

## Topics in Apologetics

John M. Frame

- I. Apologetics is evangelism, counseling, preaching.
  - A. Importance of dealing primarily with people, rather than with arguments.
  - B. Important to focus on the gospel, the basic truths of God's Word.
  - C. No argument guaranteed to persuade everyone.
  - D. Different arguments persuade different people. Apologetics is person variable.
  - E. Easy for rational dialogue to break down.
    1. People repress the truth.
    2. Many not capable of following apologetic arguments.
    3. Many not motivated.
  - F. Love is the best apologetic. Schaeffer.
  - G. Emotional, volitional factors in belief.
  - H. Scriptural polemic against contentious spirit, Prov. 13:10, 18:6, 19:13, 26:21, Hab. 1:3, Matt. 5:9, Rom. 2:8, 12:18, 1 Cor. 1:11, 8:1-3, 11:16, Phil. 1:16, Titus 3:9, James 3:13-16, 1 Pet. 3:15.
  
- II. Toward an Ideal Argument
  - A. Transcendental
  - B. Simple (God is *clearly* revealed)
  - C. One that coheres well with the Gospel
    1. Showing that repression comes from sin.
    2. One that doesn't bog us down in intellectual subtleties.
    3. One that shows respect for the unbeliever's questions.
    4. One that leads naturally to Christ.
  - D. Contextualized to the individual or group you're addressing.
  
- III. The Existence of God
  - A. Who is God?
    1. Absolute personality: uniquely biblical.
    2. Covenant Lord: rules all areas of life.
      - a. Control, authority, presence.
      - b. Hard to determine what a world would be like *without* God.
        - (i) Teleological argument: how do you actually distinguish between rocks and watches?
        - (ii) Positivists: How, specifically, does a theistic world differ from a non-theistic world? Hard to conceive.
        - (iii) We've never experienced any reality without God.
        - (iv) Total chaos? But what is that?
  - B. Belief in God

1. A belief that is truly comprehensive, influencing every aspect of life, thought, emotion.
  2. Involves behavior, emotion, as well as concepts.
  3. Agnosticism
    - a. No halfway house between belief and unbelief, though in everyone the two beliefs struggle for dominance.
    - b. Most “agnostics” really atheists, because they do not lead theistic lives, or at least the atheistic principle is dominant.
- C. The Main Issue: Personalism vs. Impersonalism
1. Impersonalism: the personal reduces to matter, motion, time, and/or chance.
  2. Personalism: the impersonal is subject to a Person.
  3. Why doesn't our culture give both of these a fair hearing?
    - a. Science, philosophy.
    - b. Indicates the rebellion against the truth of Rom. 1, the use of a false presupposition.
- D. Moral Values
1. Oddness: can't be perceived, but crucial to our life and thought.
  2. Not derivable from sense experience. “Naturalistic fallacy” argument.
  3. Subjective?
    - a. But we constantly judge the wrong actions of others.
    - b. Cultural subjectivity? But we don't regard cannibalism as a mere taste.
    - c. Cannot be subjective, because all thought depends on them: what we ought to believe and say.
  4. Hierarchical order
  5. Source
    - a. Impersonal? But how could an impersonal being communicate ethical principles and demand allegiance to them? How can the impersonal ever create an *obligation*?
      - (i) By sheer force of might? But why not resist bravely, as Prometheus?
      - (ii) By some moral value attaching to the impersonal being itself? But that in effect makes the impersonal being a person.
    - b. Personal
      - (i) Typically, we become aware of obligations in a personal context: parents, sports teams, military, etc.
      - (ii) The ultimate source of morality must be an ultimate person.
      - (iii) So God exists.
      - (iv) And he is personal, therefore thinking, planning, loving, speaking, good, righteous, one.
      - (v) Since personal qualities exist only in a plurality of persons, this argument also suggests the Trinity.

- (vi) His absoluteness implies his eternity, perfection of knowledge, power, presence. For if there were a limitation, then it would be conceivable to think of a reality without God. Nothing is doable if God cannot do it, for if something were, its doability would be measured by a standard other than God.
- 6. Is this argument transcendental? It purports to show that any other ground of morality is meaningless.
- E. Epistemology
  - 1. As teleological argument: remarkable that mind correlates with reality.
    - a. More easily explained personalistically.
    - b. Evolution?
      - (i) Questions about that have been raised.
      - (ii) And what is the source of evolution itself, programmed to maximize intelligent life?
  - 2. Another dimension: truth is itself an ethical value.
    - a. My will is involved in deciding what to believe, or repressing the truth.
    - b. We accept logical conclusions because we are ethically obliged to.
- F. Metaphysics
  - 1. Teleological
    - a. Formulation: the world evidences design, so it is the product of a designer.
    - b. Programming at macro and micro level. DNA. ("Welcome to Canada")
    - c. The complicated interdependence of the elements of living cells (Michael Behe).
    - d. Problems
      - (i) Dysteleology (apparent purposelessness, evil)
        - (A) See later discussion of evil.
        - (B) Actually, if God exists, it will be impossible to draw a perfect analogy between the world and a product of *human* design. So some dysteleology actually has evidential value.
        - (C) God is an aesthetic being, as well as a purposeful one.
      - (ii) Alternative explanations (Hume): a committee, vegetable growth, etc.
    - e. The real (transcendental) question: How is it that we are able even to speak intelligibly about rational explanations for data? Personalism or impersonalism?
  - 2. Cosmological
    - a. Formulation
      - (i) Every effect has a cause.
      - (ii) The universe is an effect.

- (iii) Therefore the universe has a cause.
- b. For discussion of the possibility of an infinite series, see my paper. Basically I'm not sure that either the possibility or the impossibility of such a series can be demonstrated.
- c. Rough equivalence of "cause" and "reason."
- d. Those of a rationalist frame of mind are inclined to say that there is a cause for everything. Those of an irrationalist frame of mind tend to be skeptical.
- e. Irrationalism is self-defeating.
- f. Rationalism is torn in two directions:
  - (i) toward an ultimate cause, which explains everything.
  - (ii) Toward ceaseless questioning, "why?" which never ends at an ultimate cause. But this position is indistinguishable from irrationalism.
- g. So the cosmological argument reduces to the epistemological and moral.

