiences that we can understand its meaning. Only as we work by this light can we attain true theoretical understanding.

*I have more insight than all my teachers,
For thy testimonies are my study.*

*I have more perception than the Ancients,
For I pay close attention to thy precepts.*

- Psalm 119:99,100

In short, scripture functions neither as a source of supplementary information, nor as a basic text-book for our studies, but provides the light by which we are to work in all we do, lighting up with meaning all we consider.

SUBJECT AND LAW

The very young child soon has experience of things around him. He becomes aware that he is not in a vacuum, but that there are numerous other things within his temporal horizon. His experience is very limited, but it is real, and expands as he grows.

Very early he encounters, in this world of things, a law-side in his experience of these things. He learns that certain things hurt him if he touches them - e.g. the hot stove - that some things are soft and others hard - e.g. the pillow and the floor - that certain actions on his part produce certain sounds from particular things - e.g. shaking a rattle - that he sinks in water and that the water is wet.

Of course, he does not at first give these experiences names, for he has not yet learned to symbolise his experience in words. When he does, he will express this law-side to his experience in rules, such as 'hot things burn', or 'sharp things cut', or 'people sink in water'. When he does this he is simply expressing his experience - usually supplemented by his knowledge of the experience of others - of the law side of the world in which he lives. {36}

This law-side is not distinguished or separated in his thought from the concrete things of his experience. It is without meaning apart from those things.

This is a very important understanding that, in the later opening of theoretical thought, is too often lost to view. As a result the integrality of the creation is driven apart in thought as the law-side is separated from the concrete facts. However he may drive them apart, in man's experience there always remains a law-side that is inseparable from the concrete things and events of experience. It may be distinguished, but not separated as though it has an independent existence and as though the concrete things and events have an existence independent of the law. There is a law-side that is neither separable from nor reducible to the concrete factuality of experience.

In the light of scripture we see that this experience of a law-side to temporal reality is nothing but the experience of the law-order of the creation, by which God orders and regulates the whole creation. Because all facts, as creation, are subject to the law-order of creation, we will call this factual side of our experience the subject-side.

This subject-side to our experience, the factuality of experience, is what it is only because it is subject to the law-order since the subject is never its own law and can never form its own law, it has no meaning, no existence apart from its law-side in which the law-order of creation is revealed. This is why be factuality simply does not exist. We cannot encounter a bare fact but always facts that give expression to the law order of creation.

This means, also, of course, that the law-side has no existence apart from the factual, subject-side, in our experience. We can experience the law-side of creation only in the concrete factuality of the subject-side. Law and subject in the temporal horizon of human experience, exist only in inseparable correlation. Every attempt to tear them apart - think of rationalism with its giving of independent existence to the law-side in laws given prior to all experience of the factual, subject-side of temporal reality, and of irrationalism with its giving of independent existence: to the subject-side in a universe without laws-falsifies meaning.

The tree growing in my garden is undoubtedly a fact, but this very factuality depends on and testifies to the law-order that constitutes it just the fact it is - and not another fact - and distinguishes it from all other facts - e.g. from the bird that perches in its branches. Likewise, my observation of the tree is a fact depending for its very factuality on the law-order so that there is a constancy in my observation and the tree is not observed by me in an infinite variety of constantly changing visual images i.e. - it is observed constantly as a tree and not one moment as a {37} tree, then as a man, then as a bird, then as an

aeroplane, then as a spider, then as a dinosaur, then as an abstract form.

In short, every fact is a law-ordered fact. This is the condition of its factuality.

EXAMINING THE HOW OF EXPERIENCE

Our child in his earliest experience, encounters the world around him as a whole without any attempt to analyse it. His first distinctions are not analytical distinctions, but simple distinctions within the concrete subject-side of his experience - e.g between hot and cold water, soft and hard toys.

This lack of analytical distinguishing does not mean he is not learning. He is learning a great deal as his intuitive, pre-theoretical knowledge of the world, with its significant distinguishing and associating, gradually extends. This extension of experience continues, with more or less vigour, throughout life, and is the essential basis for all his knowing activity.

