

# *WitnessKit 3 God and Religions*

## Class 8

More about Existentialist  
Theology, Nihilism, Sartre's  
and Camus' Quarrel, Semantic  
Mysticism

# A Verse to Read Together:

Romans 12:2 “And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.”

(We renew our minds through reading God’s word regularly.)

# A Verse to Read Together:

- Jesus said, “If You abide in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; and you shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free.” John 8:31b-32
- Jesus said, “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.” John 10:27
- We hear Jesus’ voice through His word.

# Step one toward cultural despair of meaning in life

Took place in the philosophy departments.

Step two took place in the world of art.

Step three took place in music—first in intellectual music and then in popular music.

Step four in general culture.

Step five took place in the religious world.

First, we want to look at some consequences in the secular world, and then we want to discuss the descent in the religious world.

# Background from Last Lesson:

The divided field of knowledge assumes several things:

- Knowledge of the physical world cannot supply meaning for people's lives.
- The dialectic has replaced classical reason.
- **Meaning cannot be found in rational beliefs.** The realm of values and meaning is emotional, subjective, and irrational, not objective.
- Meaning is found in an **experiential leap** of some kind, which is irrational and not able to be communicated to others.
- The dialectic can be applied to group power.

The method of existentialism—the emotional experience—became the vehicle for finding meaning in life. The content of the experience was irrelevant.

# Some of us lived through the Sixties.

- We watched as our friends bought into this way of thinking. It was MYSTIFYING! It was as though half the high school completely lost their sense of cause and effect. Most of the other half was busy trying to fit in, without understanding how, and still trying to keep a sensible grasp of decision-making.
- Francis Schaeffer's books were the first explanations that made sense of the shift. I only wish I had found them SOONER!

# We are going through a similar shift.

- The present time is a similarly mystifying shift from Modernism to Postmodernism among people in power. The shift is setting bewilderment into law and administrative codes and case law—and it is working against faith's answers.
- So we need to understand and find a way to persuade people toward ideas that work in the real world—including spiritual reality.
- Many people who chose the irrational answers of the sixties found out the hard way that those answers do not work. Some went to graduate school, without learning that, and became influential teachers of the next generation.

# The Sixties

- The sixties accomplished one good thing: The Civil Rights movement in the US.
- That one good thing was consistent with a Biblical worldview, whereas the evils of the Jim Crow world were NOT consistent with a Biblical worldview. Martin Luther King held a Biblical worldview.
- That one good thing became the basis for Postmodernism's understanding of right and wrong, but without the moral universals of Enlightenment Theism.



# The Sixties

- Without a philosophical base in universal moral truths, the Postmodernist understanding of right and wrong is inadequate.
- It IS well-intentioned. We need to understand that and build bridges of greater understanding between it and Enlightenment Theism.
- But without an adequate base, Postmodernism cannot fulfill its promises.
- So we need to keep the good of the sixties and ALSO keep the good of Enlightenment Theism.

**Test all things.**

**Hold fast to what is good!**

**I Thessalonians 5:21**

# We must try to understand

## Pitfalls

Pitfalls in the secular world when using existential methods for finding meaning in life.

1. Existentialism can easily deteriorate into nihilism.
2. Camus' and Sartre's quarrel reveals existentialism's failure to provide a basis for morality.

# Existentialism can easily deteriorate into nihilism.

It is only a small step from believing the existentialist answer – that meaning for life is found in an irrational, non-communicable experience – to reach the point of saying “The Emperor has no clothes.” – There is not any real meaning to be found. That is the step into nihilism.

So we see people like the young males who walked into a high school in Colorado wearing all black, and asking questions like “Do you believe in God?” before they pulled the trigger.

# Nihilism is...

"A doctrine holding that values are baseless and that nothing can be known or communicated; Rejection of all distinctions in moral or religious value and a willingness to repudiate all previous theories of morality or religious belief."

The divided field of knowledge, into rational but meaningless physical reality, and an irrational realm of meaning and values, is a *very small step away from nihilism.*

# Nihilism is a danger.

*When we present reality to teenagers along existentialist lines, those ideas can act as catalysts toward foolish and terrible choices.*

Adults can look at these things, with their own established habits of thought, and not be greatly changed. Young people do not have those fixed habits of thought, and are much more vulnerable to bad ideas. That is why adults have so much responsibility to retain and present GOOD ideas.