### 3. Ontological

- a. Formulation
  - (i) God possesses all perfections.
  - (ii) Existence is a perfection.
  - (iii) Therefore, God exists.
- b. Perfect island criticism: but a perfect island is not a perfect *being*.
- c. "Jump from mind to reality."
  - (i) But this is the nature of human thought.
  - (ii) We must do this in affirming our ultimate standards.
  - (iii) To say that we can never do this amounts to skepticism.
- d. Main problem: no religiously neutral concept of perfection.
- e. Anselm's version: presuppositional.
  - (i) Found in prayer.
  - (ii) He affirms he does not doubt God's existence.
  - (iii) Faith seeking understanding.
  - (iv) Addresses Gaunilo, not as fool, but as Catholic.
  - (v) Appeals to Gaunilo's faith and conscience.

## IV. Proving the Gospel

### A. Starting point

1. The worldview expounded above.
  - a. Absolute personality theism.
  - b. Creator-creature.
2. Since this worldview is found in Scripture alone, there is a large presumption in favor of Scripture as a divine revelation.
3. Scripture itself teaches its own authority, sufficiency.
4. So the authority of Scripture is a key element of epistemology. To know God, we must be open to hear his Word.

## B. Biblical Criticism

1. Generally presupposes that supernatural events cannot happen.
  - A. Evolutionary view of biblical history.
  - B. Denying the possibility of predictive prophecy.
2. Tendency now toward more conservative views of biblical history, dates.
3. Lewis: "All theology of the liberal type involves at some point... the claim that the real behavior and purpose and teaching of Christ came very rapidly to be misunderstood and misrepresented by his followers, and has been recovered or exhumed only by modern scholars."
4. "They claim to see fern-seed and can't see an elephant ten yards away in broad daylight."
5. Is Scripture credible?
  - a. The presence of unbelief among scholars never counts for anything. Scripture tells us that we must contend against the wisdom of the world.
  - b. If Scripture is the revelation of God's absolute personality, then it must be inerrant. He can express himself no other way.
  - c. Jesus himself and all other biblical writers regarded the portions of Scripture available to them as God's Word.

## C. Scripture's Own Rationale for the Gospel Message

1. Argument from Prophecy
  - a. Coherence between human need and the nature of salvation.
  - b. Anticipations of substitutionary offering.
    - (i) Gen. 22
    - (ii) Ex. 12-15
    - (iii) Ex. 17
    - (iv) The tabernacle and temple sacrifices.
  - c. Need for a *divine* savior, Psm. 2:12, 45:6, 110:1f, Isa. 42:6ff, 43:1ff, 59:15-20, Jonah 2:9.
  - d. Need for one to transcend Adam, Moses, David.
  - e. Specific prophecies of the coming of the Messiah: Isa. 7:14, 9:6-8, 11:1-16, 35:5ff, 53, Jer. 31:33ff, Dan. 9:20-27, Mic. 5:2, Zech. 9:9-12, 12:10, Mal. 3:1-5.
  - f. The "argument from prophecy" is really an argument from the whole OT, John 1:45, 5:39, Luke 24:27.
2. The NT Witness
  - a. Jesus' self-witness
    - (i) Self-centered message
    - (ii) Unique sonship, John 5:18ff, Matt. 26:64.
    - (iii) Power to forgive sins, Mark 2:7 (see Isa. 43:25, 44:22).
  - b. Jewish monotheists believed him.
    - (i) His divine claim, John 1:1.

- (ii) Yahweh passages in the OT applied to Christ in the NT, Isa. 45:23ff, Phil. 2:10-11.
  - (iii) He is creator, not creature, John 1:3, Col. 1:16-17.
  - (iv) He is covenant Lord, 1 Cor. 11:25.
  - (v) Author of providence, Heb. 1:3.
  - (vi) Incidental references: Gal. 1:1, 10, 12.
  - (vii) Identification of the Messiah with God in Psm. 2, 45:5, 110:1ff.
  - (viii) Sinlessness, 1 Pet. 2:22, 1 John 3:5.
- c. Miracles, John 20:31.
- (i) Not everybody believes.
  - (ii) Miracles not necessary to faith.
  - (iii) But they warrant faith.
  - (iv) Are miracles possible?
    - (A) Yes, if God exists.
    - (B) Vs. Hume: experience does not limit possibility.
  - (v) Are the Biblical writers fit witnesses?
    - (A) Yes, because they are inspired of God.
    - (B) Yes, because they were willing to die for what they preached.
    - (C) Yes, because the opponents of Christianity had no good argument to the contrary: the miracles happened, but by Beelzebub.
- d. The Resurrection
- (i) Chief argument: the Word of God itself (1 Cor. 15:1ff).
  - (ii) No fear of contradiction.
  - (iii) The Jews conceded the empty tomb, but claimed the disciples had taken the body.
    - (A) But why would they do this, risking their lives?
    - (B) And why would they have been willing to die to perpetuate the fraud?
  - (iv) The story was related too soon to be the product of legendary development.
  - (v) The women as first witnesses, a mark of authenticity.
  - (vi) Attempts to explain away the Resurrection as a natural event fail.
    - (A) Jesus did not die: "swoooooon."
      - (i) How would he, in weakened condition, have rolled away the heavy stone?
      - (ii) How would he have appeared triumphant, as Lord of life?
    - (B) Disciples' conspiracy? See (iii) above.
    - (C) Visions, hallucinations?
      - (i) But same image in many persons.
      - (ii) In different situations.