As he grows, however, he learns with more or less facility, to use his analytical faculties to gain further insight into the world of his experience. This development of the analytical function takes places, specially, but not usually exclusively, through his formal education.

Prior to any analytical understanding of the tree in my garden, I may know that tree very well, far better, in fact, than the tree surgeon whose advice I ask over some disease that threatens it. But now I want insight into how the tree functions. I want to deepen my understanding of the tree not as the concrete 'what' in my garden - already I know it as such very well - but in the 'how' of its functioning.

To do this I must make the tree an object of theoretical analysis. I must abstract the tree from the totality of my experience and set it before the analytical manner of thought. In this way I may expect - though not without difficulty, since the tree will resist analysis and throw many problems in the way - to gain theoretical insight into the functioning of the tree.

It should not be thought that this theoretical insight is a more accurate understanding of the tree. This is a common mistake in modern thought, scientific investigation, that is to say, the theoretical attitude of thought, is supposed to give more accurate knowledge of the world which supersedes the pre-scientific knowledge.

This is a serious mistake since it narrows knowledge to theoretical understanding. Theoretical thought, the bringing of the analytical faculty to bear on the abstracted data of experience does extend our understanding of the world of {39} experience, but it does not invalidate or supersede the understanding gained in pre-theoretical thought. It merely extends our understanding into a new area.

I do not know the tree in my garden any better, as the concrete 'what' because - I have analysed its 'how' in theoretical thought, but I have extended my understanding of the tree beyond the 'what' to the 'how'. The man who thinks he will get to know his wife better by making her into an abstracted object of scientific study than by encounter with her as a

concrete person is certainly making a serious error. Yet this is what he must do if it were true that theoretical thought makes all other ways of knowing obsolete.

When I abstract this tree in my garden from the totality of my experience to make it an object of theoretical analysis, I find that it displays a rich diversity of functions. Perhaps the first to take any notice will be the function of organic life: the tree lives. Looking more closely, I find that, distinct from this life-function, it has a physical-chemical function, a function that can be described in terms of energy. I find also a numerical function; it is a single tree among three others of the same species in the garden, and having a certain number of branches. It has a spatial function in terms of dimensional extension, and it also has a function of motion.

So we can readily distinguish five separate functional aspects of the tree - number, space, movement, energy and organic life.

But if we continue our analysis we will find still more functional aspects open to our view, though not now as functions of the tree as an acting subject, but functions of the tree as functional object for other subjects. In other words, these are ways in which the tree functions as an object for other acting subjects.

It can be an object of logical analysis and distinction. It functions as a linguistic object in the linguistic symbol 'tree' and in other ways. It can function as a legal object, if, for example, a dispute as to ownership arises, or my neighbour complains that its leaves constantly block his roof drainage. It can be the object of love - a tree-lover - or of hate - my neighbour of the blocked gutters - and so reveals a moral aspect. It can be viewed as an economic object with economic value, great or small. It is an aesthetic object, contributing to the harmony of my garden. It can function as an object of social intercourse through the role it plays in a garden party, or through it being planted in a street garden. It has a cultural function, evident from its place in a garden which is the product of man's moulding of the creation. The tree also reveals a faith aspect; to me it is the creation of God while to my unbelieving neighbour it is a product of natural forces. Finally, as an object producing feeling - consider the horse who shies at sight of it, or the man who speaks of its warm colours - it has a physical function also. {39}

We now have ten more functional aspects of this tree in my garden. Not all, indeed, are at all times active - e.g. it is not a legal object while no legal dispute arises - but in principle every one is present and may be activated at any time. This now gives us fifteen functional aspects for the tree.

If we were to extend our enquiry further we would find that not only this tree, but everything we encounter functions in these fifteen aspects, though with some difference in the manner of functioning according to the nature of the subject.