# Nihilism is a danger.

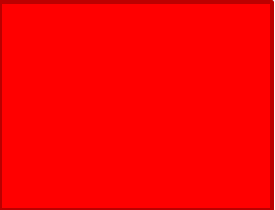
The emotional roller-coaster of adolescence is a very poor time to tell students to be emotionally led. We should be teaching them to think matters through very carefully, to follow good standards, to make decisions for the long term, and to seek to identify cause and effect.

Even for those students who do not jump off the cliff into nihilism, the emotional decision-making ideas of Postmodernism are still a hazard.

# Nihilism is a danger.

The character education movement is a very good response. Parents and churches need to supplement secular character education by giving students a way to integrate it with faith. And parents and churches need to include moral issues that the schools cannot address, or ones they address badly.





# Despair => Nihilism

("Nihilism accepts the conclusion that everything is meaningless and chaotic."—Schaeffer)

Those young men with the guns in Colorado did not believe any answers existed.

They were nihilists. Where are they today, after death? Because God is just, they are experiencing justice. They missed the path to mercy, because they were taught ideas that are false.

They demonstrate the **moral bankruptcy** of the *answers to meaning in life* that young people receive in a secular society.

Many secularists want to promote the absence of moral rules along with denial of God's influence, but they do not want to deal with the nihilism that logically follows.

# While a small percentage of students who are taught the existentialist answer

may take the next logical step into nihilism, MANY more will take steps into **random ideologies** looking for SOMETHING to provide meaning, whether that something is

- fellowship at the local bar,
- or riding motor bikes in rallies,
- or becoming disciples of the green movement,
- or going off into Islam,
- or sleeping around.

None of those answers will help them have eternal life, either.

Pitfalls can lead to the

ETERNAL PIT—one of the Bible's descriptions of hell.

# Romans 8:1-9

- <sup>1</sup> *There is therefore now* no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. <sup>2</sup> For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from *the law of sin and death*.
- The universal moral law is good, but human inadequacy to keep it makes it “the law of sin and of death.” The wages of sin is death, and everybody sins.
- But through Jesus’ victory over sin and death, a new law is available—the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus.

# Romans 8:1-9



Here we see the word *Law* used two different ways. The moral law is God's statement of the rules that define righteousness. The law of sin and of death is a law that describes what actually happens, because of human inadequacy to keep the moral law.

The most righteous people on earth are the ones most aware of their inadequacy to keep the moral law, because they notice the details where they fail and seek God's help. The unrighteous tend to "reset" the law to the point where they can keep it.

# Romans 8:1-9

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The idea that nothing can be known in the realm of meaning and values implies that there is no moral law, just moral opinion. In fact, using the word *values* assumes that morals are merely opinion—what you or your group *value*. So how can anyone keep the real moral law if he assumes it does not exist? How can anyone become righteous under the existentialist approach, the moral relativism approach, to the universal moral law?

# Romans 8:1-9

- The nihilists carry the word *values* to its horrifying conclusion, and may commit acts of terrible wickedness as a result.
- But the “good old boys” who reset their *values* for convenience may be headed for the same eternal destiny—justice—as they commit *generally acceptable* acts of abandoning families for convenience or for a new, younger-model wife. The sophisticated young woman may appear smart and street smart, but she may similarly follow a culturally acceptable path toward eternal justice. ALL of us need to find the path to mercy!
- The moral law is not the human definition of it. It is not merely *values*.



# Romans 8:1-9

<sup>3</sup> For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God *did* by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh,

The moral law is good, but it cannot, in and of itself, accomplish righteousness. The weakness of human nature makes the law itself weak. God overcame the weakness of the law for us, by sending His own Son, in the likeness of weak human nature. God judged sin through the death of His Son,

# Romans 8:1-9

<sup>4</sup> that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

and God fulfilled the righteous requirement of the law through the righteousness of His Son. Both that righteousness and that power to do right are available to us, who do not live according to the weak human nature, but according to the Spirit of God.