- V. Apologetics as Defense: The Problem of Evil
- A. Formulation
1. If God were all-powerful, he would be able to prevent evil.
  2. If God were all-good, he would desire to prevent evil.
  3. So if God were both all-powerful and all good, there would be no evil.
  4. But there is evil.
  5. So either God is not all-powerful, not all-good, or doesn't exist.
  6. Or: a cry of the heart.
- B. An answer? At what price?
- C. What the Bible does not say.
1. That evil is unreal. Even if evil is unreal, the subjective experience of it is real, so evil is real.
  2. That evil is a privation. Even if it is, God is responsible for the privations of being as well as being.
  3. That God is weak (Kushner), Psm. 115:3, Isa. 55:11, Luke 18:27, Rom. 11:33-36, 1 Tim. 6:15-16.
  4. That this is the best possible world (Leibniz).
    - a. Paradise and consummation glory are examples of better worlds than this.
    - b. God creates beings that are not perfect, for his own glory.
  5. That human beings have libertarian freedom.
    - a. Creatures are to blame for sin and evil.
    - b. But Scripture teaches that God does control our free choices: Gen. 50:20, Acts 2:23, 4:27, 2 Sam. 24:1, Rom. 11:36, Eph. 1:11.
    - c. In Rom. 9, Paul contradicts the assumptions of the free will defense.
    - d. Scripture never uses the free will defense. (Job, Psm. 37, 73, Rom. 9)
  6. That evil builds character.
    - a. It can have that beneficial effect.
    - b. But this doesn't fully explain the problem of evil.
    - c. Neither unfallen Adam, nor the glorified saints in heaven, need evil for character building.
  7. That evil is necessary for a stable environment.
    - a. But Paradise and Heaven are examples of stability without evil.
    - b. And this is not a sufficient explanation.
  8. That God is only an indirect cause of evil.
    - a. He is a direct cause of everything (above).
    - b. And indirectness does not exonerate: the hit man.
  9. That God is above the moral law (*ex lex*).
    - a. The law reflects God's own character, Lev. 11:44-45, Matt. 5:45, 1 Pet. 1:15-16, John 13:34-35.
    - b. God has some prerogatives we don't have, but in general the laws he prescribes for us reflect his own character.

D. An *Ad hominem* Point

1. The unbeliever does not have the resources to distinguish evil from good.
2. So he cannot formulate the problem of evil.
3. And he has a problem with good: how are moral distinctions possible in a godless universe?
4. But this doesn't solve the problem of evil, which is a question about the consistency of the Christian world view.

E. What the Bible Says

1. God is the standard for his actions: we may not accuse him.
  - a. Gen. 3, 22.
  - b. Job 23:1-7, 31:35ff, 38-42.
  - c. Ezek. 18:25.
  - d. Matt. 20:1-16.
  - e. Romans 3:26, 3:4-8, 31, 6:1-2, 15ff, 7:7, 9:14-15, 19-21.
2. Scripture gives us a new historical perspective.
  - a. The past: waiting and waiting again.
    - (i) Ex. 2:23ff, 3:6, 12-15, Wilderness wanderings, etc.
    - (ii) Dialectic between mercy and justice.
    - (iii) Fulfilled only in the atonement.
    - (iv) Can we not wait for an answer to the remaining perplexity?
  - b. The present: the greater-good defense.
    - (i) God's plan brings greater glory to himself.
    - (ii) God's plan brings greater benefit to us, Rom. 8:28. Cf. John 10:10, Deut. 5:33, Psm. 1, 119:7.
      - (A) Displaying God's grace and justice, Rom. 3:26, 5:8, 20-121, 9:17.
      - (B) Judgment of evil, Matt. 23:35, John 5:14.
      - (C) Redemption, 1 Pet. 3:18, Col. 1:24.
      - (D) Shock value to unbelievers, Zech. 13:7-9, Luke 13:1-5, John 9.
      - (E) Fatherly discipline to believers, Heb. 12.
      - (F) Vindication of God, Rom. 3:16.
  - c. The future: God will one day take the problem of evil from our hearts.
    - (i) His final judgment. Psm. 73, Isa. 40:1ff, Matt. 25, Luke 1:51, Hab. 2:2-3.
    - (ii) Our praise, Rev. 15:3-4, 16:5-7, 19:1-2.
3. God Gives Us a New Heart
  - a. Scripture turns our skepticism into faith, Luke 24:32.
  - b. The new heart of faith, Psm. 51:15, 73:16-17.

VI. Apologetics as Offense: Challenging Unbelieving Thought

A. Philosophy

1. The Milesians, (6<sup>th</sup> century, BC): "all is..."

- a. Rationalism: “all”
- b. Irrationalism: reduces mind itself to matter, motion, chance.
- 2. Parmenides (5<sup>th</sup> century): the rationalist.
- 3. Heraclitus (535-475): also rationalist, but affirms change.
- 4. Sophists (Protagoras: 490-?): no objective truth, only truth for me.
  - a. Irrationalist in obvious way.
  - b. Also rationalist: I am the final authority in determining truth.
- 5. Plato (427-347)
  - a. Irrationalist on the changing world of experience.
  - b. Rationalist on the world of Forms or Ideas, that serve as criteria for truth.
- 6. Aristotle (384-322)
  - a. Demythologizes Plato: form and matter are in things of experience, not in two different worlds.
  - b. But form and matter both serve as principles of rationality and irrationality, respectively.
  - c. The Prime Mover: an impersonal principle, not a personal God.
- 7. Plotinus (204-269): Neoplatonism
  - a. Rationalist: proposes “the One” as explanation of everything.
  - b. Irrationalist: we cannot speak about “the One.” Our language inadequate.
  - c. A continuum between the One and the material world. Emanation, not creation.
  - d. The world is divine, but also radically distinct from the One: transcendence and immanence.
  - e. The way to salvation: be reabsorbed into the One. Become divine.
- 8. Rationalists (Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz) and Empiricists (Locke, Berkeley, Hume) (17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup> century)
  - a. Rationalists stress the older rationalist theme.
    - (i) Seek to build the whole edifice of human knowledge anew, by means of reason alone.
    - (ii) Dream of mathematical axiomatization of all knowledge.
    - (iii) Skeptical of sense-experience, but relied on it.
    - (iv) Speculative
  - b. Empiricists degenerate into irrationalism.
    - (i) What can we really *know* through sense experience?
      - (A) Nothing necessary or universal. But that destroys science and mathematics.
      - (B) Hume: Reason should be the slave of the passions. Custom rules.
- 9. Immanuel Kant (1724-1804)
  - a. Irrationalism about the noumenal world, the world of things in themselves.
  - b. Rationalism about the world of experience.
- 10. G. W. F. Hegel (1770-1831)