Consider for a moment, the pen with which this was written. It also functions in the aspects of number, space, movement, and energy in much the same way as the tree but when we come to the aspect of organic life we find a difference. The pen does not live. It does not, and cannot, act as subject in this aspect. Yet it does function here also as an

object of the biotic function of other subjects, producing distinctive stimuli in the nerves of sight, touch, and through the retraction mechanism, hearing.

If we had time we might go through all the fifteen functional aspects and show how this pen functions in them all. As the product of cultural activity it functions in the cultural aspect. As a potential gift it functions in the aspect of social intercourse. It functions in the linguistic aspect as the object of the symbol 'pen'. In the faith aspect, to me, it is an object of man's activity in fulfillment of God's mandate to man to rule and develop the creation, a culturally developed object of God's creation, while to another it will be the triumph of an autonomous science and technology.

So we might go through the whole range of aspects, and do the same with the whole range of our experience. All things function in these fifteen aspects. Considering the integrality and coherence of creation in Christ, this is surely what we would expect.

If we may now introduce a little technical language, we will call these fifteen various ways in which things function, modal aspects, or modalities of our experience. We use this term because we are speaking of modes, or ways, in which the creation function, and not of concrete things that have an independent existence.

That these modalities are abstractions does not make them unreal or the mere creation of human thought. It means simply that they open out to view only before the theoretical activity of thought by the confrontation of experience with the analytical modality of human thought.

Proceeding just a little further we find a temporal order in these modalities. They do not occur haphazardly but in a temporal order, that is a time order. {40}

We find, for example, that the modality of number is original, the first in the order of time because it needs no other modality before it to be meaningful. On the other hand, we find that the spatial modality rests on the numerical modality as its necessary predecessor, since we cannot think of space without the numerical analogy of two, three., or more dimensions. The modality of number, therefore, must proceed in the order of time, the spatial modality.

In a similar way the biotic modality must follow that of energy and movement, since we cannot think of organic life without analogies of biotic energy and movement. Provisionally, therefore, we may arrange the modalities in the following order of time, beginning at the bottom and ending at the top, for the reason we will mention shortly.

Faith	Theology
Moral Or Ethical	Ethics
Juridical	Jurisprudence
Aesthetic	Aesthetics
Economic	Economics
Social	Sociology
Linguistic	Linguistics
Historical/Cultural	History

Analytical/Logical
Psychical
Biotic
Physical (Energy)
Movement
Spatial
Numerical

Logic
Psychology
Biology
Physics/Chemistry
Kinematics
Mathematics
Mathematics

Taking yet one more step, we discover that all these functional modalities have their law-side, just as the child found a law-side in his pre-theoretical. There is a regularity in the numerical function making it meaningful to talk of arithmetical laws. Similar functional regularities warrant our speaking of psychological laws, laws of energy, logical laws, etc.

Viewing the modalities from this important law-side which makes the modalities what they are, we speak of them as law-spheres, since each modality is a distinct sphere of law. In each law-sphere the law-order of creation is revealed in a distinctive way.

While each of the law-spheres has its own nucleus of meaning that distinguishes it from every other law-sphere and makes it impossible to reduce on to the other, each one functions in the whole range of experience. It does this by means of analogies that reflect all the modalities within each modality qualified by the nucleus of the modality in which they appear. {41}

Consider, for example, the psychical modality with its nuclear meaning of feeling. But we cannot do justice to feeling without an energetic analogy - strong or weak feelings - and a spatial analogy - expansive or restrictive feeling - and a logical analogy in logical feeling, or a moral analogy in moral feeling.

So we might proceed through the whole range of law-spheres. Each one has its own qualifying nucleus of meaning that makes it inviolate, unable to be reduced to any other, yet each one functions throughout the whole world of experience. Number, spatiality, energy, organic life, logic, none can function in isolation, but only in the full temporal coherence of all the aspects.

It is this universality of function of the modalities that makes it possible for man, in his theoretical thought, to absolutise one or the other of the modalities, defining all meaning in terms of that one modality. The result is the spate of -isms we have seen in modern times, historicism, logicism, mathematicism, vitalism, psychologism, etc. Because one modality does function in the whole range of modalities this absolutising has an appearance of validity, but it is, in fact, a falsifying. Each modality exists only in coherence with all the rest. To lift it out from the others to elevate it above them all as the absolute origin of meaning distorts it beyond all recognition.