# Romans 8:1-9

- <sup>5</sup> For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those *who live* according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.
- <sup>6</sup> For to be carnally minded *is* death, but to be spiritually minded *is* life and peace.
- The characteristic of those who live according to the Spirit is that they set their mind on the things of the Spirit.

# Romans 8:1-9

□ <sup>7</sup> Because the carnal mind *is* enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. <sup>8</sup> So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

God is primarily concerned with our internal life, because that is where the critical decisions take place. If that internal life is at enmity with God, the person cannot please God.

# Romans 8:1-9

- <sup>9</sup> But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His.
- Romans 8:1-9 (NKJV)

God, Himself, in the Person of the Holy Spirit, is willing and ready to release us from that enmity and to bring us to the realm where we CAN please Him. The requirement is to receive the Holy Spirit into our life, and then set our minds on the things of the Spirit.

# The MIND

- What people THINK is absolutely vital for being able to please God.
- Worldviews that prevent people from faith in the True and Living God are a serious hindrance.
- In contrast, the mind with the Holy Spirit can face terrible evils, and can think under the influence of God's righteous Holy Spirit, without being harmed by the evils. So a person does not have to leave the world to avoid contamination by the evils of the world.

## Romans 8:2

**2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.**

# We must try to understand

## Pitfalls

Pitfalls in the secular world when using existential methods for finding meaning in life.

1. Existentialism can easily deteriorate into nihilism.
2. **Camus' and Sartre's quarrel reveals existentialism's failure to provide a basis for morality.**



# Camus' and Sartre's quarrel

Camus and Sartre were leaders in the existentialist movement in France in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Their books are often required reading in high schools and universities.

They believed in an existential *validation of oneself* through choice, with certain stipulations.

# Camus' and Sartre's quarrel

The stipulations:

The choice could **not** be for a **reason**, because that would be a reason programmed into the person's mind by his genes and environment.

The choice had to be an irrational choice—a **neutral** act of the will.

# Camus broke those rules.

Camus took a **moral position** on an issue. That caused a quarrel with Sartre. Sartre said Camus was inconsistent with their beliefs.

# Sartre was upset with Camus

For being inconsistent with their belief system, yet Sartre was inconsistent as well, because **Sartre** took a moral position on the Algerian war. He fell from his place of prominence in the existentialist movement because he decided the war was unjust and dirty.

As Schaeffer says, this demonstrates that nobody can live consistently with the existentialist answer. It further demonstrates that existentialism as a theory is **incapable of telling right from wrong.**

# Meaning informs right and wrong.

A theory **which cannot** make rational judgments about meaning in life also **cannot** make rational judgments about right and wrong, good and evil, just and unjust.

A worldview that accepts survival of the fittest as a basis for biological reality, and existentialism as the basis for meaning in life

**HAS NO BASIS FOR MORALS.**

It has no substance with which to resist evil. It cannot even define evil, let alone fight it.

# Both Sartre and Camus were inconsistent with their existentialism.

- Both Sartre and Camus showed that they each had an inborn sense of right and wrong. Eventually an issue reached their very real consciences.
- This demonstrates that existentialism is not true to the real world of the human heart.
- Yet some modern forms of Christianity try to integrate this way of thinking into their beliefs.

Such a theory does not transition well to the religious realm.

Sometimes religious enterprises trade the certainty of truth for trendy empty air.

A religion that cannot tell right from wrong or good from evil is worthless as a religion. (Even if that sounds harsh, it is true.)

Yet a religious step into existentialism is **the only acceptable kind of religious experience** in much of academia.

Kierkegaard's leap of faith was the gateway to religious existentialism. Karl Barth (pronounced "bart") formalized the system.

# God in His Mercy

Sometimes allows people to find Him *for real* by means of a blind leap of faith, because HE REALLY IS THERE.

- *But existentialism as a theory of religious experience is morally bankrupt.* It obscures the truth far more than it reveals it.
- It often replaces the true step of faith—receiving eternal life—with a confusing emotional experience that cannot satisfy.