- a. Rationalistic: “the real is the rational, and the rational is the real.”
  - b. But a rational view of the world can be attained only by negating what we presently think we know and rising above it.
11. Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889-1951)
- a. *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*
    - (i) Rigorous terms for meaning and truth (rationalistic).
    - (ii) But recognizes that his own book doesn't measure up to these criteria, so he says that the book has only a kind of mystical value. (Irrationalistic)
  - b. *Philosophical Investigations*
    - (i) Meaning is use; language has a meaning if people can use it in society (Irrationalistic).
    - (ii) But they must use it *properly* (Rationalistic).
12. Logical Positivism (1920s-1940s)
- a. To be “cognitively meaningful,” that is, to state a fact, a sentence must be verifiable by means akin to those of science. (Rationalism)
  - b. But this verification principle proved not to be verifiable, so arbitrary. (Irrationalism)
13. Existentialism, Postmodernism emphasize irrationalist side.
14. Scientific modernism emphasizes the rationalist side.
- B. Religion
- 1. Traditional Polytheisms (Greek, Egyptian, Contemporary Tribal)
    - a. Many finite gods. Don't fully explain anything.
    - b. Impersonal fate.
      - (i) Tends to be unknowable.
      - (ii) Cannot serve as an ethical standard.
  - 2. Eastern Religions
    - a. This sort of thought is essentially monistic. i.e., it holds that ultimate reality is one, not many.
    - b. The pluralities of our experience, the distinctions (including the distinction between good and evil) are ultimately illusory. On this principle, all elements of ethics in its normal sense are eliminated:
      - (i) Normative perspective: the distinction between good and evil is ultimately illusory. Reality is beyond good and evil, transethical.
      - (ii) Situational perspective: the world as experienced by the senses does not exist. History is an illusion. One seeks detachment from things, not a God-glorifying use of them.
      - (iii) Existential perspective: the self also is illusion, and other selves are illusory as well. Thus the concepts of personal and social ethics are ultimately meaningless.

- c. Ethics enters as part of man's quest for union with the One. Right living is part of the discipline by which one escapes the continuous cycle of rebirth and achieves Nirvana, that union with the ultimate which is also characterized as annihilation.
- d. Often this principle puts ethics on a thoroughly egoistic basis, though in some cases (e.g. Mahayana Buddhism) there are elements of altruism (the Buddha, about to achieve Nirvana, returns to the world to help others). It is not, however, clear in these systems why one ought to be altruistic.
- e. Though ethics plays an important role in these systems, it is ultimately negotiable. Our goal is to reach a state of mind in which ethical distinctions no longer have meaning.
- f. Ethical standards on these views:
  - i. To a great extent [as was the case with #1] the concrete norms resemble the laws of Scripture.
  - ii. The overall goal, however, in these religions, is detachment—from things, the world, other people. This theme contrasts sharply with the biblical teaching that love is the central commandment.
  - iii. The stress on detachment plus the exaltation of nature to the status of ultimate ethical authority (particularly in Taoism and Hinduism) often leads to a passive acceptance of natural and social evil.
  - iv. The vagueness of detachment as an overriding ethical norm is illustrated by the differences among Gnostics, who also held to a monistic worldview.
    - (A) Some were ascetics (wishing to get free of the body and its wants),
    - (B) Others libertines (feeling that what happens to the body is of little importance).
- g. Summary
  - i. Monism leads to an empty absolute—an ultimate reality with no rational or ethical character.
  - ii. Ethics is subordinate to metaphysics. Man's quest for metaphysical union with the One takes precedence over all ethical considerations. Salvation is metaphysical transcendence, not redemption from sin.
  - iii. As such, there is no basis for ethical action or ground for ethical hope.

### 3. Islam

#### a. Scripture

- i. Mohammed admired the “peoples of the book” (Jews and Christians), and he adopted some biblical history and teachings.
  - ii. In a sense, then, Islam is a “Christian heresy,” like the Jehovah’s Witnesses and Mormons.
  - iii. Muslims think that the Bible speaks of Mohammed. They interpret some prophetic texts that way, though these interpretations are easily refuted.
  - iv. Because Islam is influenced by Scripture, it is not as easily amenable to Van Tillian transcendental argument.
    - (A) Allah is somewhat personal, so Islam does not “reduce the personal to the impersonal” in the most obvious way.
    - (B) But since Islam turns away from Scripture in many ways, it veers toward an impersonalist concept of God (see below).
  - v. But Muslims believe the biblical text has been corrupted.
    - (A) An apologist should ask where the evidence is for this corruption.
    - (B) Case in point: the Qur’an teaches that Jesus did not die on the cross, but all four gospels and many NT texts say that he did. Where is the evidence of corruption on such a vast level?
  - vi. They believe that the Qur’an is the direct Word of God, given to Mohammed directly from heaven. Therefore its teaching transcends the teaching of extant biblical texts.
  - vii. There are inconsistencies within the Qur’an itself which apologists may exploit. For example, Surahs 6:10:65 and 115-116 say that God’s Word cannot be changed (How, then, can the Bible have become corrupted?); but 2:100 and 16:101 say the Qur’an itself has been changed.
- b. Allah
- i. Unknowable and therefore unknown.
    - (A) Compare “unbiblical transcendence.”
    - (B) Allah does not enter the world, have fellowship with human beings.
    - (C) He reveals his will, not himself.
  - ii. Predestination verging on fatalism.
  - iii. Denial of the Trinity.
    - (A) Mohammed misunderstood as Father, Mother, Son.
    - (B) So incarnation, divine atonement, redemptive love impossible.
    - (C) Recall Van Til’s argument that the Trinity provides a balance between the one and the many in creation. See my *Cornelius Van Til*, 63-78.