This is why we arranged the modalities as we did, from bottom to top in the order of time. The temporal order, always points away from itself to its Origin, God the Creator, in whom alone it finds its fulfillment in Christ our Redeemer. So the upward character of our list is intended to remind us of the upward, God-ward direction of the temporal

modalities.

These modalities are refractions of the temporal fullness of meaning. That fullness of meaning cannot, therefore, be grasped in any one of these modalities, or in their sum total. The fullness of meaning can be grasped only in the religious root of man's existence which can never be made the object of theoretical thought. Hence the folly again becomes apparent of all attempts to regard theoretical thought as the high road to the full meaning of life.

WHAT HAVE WE BEEN DOING?

We have been making no attempt to give a do-it-yourself outline for Christian scholarship, setting out a series of easy steps. To attempt this, or pretend it could be done would be downright misleading. Christian scholarship comes only in communal blood, sweat and tears. If any one of us is to attain to anything like a truly Christian approach to our studies there will need to be a lot more communal travail.

What we have tried to do is two things. First, we have tried to give a demonstration of how we must proceed toward a Christian approach to our studies. We have been building up a theoretical total view that will be a Christian view, but it will be noted that we have not attempted to do this by marshalling a of Bible texts. {42}

What we have used is the raw material of experience. As Christians we can confidently use this raw material. We can trust human experience, not because we trust man but because we trust God who is faithful in upholding and maintaining his creation according to his Word.

In working with this raw material we have endeavored to do so in the full light of scripture. Always, as we have worked, there has been in the forefront of our thinking, the biblical revelation throwing light on the data of experience. Always, in particular, we have been working under the conscious direction of the biblical ground-motive of creation, fall into sin, and redemption in Christ Jesus. This has kept before us the fundamental principles of an ordered world, a coherent world, and a world that is not self-sufficient but refers beyond itself to its Creator and Redeemer.

The second thing we have been trying to do is to give the beginnings of a framework for our studies. To increase our insight into what our academic activity is all about. It will be noted that, alongside the list of law-spheres on page 6 there is a list of academic 'disciplines'. This is not complete, but a sample to indicate how our university studies are directly related to the law-spheres.

Indeed, we may say that, at root, our studies are concerned with discovering the content of the various law-spheres; locating the laws that hold for the various modalities of existence. It will be worth noting that, in the later law-spheres - from the historical onward - these laws appear in a different way. Before this they are determinative, determining the way things are regardless of man's activity. From this point they take on a normative character. They are given to us only as regulative principles to which man must give positive form. So, for example, aesthetic norms cannot be read off with the same universal validity as,

say, mathematical laws. The latter do not depend on man's response, while the former do. But this does not mean that no norms for aesthetics are given in the law-order of creation. They are but as regulative principles to which man gives positive expression which may be more or less true to the divine law-order and may vary from time to time.

In pursuing this task of learning the content of the law-spheres we have seen that we must take care not to tear the factual, subject-side of temporal experience away from its law-side. We have seen also that we must take care not to over-estimate any one law-sphere just because it functions universally, and that, in fact, we must guard against an over-estimating of the activity of theoretical thought itself.

If we grasp what we have discussed in this paper, we will not have the answers we want in our particular areas of study, but we will be a step further toward those answers. {43} Up to now we have avoided the word philosophy, but what we have been doing is really nothing else but developing, in a very preliminary way, a Christian philosophy - i.e. a Christian theoretical total view of the world of academic study. In doing this we have followed in general terms, the path already cut so well in this area by the Christian philosophy of the cosmonomic idea, developed first by Profs. Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven, and later by others in England, USA, Canada and South Africa. If we use it critically as a fallible human tool, and not with religious devotion, we will find that this philosophy will continue to serve us well as we continue along the pathway to integral, Christ glorifying, Christian scholarship. {44}