# God cares about TRUTH.

- *Philosophical Existentialism* obscures the truth far more than it reveals it.
- When the postmodernist form is added to the mix, the postmodernist churches use existentialist methods to fight oppression.
- They use storytelling as a vehicle, without concern about the truth of the stories. But they cannot define oppression objectively, and that leads to manipulation.

# Existentialism is the basis for Neo-Orthodoxy

Neo-Orthodoxy is the basic belief system of much of “mainstream” Protestant Christianity. It denies the truth of the Bible while claiming it does not matter whether it is true or not, so long as we “believe.”

It takes faith as an emotional benefit ONLY, without an anchor in reality.

It uses the same words as Orthodox or Biblical or Traditional Christianity, but with empty definitions.

# Existentialism is the basis for Neo-Orthodoxy

This is not the whole story, but is a description of the trend over the last century of time. Some of the “mainstream” churches have returned to a more Biblical faith, and some individual churches never really left. Some have a blend of Postmodern and Biblical thought. So the categories are blurry.

In general the trend toward more Biblical approaches goes this way: Least=Mainstream, Middle=Traditional, Most=Evangelical.

# Existentialism is the basis for Neo-Orthodoxy

Biblical Christianity forms much of what is called Evangelical Christianity, including Charismatic forms.

The other main group within Christianity is the Catholic, whether the Roman Catholic, Anglican, or Eastern Orthodox form, which can be characterized as Tradition with a Bible background. They may include a Neo-Orthodox to Postmodernist component, but with traditional expression.

# These Categories Are Painted with a Broad Brush.

The understanding of individuals within congregations varies. Often the Neo-Orthodox clergy will have Biblical Christians in their congregations, and vice-versa. This variation happens because both groups use the same words, but with different meanings. There can be two parallel churches in the same place, and sometimes a generational difference will be taking place as well.

# These Categories Are Painted with a Broad Brush.

The label a church has on its sign in front of the parking lot may not be very informative.

It is important to understand that God is not the author of this kind of confusion. We as congregants need to maintain our own Bible reading and listening skills, so that we avoid confusion of this sort.

Even if we have little choice about which church to attend, we should stand firm for the real faith, in an encouraging way. We should be encouragers for others to do the same. We should ask God to help us say the right thing at the right moment.

# We can see even more pitfalls

## Religious Pitfalls

When existentialism is applied to religious experience.

1. Empty mysticism
2. Misleading communication
3. Bypassing salvation
4. Takeover by unbelieving clergy.
5. The need for clarity.

# Empty mysticism

The first pitfall is empty mysticism. Neo-orthodoxy gave the same answer of a divided field of knowledge as secularism:

The rational and logical are assumed to apply to science and history, and the Bible is assumed to be full of mistakes, based upon a denial of miracle.

The failed quests for the historic Jesus were endeavors of this movement. Their view of faith is that faith is an optimistic and non-rational leap without any content that can be communicated.



# Empty mysticism

Neo-Orthodoxy uses Traditional Christian words and symbols, and uses the connotation of those words to provide **emotional** meaning, while denying the objective truth of those words. This gives the illusion of communication.

On the video, EXPELLED, NO INTELLIGENCE ALLOWED, a scientist compared religion to knitting—a sort of comfort activity that has no real importance. The mysticism of Neo-Orthodoxy is that kind of thing.

# Empty mysticism

God words are used without content—as sort of “fill-in-the-blank emotional experience” words. The cross is used that way, and God is used that way, such as the phrase of Tillich’s which Schaeffer quoted, “God behind God.” What does that phrase mean? Fill in your own blank. This sort of religion becomes faith in faith— the idea that faith is good for a person even though there is apparently no reason to have faith.

# Empty mysticism

Postmodernism views all religious experience as a sort of religious emotional trip that only has meaning in the emotional realm.

True Christian experience, on the other hand, **is an objectively real experience**, because God really is there, He really loves us, and He really wants fellowship with us. He was willing to pay an enormous price to make that fellowship possible. True Christian experience is **NOT IRRATIONAL** at all. And it is not empty.