- iv. Extreme nominalism.
  - (A) Allah has no consistent standard of justice, truth, right, wrong. What he declares to be right today he may declare to be wrong tomorrow. Similar to eastern religions.
  - (B) He is not unchangeable.
- c. Jesus
  - i. Islam affirms that he is a prophet.
    - (A) Sinless
    - (B) Worked miracles
    - (C) Virgin born.
    - (D) Word of God
    - (E) God's servant, Messiah, Lord
    - (F) Will return at the judgment with thousands of angels.
  - ii. However,
    - (A) He is not divine.
    - (B) He did not die on the cross, but another was substituted for him, and he was "lifted up to God." Some Qur'anic verses say that Jesus did die: Surahs 3:55, 5:117, 19:33.
- d. Man, Redemption
  - i. No original sin, though weakness, forgetfulness of God.
  - ii. Need to balance bad deeds with good. Works righteousness
- 4. Liberal theology
  - a. Spinoza, Reimarus (17<sup>th</sup> century)
    - i. Assumed Scripture was simply a human book and therefore erroneous.
    - ii. No real argument to this effect, except alleged discrepancies that had been known for centuries.
    - iii. Rational autonomy now becomes the rule in academic theology.
  - b. Enlightenment rationalism (Cherbury, Toland, etc.)
    - i. Natural revelation sufficient.
    - ii. Reduction of theology to moralism: God exists, rewards, punishes.
  - c. Lessing (1729-1781):
    - i. The "big ditch" between the accidental truths of history (irrationalism) and the necessary truths of reason (rationalism).
    - ii. So how can we base our religious confidence on historical happenings?
  - d. Kant (1724-1804)
    - i. Rejects both natural and supernatural revelation.
    - ii. So the autonomous mind judges all theological statements.

- iii. God, freedom, the soul, are noumenal, so not accessible to experience.
- iv. Rationalism: the autonomous mind.
- v. Irrationalism: the noumenal God.
- e. Schleiermacher (1768-1834)
  - i. Autonomous feeling, romanticism.
  - ii. Irrationalism: feeling rather than reason.
  - iii. Rationalism: antipathy to revelation from outside ourselves.
- f. Ritschl (1822-1889): autonomous historical investigation.
- g. Barth (1886-1968)
  - i. God wholly hidden (irrationalism) and wholly revealed (rationalism).
  - ii. Revealed in hiddenness, hidden in revealedness. Dialectical games.
  - iii. God in Christ: freedom (irrationalism) and love (rationalism).

### C. Science

1. Angel Sanchez, in *Escondido Times-Advocate* (April 28, 1983): “Ever wonder why most people refuse to discuss religion and politics? I suspect it’s because they are both so ambiguous. Isn’t it time we built our beliefs on a firm foundation, something which most of us can understand, something which affects our lives every day and we can control? SCIENCE. Think about it.” Emphasis his.
  - a. Most alleged contradictions between Christianity and science are drawn from this popular picture.
  - b. Assumes that science is “neutral,” without presuppositions.
  - c. Assumes that science is an accumulation of brute facts.
  - d. However, the general issues about epistemology (DKG) pertain also to science.
2. Historic questions about scientific neutrality.
  - a. Greek sophists, skeptics.
  - b. David Hume
  - c. Immanuel Kant
  - d. Conventionalists (Poincare): Science goes beyond empirical facts to formulate laws, theories.
    - (i) Therefore it cannot be verified.
    - (ii) Why adopt a scientific proposition? Many reasons, including the aesthetic.
  - e. Instrumentalism (Dewey)
    - (i) Scientific theories are not descriptions of the world at all.
    - (ii) Rather, they are instruments, tools, by which we manipulate nature. (Ptolemy’s astronomy is still a good instrument for navigation.)
  - f. Operationalism (Bridgman, Eddington, Gordon Clark)

- (i) Scientific theories don't describe the world, but summarize data from operations.
  - (ii) Pointer readings.
  - g. Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*
    - (i) Science depends on paradigms, "accepted examples of actual scientific practice, examples which include law, theory, application, and instrumentation together—provide models from which spring particular coherent traditions of scientific research."
    - (ii) Anomalies, Crisis
      - (A) "Persistent failure of the puzzles of normal science to come out as they should." (Ptolemy/Copernicus; phlogiston/oxygen; Newton/Einstein.)
      - (B) Not resolved by simple observation.
        - (1) Our expectations influence our observation.
          - (a) anomalous playing cards.
          - (b) Upside-down glasses.
        - (2) Even retinal images paradigm dependent.
          - (a) The study of them is.
          - (b) Duck-rabbit: same image, different observations.
        - (3) Nobody changes their theory because of a single observation.
        - (4) So defense of a paradigm is always circular.
    - (iii) Since there is no neutral standard to distinguish observations from reality, Kuhn says that people with different paradigms live in "different worlds."
  - h. JF: We can achieve scientific objectivity only through divine revelation.
3. Contemporary discussion: Johnson and others on Evolution.
  - a. Claim of dogmatic certainty unwarranted.
  - b. New evidence: Behe on cells.
  - c. The strongest argument for evolution is that it is the only viable alternative to theism.
  - d. The argument here depends on the cogency of the argument for the biblical God.

#### D. Modern Culture: the Modern and the Postmodern

- 1. "Modern" Epistemology
  - a. Certainty is possible through autonomous reason.
  - b. Ideal is scientific objectivity.
  - c. Tends toward dogmatic naturalism, anti-supernaturalist. Nature is "all there is."

- d. Associated with capitalism, technology, rapid communications, urbanization, globalization, democracy, secularization (Edgar).
2. "Postmodernism"
- a. Things look different from where you sit.
    - i. Uncertainty principle in physics.
    - ii. Capitalism looks different to the poor.
    - iii. We always bring our own values into any discussion. No "brute facts," only interpreted facts, value-laden.
      - (A) Freedom of opportunity vs. equality of result.
      - (B) Government shutdown: unfairness to the workers vs. unfairness of unbalanced budgets to future generations.
  - b. Therefore, no such thing as "objective truth."
  - c. Language refers only to language, not to the world.
  - d. We create reality through speech.
    - Nobody has the authority to set the rules for discussion.
  - e. Neither the author of a text nor anybody else has the right to tell you what the text means.
  - f. No rules governing how knowledge is to be gained and transmitted.
  - g. Hence, egalitarianism.
    - i. Marxist thrust: everyone is divided into groups of oppressors and oppressed.
    - ii. White male heterosexual Protestants from Western culture are oppressors; others are oppressed.
    - iii. Overcoming inequalities is the chief goal of life.
  - h. So everyone has the right to his own truth, determined largely by individual and group desires for self-esteem. "Objective truth" is impossible and therefore unimportant.
    - a. Black Pharaohs.
    - b. Goddess worship: the goddess need not be shown to exist.
    - c. All groups equally competent in all fields.
    - d. Minority and women writers as good as "dead white males" like Shakespeare.
  - i. Hence "political correctness." The one unforgiveable sin is to violate the self-esteem of a particular victim-group.
  - j. Of course, oppressor groups should be regularly insulted, regardless of the truth of the insult.
  - k. Chief criticism of Christianity: not that it is in error, but that it makes a claim to

absolute truth.