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# Misleading communication

The second pitfall of existential religious experience is misleading communication. If a church leader uses religious words as vehicles for content-less emotional experience, they can also be used as vehicles for manipulation.

The direction the Neo-Orthodox churches have gone since Schaeffer wrote is a political direction—generally into causes that hope to alleviate oppression in some form.

This IS a good intention.

# Misleading communication

Because the foundation is morally shaky, without a source of moral universals or standards, the causes tend not to be evaluated carefully.

We saw, in the 1960s, organizations like the World Council of Churches forwarding the aims of the Soviet Union, because of two failures—failure to evaluate claims using moral universal standards and failure to search for truth.

# Misleading communication

It is inherently dishonest to use religious connotation words for manipulation. It is inherently dishonest to present faith in irrational emotional experience as equivalent to faith in objectively believed events such as the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

This existential approach to Christianity tends to equate all religious experience under the heading of “irrational but helpful emotional experience.”

# Misleading communication

Since different religions believe radically different ideas, it is inherently dishonest to equate them in that manner. It is a form of misleading communication.

It is a form of misleading communication to use god words in a way that *leads the retirees in the pew to keep sending in their offerings*, thinking they are supporting the faith of their fathers, while the ministers are teaching a radically different form of faith.



# Misleading communication

A worldview that denies the existence of objective truth is unlikely to be sensitive to honesty.

But God is VERY sensitive to honesty.

So we need to pray for leaders who have fallen into the trap of a mistaken worldview. We need to ask God to be merciful to them and to lead them into truth. They are in a job where Bible study is appropriate use of time. So we can pray for God to open His word to them.

# Misleading communication

One of the prerequisites Jesus mentioned in more than one location of the Gospels is honesty of heart. John 3:21 mentions it. The parable of the sower mentions the need of an honest and good heart.

The Bible is very clear about the need for honesty. It is also clear that people are honesty-challenged by sin nature.

A true religion will support heart-honesty. It will call people to account for the opposite.

# Misleading communication

If we are dealing with well-intentioned ministries that do not meet this challenge, then...

We need to find appropriate ministries to support with our finances, because the whole world needs the truth.

We need to become immune to manipulation, and sensitive to the true Holy Spirit, informing us through God's word. And we need to do this carefully, aware of our own limitations as human beings.

# Misleading communication

So far we have been talking about churches and ministries that have the name “Christian.” This also holds true for other ministries and groups. We need to understand how groups view the issue of honesty before we give them our support. We need to avoid being manipulated or misled. For example, if the World Council of Churches had used this test, they would not have supported the aims of the Soviet Union, because the theory of Marxism does not hold honesty as a standard.

# Misleading communication

Of course we can pray for people and groups who do not have this standard. But that is not the same as supporting them.

If two groups are in conflict, and one denies honesty as a standard, and the other upholds honesty as a standard, even if the honesty group looks worse than the other group, reality is likely to favor the honesty group. People who do not uphold honesty can become horribly skilled at deception, and still feel good about their efforts. They can be persuasive.

# Misleading communication

Ephesians chapter 4 covers the topic of honesty and of avoiding manipulation, or being manipulated, while maintaining kindness in the process. And it is talking about church!

Honesty does not mean harshness or malice, but it does mean firmness for truth and clarity.

Honest and wobbly don't go together. Honest and gentleness do. If someone is demanding that you go wobbly about truth in the name of kindness, kindly stand firm instead.

# We can see even more pitfalls

## Religious Pitfalls

When existentialism is applied to religious experience.

1. Empty mysticism
2. Misleading communication
3. Bypassing salvation
4. Takeover by unbelieving clergy.
5. The need for clarity.

# Bypassing salvation

This is the most serious issue. A “faith” that equates all religious experience can be a cheap and non-working substitute for saving faith. It can be a substitute that does nothing to solve the sin problem, and that does nothing to enable a person to go to heaven.

It is like a generic medicine that is supposed to cure dread diseases, but really is just alcohol and menthol. It gives a momentary buzz, and that is all.



# Bypassing salvation

What does it really mean to say that “it does not matter whether Christ really rose from the dead. It only matters that you believe it.” Can you believe something, and think it matters to believe it, while simultaneously thinking it does not matter whether it really happened or not?

That system says the only important thing is the subjective effect such faith has on the emotions.

# The Apostle Paul would be appalled.

- I Corinthians 15:14-19<sup>14</sup> And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching *is* empty and your faith *is* also empty. <sup>15</sup> Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ, whom He did not raise up—if in fact the dead do not rise. <sup>16</sup> For if *the* dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen. <sup>17</sup> And if Christ is not risen, your faith *is* futile; you are still in your sins! <sup>18</sup> Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. <sup>19</sup> If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable. (NKJV)

# Bypassing salvation

In I Corinthians 15, Paul said the opposite. He said, in essence, If Christ did not rise from the dead, our faith is futile, and we might as well eat, drink, and be merry as to persevere under persecution. We are of all people most miserable (in this persecution) if the resurrection didn't really happen. And our forgiveness depends upon the reality of the resurrection.

# Bypassing salvation

Even though the same word, “faith” or “believe” is used in the two religious systems, they are not the same ideas at all. In Biblical Christianity, our salvation hinges on believing the TRUTH. Believing a lie will not take away sins. Believing a lie is not the same thing as believing the truth. Truth matters.

# Bypassing salvation

Because God is real and GOOD, we can trust Him. We don't have to have total proof to believe. But that is different from saying it doesn't matter whether it is true or not, just believe.

Because God is real, when we do believe, He gives us experiential evidence. He calls the giving of His Holy Spirit the “earnest” of our salvation, of our eternal inheritance, like the earnest money to seal a contract.

# Bypassing salvation

Having His Presence in our life is like carrying a little hint of heaven's reality in our daily life.

But like Elijah's experience after the earthquake, His voice is a still, small voice. We have to listen well, through His word. The Bible gives us His ideas and He reminds us as we go along. In metaphor, the world's voice clamors, and the Holy Spirit speaks softly.

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5. The need for clarity.

# Takeover by unbelieving leaders

This is a sticky situation. A clergyman or woman can come out of a Neo-Orthodox seminary believing the existentialist form of Christianity while not believing in Christ at all. If that individual takes up the pastorate in a believing church, that represents a hostile takeover.

Yet it can and does happen, and often the people in the pew are too nice to stop it, or the ones who try to stop it are considered divisive.

Ditto for denominational colleges and seminaries—where the PhD process makes these takeovers easy.



# Takeover by unbelieving leaders

The PhD process is hostile to evangelical Christianity, so very few evangelicals are able to obtain PhDs.

The colleges and universities **must** have faculties made up almost **entirely** of PhD degreed professors, in order to be **accredited**.

Scholarships and all funding, as well as tax breaks for families, all hinge on accreditation.

So the democratic process among the professorate is usually hostile toward an evangelical theme for a university.

# Takeover by unbelieving leaders

The Neo-Orthodox approach to faith makes it easy to sign a statement of faith, even for someone who opposes Biblical Christianity very strongly,

and that is usually as far as a university can go toward protecting the faith of the students by screening professors.

So the universities, with all their influence on the future, are often absent Spiritual leadership.

# We can see even more pitfalls

## Religious Pitfalls

When existentialism is applied to religious experience.

1. Empty mysticism
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3. Bypassing salvation
4. Takeover by unbelieving clergy/ the scholarship vacuum response.
5. The need for clarity.

# Additional problems occur

Within Evangelical churches. Because Neo-Orthodoxy and Postmodern extensions of it have gained authority in many divinity schools, a reaction has occurred in Evangelicalism over the last generation.

That reaction has been in the direction of **simple** Bible study and personal religious devotion, **without** maintaining an awareness of religious directions in academia.

# Even Seminaries that have maintained true Biblical Christianity

have often focused on “how-to” courses—  
toward increasing church attendance and  
membership,  
personal evangelism,  
programs and methods for church growth.

They have focused less on scholarship, because  
that domain has been largely taken over by  
hostile forces in the PhD/ThD labor market.

# The Scholarship Vacuum

This has left a gap in scholarship for Baptist and other Evangelical doctrine, and has left the field of theology, by default, to the Reformation theology group, whose focus has not been on evangelism, but on scholarship.