### 3. Response to Postmodernism

a. Not really new: skepticism as to absolute truth and values has always been with us: Greek Sophists, Hume, Kant, Marx, Freud, et al.

(i) This is important, because much of the appeal of postmodernism is that it is up-to-date, avant-garde, more-modern-than-modern. "We cannot believe that any more, not since A, B, C..." Historical determinism.

(iii) The development from modernism to postmodernism is essentially a movement from rationalism to irrationalism (Van Til), though there are rationalistic elements in postmodernism too. Unavoidably so, for the postmodernist is sure that claims of absolute truth are wrong.

(iv) Even if it were the latest thing, however, that should not intimidate us.

b. Not likely to replace modernity as a whole

(i) Capitalism, technology, globalism seem to be here to stay.

(ii) Postmodernism is modernistic in the most crucial point: believing that human beings are autonomous, that they can make their decisions apart from God's revelation.

(iii) Postmodernism is typically modern in thinking that the newest idea is the truest, that the latest is the greatest, that we can never "turn back the clock." (1, a above).

c. Many true insights

(i) Each person views reality from a somewhat different perspective.

(ii) People do oppress one another through their use of language and through setting up arbitrary rules for discussion.

(iii) There are no brute facts, facts apart from any interpretation. Every fact we know is a fact which we have to some extent interpreted and evaluated according to our own system of values.

(iv) We are finite and fallible. We should not, in our pride, claim to know more than we do. We do not know as God does.

(v) Not all knowledge can be put into words. Not all reasoning can be stated in logical arguments.

- (vi) Right to oppose the claims of autonomous "modern" reason to achieve truth on its own resources.

d. Those true insights do not, however, destroy the possibility of objective truth, knowing the world as it really is.

- (i) Our perspectives and value-systems can be, and often are, revised as a result of thought and discussion, suggesting that we have mental resources for transcending inadequate perspectives.
- (ii) If there is no objective truth, then there is no point in discussing postmodernism or anything else.
- (iii) On a Christian understanding, God has revealed himself clearly in the world so that even unbelievers can "know" him (Rom. 1:21). Sinful prejudices do lead to a distorted understanding of the truth, but that is a sinful distortion of a truth which is objectively known to us.
- (iv) Our knowledge is not exhaustive, as God's, but it is real knowledge, and therefore true.

e. Self-referential incoherence

- (i) If postmodernism is true, there is no truth. Then postmodernism is not true.
- (ii) Is truth in the traditional sense unimportant, then? It is important when we enter freeway traffic. The postmodernist cannot live with his relativism.
- (iii) So the postmodernist is inconsistent. But the problem is, he can live with incoherence. Perhaps, he thinks, coherence and logic themselves are only western ideals, means by which westerners oppress those of other cultures. (But easterners use "western logic" in many situations.) The "playfulness" of postmodern literature.
- (iv) In some situations, then, argument fails. Testimony, non-verbal witness important.

### 3. New, Monist Spiritualities (Peter Jones)

a. All is one, and one is all.

- (i) Universe as one living organism.
- (ii) God is part of the oneness.
- (iii) We find him within ourselves. He is us, at the deepest level.

b. Humanity is one.

- (i) Humanity is the essence of divinity.
- (ii) So people essentially good.
- c. All religions are one.
  - (i) Five Gospels
  - (ii) Pluralism
- d. Our one problem: distinction, disunity.
  - (i) Distinction is illusion, maya.
  - (ii) Vs. Patriarchal institutions, that break up unity.
  - (iii) Vs. dichotomies:
    - (A) creator-creature
    - (B) God-Satan (Charles Manson called Christ, Satan).
    - (C) Animals and humans
    - (D) Life and death (reincarnation)
    - (E) Heaven and Hell
    - (F) Right and wrong
    - (G) Male and female
- d. Message: discover the spiritual power within: drugs, etc.

## E. Modern Popular Culture

### **Christianity and Culture**

John M. Frame

Lectures given at the Pensacola Theological Institute, July 23-27, 2001

#### **Lecture One: What is Culture?**

- I. Use of the Term
  - A. *colere*, agricultural metaphor.
  - B. Anything we work to achieve: objects, systems of ideas, institutions, enjoyments.
  - C. Lausanne Committee on World Evangelism: “an integrated system of beliefs, values, customs, and institutions which binds a society together and gives it a sense of identity, dignity, security, and continuity.”
  - D. Distinction: creation is what God makes by himself; culture is what he makes through us.
- II. The Cultural Mandate, Gen. 1:28, Gen. 9:1-7.
  - A. Filling
  - B. Ruling (includes guarding or preserving, not exploitation).
  - C. For the glory of God.

- III. So culture includes a normative element. Both real and ideal, facts and values, what is and what ought to be.
  - A. Matthew Arnold: “the pursuit of our total perfection...”
  - B. T. S. Eliot, “simply that which makes life worth living...”
  - C. Herridge, “A thoroughly cultured person...”
  
- IV. Since culture is normative, it is religious.
  - A. Religion: what grips a person’s heart most strongly.
  - B. Henry Van Til, “Culture is simply the service of God in our lives; it is religion externalized.”
  - C. Religion is totalitarian. 1 Cor. 10:31, Rom. 14:23, Col. 3:17.
  