The problem is ...

that Reformation Theology sometimes becomes another form of DETERMINISM.

# Traditional Baptist Doctrine

Is a strong counter-balance to deterministic Reformation Theology. That counter-balance is needed, because determinism is simply wrong. Not all Reformation Theology is deterministic, but enough is to be a problem. So one of the many things we as Baptists and Evangelicals need to do— we need to support scholarship in doctrinal studies, with an awareness of the inadequacy of determinism.

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# Finally, I want to talk about

The need for apologetics as a way of clarifying thinking. Often, we hear a muddled form of explanation about salvation. It can be very difficult to know for sure what someone is talking about when they describe their faith. Was it “walking down the isle” that they are depending on to give them eternal life? Was it “baptism?” Do they connect eternal life with the cross, or do they think it is automatic for everyone?

# Apologetics As a Way of Clarifying Thinking

Because the existential approach to Christianity is a focus on experience rather than doctrine, people can present religious experiences in vague terms and the hearer may not understand what they mean. They may be talking about real saving faith, and again, they may not be.

If we introduce them to apologetics, we may have an opportunity to lead someone to the LORD for salvation who has their name on the church membership roll, but who has not really understood the basics of the faith.

# Apologetics As a Way of Clarifying Thinking

A person who has an existentialist belief system may go through the motions of becoming a Baptist or other church member without understanding that Jesus Christ really did die on the cross and rise again from the dead for them. They may not understand why they need a Savior, as opposed to just needing a meaningful experience. Studying apologetics is a non-threatening way to clarify what Christianity is all about.

# Apologetics As a Way of Clarifying Thinking

We have a mandate from Christ to spread the good news of salvation to others who have not heard or understood it.

We need to clarify our thinking to be able to fulfill that mandate.

Being able to talk about our religious experience IS important. Being able to connect it in words to theological reality is ALSO important. That theological reality is part of what our friends need to understand, before they can experience the same salvation we are sharing.

# Apologetics As a Way of Clarifying Thinking

So in one way, the hard work of apologetics study is for our own benefit. In another way, it is for the eternal benefit of others.

And the best part about it is this:

God loves to help us with this. He loves to help us bring our thinking under His wise worldview. The Biblical worldview is a wonderful gift from the All-Wise God. And because His wisdom so far exceeds ours, we can spend a lifetime studying with Him.

# Promises From the Good Shepherd, Ezekiel 34:11-31

Thus says the LORD God,  
“I Myself  
Will search for My sheep.  
I will deliver them  
From all the places  
Where they were scattered  
On a cloudy, gloomy day.

# Promises From the Good Shepherd, Ezekiel 34:11-31

I will bring them out.

I will gather them.

I will bring them home.

I will feed them--

in good pasture

by streams of water.

I will lead them to rest....

# Promises From the Good Shepherd, Ezekiel 34:11-31

I will seek the lost.

I will bring back the scattered.

I will bandage the broken.

I will strengthen the sick.

I will feed the wicked—with judgment.

I will remove the trampers who cause harm.

My flock will no longer be in danger.

My Son will be their Shepherd.

I will make them a blessing.

I am with them and they are Mine.



# Homework

3 sets

# Homework Class 8 Set 1

- Read Psalm 19. This Psalm is in three parts. Verses 1-6 relate to communication about God in nature. Verses 7-11 focus on communication from God through His moral law found in the first five books of the Bible. Verses 12 through 14 focus on personal application of the knowledge available about God from these sources. In verses 3 and 4, the knowledge about God from creation is in non-verbal form, but there are things we can know about God from that non-verbal information.
- What are two of those things mentioned in this Psalm?

# Homework Class 8 Set 1

- In verses 7 through 11, what benefits are listed from paying attention and obeying God's moral law?
- In verses 12-14 what personal applications are given?
- Begin Section Two: "The Relationship of the New Theology to the Intellectual Climate" in **THE GOD WHO IS THERE** by reading Chapter One, "The Fifth Step: Theology."