- V. Culture and the Fall, Gen. 3
  - A. The essence of sin is autonomy, trying to be your own boss.
  - B. Sinners know God, but repress that knowledge, Rom. 1.
  - C. So their culture is filled with all manner of wickedness, Rom. 1, Gen. 6:5, 8:21.
  
- VI. Culture and God’s Grace
  - A. Common grace (God’s blessings that fall short of salvation).
    - 1. Good things in wicked cultures: Gen. 4, Hiram of Tyre. 1 Kings 5:6.
    - 2. Ethical-spiritual goodness vs. usefulness, skills.
    - 3. Aspects of common grace:
      - a. God restrains sin (Gen. 11:7, Job 1:12, 2:6).
      - b. God gives some blessings to everybody without exception (Matt. 5:43-48, Acts 14:17, Psm. 145:15-16, Rom. 13:4, 1 Tim. 2:1-2).
      - c. God gives skills and knowledge to unbelievers, so they can do good in society.
  - B. Special grace (God acting in Christ to save us from sin)
    - 1. If you are saved, your life will change, and you will seek a different kind of society.
    - 2. Kennedy and Newcombe: Christianity has vastly influenced western culture: help for the poor, education, political and economic freedom, science, medicine, the family, the arts, the sanctity of life.
    - 3. God calls his people to build a city, not just to rescue individual souls.
    - 4. Cultural mandate still in force, because the Great Commission calls for a renewed culture, Matt. 28:19-20.
  - C. Culture an Ambiguity

## Lecture 2: Christ and Culture

### Introduction:

1. Scripture *alone* is our ultimate authority for theories of culture.
2. H. Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture* (NY: Harper, 1951) presents some useful models.

### I. Christ Against Culture

- A. Prominent theme in the early church and persecuted churches.
- B. Christianity and culture are opponents, at war with one another.
- C. Separation theme in Scripture, Ex. 19:5-6.
- D. *World* in the New Testament
  1. The inhabited earth.
  2. Everything opposed to God, John 7:7, 8:23, 14:17, 16:20, 17:9.
  3. Satan is the ruler, John 12:31, 14:30, 16:11, 2 Cor. 4:4, 1 John 5:19.
  4. Disciples chosen out of the world, John 17:5-6, not "of" the world, 17:14.
  5. Don't be conformed, Rom. 12:2, 1 Cor. 1:20-21, 2:6-8, James 1:27, 1 John 2:15-17.
  6. Our victory, 1 Cor. 6:2, Gal. 6:14.
- E. Principles
  1. We cannot leave the world, and shouldn't try, John 17:15. Jesus sends us into the world, 17:11-18.
  2. Don't avoid sinners of the world, 1 Cor. 5:10, but shine as lights, Matt. 5:14, Phil. 2:15.
- F. But the antithesis is Christ against the world, not Christ against culture.
  1. World is the *bad* part of culture.
  2. But we should use the good in culture for the sake of the Gospel, 1 Cor. 9.

### II. The Christ of Culture

- A. Examples
  1. Tertullian: solidarity of Christians with fellow-citizens.
  2. Justin and Clement: Greek philosophers were Christians.
  3. Abelard, Ritschl.
- B. Idea: Christ is the embodiment of what is right and good in human culture.
- C. Response
  1. Christ is this embodiment, but he is not *only* that. He is our sacrifice for sin.
  2. This position tends to underestimate the effects of sin on culture.
  3. We should not confuse the Gospel with our culture or any other.
  4. We need to distinguish in Scripture what is universal and what is directed to a particular cultural situation.

- III. Christ Above Culture (“Synthesists”)
  - A. Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274)
    - 1. Most influential philosopher of the Roman Catholic church.
    - 2. Distinction between nature and grace.
      - a. Nature is the world as God made it.
      - b. Grace is the name for special gifts God gives to us beyond nature.
      - c. Natural human reason doesn’t need revelation to understand this world. But it needs revelation to understand salvation.
      - d. The state administers nature; the church administers grace.
    - 3. So Christ supplements nature with something higher, which forms a synthesis with the lower.
  - B. Response
    - 1. Don’t we need more than a supplement? To live natural life to God’s glory, we need grace.
    - 2. Without Christ, culture becomes like Sodom and Gomorrah.
- IV. Christ and Culture in Paradox (“Dualists”)
  - A. A “Double Sovereignty” of God;<sup>1</sup> the “Two Kingdoms”
    - 1. God rules in the world by natural laws; in the church by his Word and Spirit. “Law vs. Gospel,” “secular vs. spiritual.”
    - 2. Luther: God’s left and right hands.
  - B. Response
    - 1. Neither is what we normally call “divine sovereignty” in Reformed theology, which is his comprehensive rule (Eph. 1:11).
    - 2. God’s sovereignty in creation is not primarily through natural laws, but through his own direct, personal involvement in history.
    - 3. Are there two moral standards?
      - a. Secular and religious values, norms? Veith: “morality is not a matter of religion.”
      - b. So Veith tells us not to try to Christianize culture or, of course, to secularize Christianity.
      - c. Ethic of the sword vs love and forgiveness.
  - C. Problems with two sets of norms:
    - 1. No inconsistency between law and gospel. Natural knowledge of morality is one with the teaching of Scripture.
    - 2. Morality is too a matter of religion. The moral law is binding because the true God requires it.
    - 3. Through the Word and Spirit, Christians have a fuller understanding of Law, as well as a knowledge of the Gospel. Should they then not use that knowledge to Christianize culture?
    - 4. There is only one morality. It is Scripture that tells us the state has the power of the sword and the church does not.

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<sup>1</sup> Gene Veith, “Christianity and Culture: God’s Double Sovereignty,” from *The Whirlpool* (Jan.-Feb., 1997), available at [www.alliancenet.org](http://www.alliancenet.org).

5. So the use of the sword by the state *is* Christian morality, not an alternative to it.
6. This does not mean that the state may force people to become Christians. Scripture does not authorize the state to do that.
7. Christians should seek to bring biblical standards to bear in all areas of society and culture, not to make unbelievers behave as Christians, but simply to work out the implications of our faith in all of life.
8. The two-kingdom view does not eliminate Christian activism. But it creates confusion as to what standard will govern that activism.
9. If there are no distinctively Christian standards of art, then what defense is there against bringing secular art into the church?