# Homework Class 8 Set 1

- Kierkegaard led the way to existentialism both in the secular world and the religious world. The methodology of an irrational leap of faith shows up in much of modern theology, some being openly existentialist, but ranging to an emphasis on experience rather than truth even in more traditional circles, and to an eclectic “smorgasbord” religious thinking where people pick and choose what they enjoy without reference to truth OR CONSEQUENCES.

# Homework Class 8 Set 1

- What was the underlying assumption that brought the theological world into this irrational way of compartmentalizing faith?
- With this assumption, and miracles, therefore, ruled impossible, what were the choices left to the “cutting edge” theologians who wanted to keep their careers?
- Does a basis of the “Big Assumption” provide a very strong reason to reject the Bible as true?

# Homework Class 8 Set 2

- Read Luke 16:19-21. Jesus told about a rich man who was oblivious to the suffering of his neighbor, Lazarus. Lazarus died and went to be with Abraham, and later, the rich man died and went to Hades. In Hades, the rich man learned compassion the hard way, and he wanted to prevent his brothers from having to experience the same destiny as himself.
- What did the rich man ask as a miracle to convince his brothers to repent?
- What was Abraham's answer from across the chasm?
- Will the miraculous convince someone who is determined to disbelieve?
- Is the Big Assumption an evidence position or a faith position?

# Homework Class 8 Set 2

- Does the direction one chooses to exercise faith matter to God, according to the Bible?
- Is this wish on God's part consistent with the idea of a Good God?
- Read Acts 17:16-34. What do verses 27 and 30 say that God wishes for each of us? What proof did God give to us that He wishes these things for us?
- Read Section Two, Part Two of THE GOD WHO IS THERE -- "Modern Mysticism: Despair Beyond Despair."
- What is the one sentence description of nihilism?
- If Nihilism were a correct view of reality, would it be possible to go to work and keep a job and have a predictable paycheck and buy food and pay rent and raise a family?

# Homework Class 8 Set 2

- Is nihilism a faith system?
- Why does Schaeffer say the split in the field of knowledge, -- into the rational realm of sensory experience of objective reality and the irrational realm of meaning based on a non-communicable leap of faith -- why does Schaeffer say that system is actually worse than nihilism?
- Why did Sartre and Camus quarrel?
- What does Schaeffer mean by semantic mysticism?



# Homework Class 8 Set 2

- This is the place where the neo-orthodox can get really annoying. They tend to use religious words so that traditional believers think they are communicating about real things, and what they are really doing is the opposite. Because they often use the same words that real believers use, **probing questions** may be necessary to find out what they really do believe. Schaeffer is a helpful author to read in preparation for talking to someone like this, **because he helps the reader be compassionate toward them.** When you realize how empty their belief system is, you can have compassion for what they are missing. What does Schaeffer say they need, rather than a return to the poorness of an unsatisfactory religious status quo?

# Homework Class 8 Set 2

- How does Schaeffer contrast the value of faith in Christian belief versus the modern neo-orthodox treatment of faith?
- Both kinds of faith yield religious experience, but only one of the two results in forgiveness of sins and opportunity to communicate with the living God. A lovely result of the true kind of faith is that one can communicate with other people about it. It is real.

# Homework Class 8 Set 3

- Read Jeremiah 29:10-14.
- What prerequisites are in these verses for a future and a hope, for finding God, and for answered prayer?
- Read Section Two Chapter Three of THE GOD WHO IS THERE – “Modern Mysticism in Action: Art and Language.”

# Homework Class 8 Set 3

- What does Schaeffer say the fallen-ness of man does **not** lead to, and what **does** it lead to?
- Can someone live consistently with the idea of himself as a machine? Schaeffer gave two examples of people who knew intuitively in an area of their lives that they are not machines. What were the examples?
- What was Paul Klee hoping to find through art?

# Homework Class 8 Set 3

- Salvador Dali was a surrealist early in his art career, uniting the ideas of a chance universe with ideas from Freud's description of the unconscious. When he loved his wife, he found this perspective inadequate, and his art switched to mysticism. In his works of art, when he used symbolism from Roman Catholic Christianity, did he mean for the symbols to express their traditional meaning?
- What did Heidegger use as a mystical system to reach beyond existentialism?