V. Christ, the Transformer of Culture

A. Seeking to do all to the glory of God (1 Cor. 10:31).

B. Response to common criticisms:

1. Transformationalism does not mean trying to save the world apart from God's grace, but obeying God as our thankful response to his grace.
2. Does not assume an unrealistic optimism about what is possible in fallen society. But real change for the better can and does occur.
3. Does not require us to turn artistic works into salvation tracts. Scripture does not require that.
4. Does not mean that every activity of a believer must be externally different from the same activities of unbelievers. Often the difference is a difference of goal, motive, or standard.
5. Does not condone bad art. The answer to bad art is to be more faithful to God, both in his general and in his special revelation.

### Lecture 3: Christ and *Our Culture*

- I. God, the Critic of Culture
  - A. Good, Less Bad, and More Bad Gen. 6:5-6, 15:16, Deut. 9:4-5, 18:12.
  - B. God's critique is based on religion, Matt. 10:20-24, Rom. 1:1-32.
  - C. But we are not forbidden to use the products of pagan culture, 1 Cor. 8-10.
  
- II. Christian Culture Criticism
  - A. Augustine, *The City of God*.
  - B. G. K. Chesterton, Dorothy Sayers, C. S. Lewis, Malcolm Muggeridge.
  - C. Paul Tillich, liberal critics.
  - D. Abraham Kuyper, Henry Van Til, H. Henry Meeter, Herman Dooyeweerd.
  - E. Francis Schaeffer
    1. In ancient Greece, respect for "true truth," truth as opposed to falsehood.
    2. Modern skepticism leads to Hegel, who denies antithesis.
    3. In Nietzsche, despair of ever finding objective truth. To reach the ultimate, you must escape from reason.
    4. "The line of despair" characterizes twentieth-century thought and culture.
  - F. Os Guinness
    1. Twentieth century post-Christian, living on "borrowed capital."
    2. The 1960s counter-culture rejected this residual optimism, discovered the world without God was Hell.
    3. Because of the death of God, they sought relief in free sex, eastern religions, drugs, the occult.
  - G. David Wells
    1. Cultural decline comes from the "modern" mentality.
      - a. Subjectivism: basing life on human experience rather than on objective truth.
      - b. Psychologism: psychotherapy as the best way to deal with human problems.
      - c. Professionalism: business management and marketing techniques as the model for achieving the goal of any common enterprise.
      - d. Consumerism: believing that we must always provide for people what they want, or what they can be induced to buy.
      - e. Pragmatism: holding that results are the ultimate justification for any idea or decision.
  - H. Kenneth Myers
    1. High, Folk, and Popular Culture
      - a. gourmet restaurant, home cooking, Burger King.
      - b. Beethoven, African-American spirituals, Metallica.

2. Critique of Popular Culture
  - a. Began in industrial revolution, when people moved from farms to cities.
  - b. Monotony of work, extra leisure brought huge demand for entertainment. A culture of diversion.
  - c. The urban setting could not sustain the community necessary to maintain folk culture.
  - d. Comparison
    - (i) High culture has the ability to provide a transcendent perspective (though popular culture has lately infected it).
    - (ii) Folk culture has virtues of honesty, integrity, commitment to tradition, perseverance in the face of opposition.
    - (iii) Popular culture's "principal attributes are... obstacles to enjoying the best of the American experience."
      - a. Marketing, formulas.
      - b. Immediate accessibility.
- I. Premodern, Modern, Postmodern (Richard Pratt)
  1. Modern period, from 17-18<sup>th</sup> century "Enlightenment" until mid-twentieth century.
  2. Postmodern had dominated academic thought and avant garde culture for thirty years or so.
  3. Pratt's exposition:

#### I. Standard of Truth

- A. Premodern: Truth is discerned primarily through religious institutions and mythology under the guidance of religious leaders.
- B. Modern: Truth is discerned primarily through rational and scientific investigation under the guidance of rationalistic philosophers and scientists.
- C. Postmodern: Truth is discerned both through mythology and rational-scientific means.

#### II. Ultimate Reality

- A. Premodern: Ultimate reality is spiritual and deeply influences events in the ephemeral physical world.
- B. Modern: Ultimate reality is the physical world. If a spiritual world exists at all, it is ephemeral and uninvolved in the events of the physical world.
- C. Ultimate reality is both physical and spiritual (personal and impersonal); these dimensions of reality interact in countless ways.

#### III. Seeker of Truth

- A. Premodern: Individuality is discouraged and conformity to community traditions is highly prized.
- B. Modern: Individuality of the independent objective scholar (transcendent subject) is prized over conformity to received traditions.

- C. Postmodern: Individuality is disdained as self-deceptive, but individuals are encouraged to defy oppressive traditions.

#### IV. Modes of Communication

- A. Premodern: Heavy reliance on oral, ritualized and iconographic communication due to widespread illiteracy and primitive publishing techniques.
- B. Modern: Heavy reliance on written communication, especially paper, due to rising literacy and publishing technologies (printing press).
- C. Postmodern: Written communication is lowered to the level of other formats, especially the iconographic, due to widespread electronic technologies.

#### V. Historical Progress

- A. Widespread mythic meta-narratives depict history in never-ending cycles.
  - B. Widespread rational and scientific meta-narrative depict history as progressing toward utopia.
  - C. Fragmented, heteromorphic multi-narratives depict history as cycles and counter-cycles of cacaphony and harmony."<sup>2</sup> [Meta-narratives suspected as attempts to oppress victim groups.]
- J. Cornelius Van Til (1895-1987)
1. Made little of historical turning points, unlike most of the thinkers previously cited.
  2. One significant turning point: the Fall.
    - a. Eve was a rationalist: thinking of herself as the ultimate standard of truth.
    - b. Eve was an irrationalist: she persuaded herself that there was no ultimate standard of truth.
  3. To Van Til, all non-Christian thought is both rationalist and irrationalist.
    - a. History is not a linear progression from rationalism to irrationalism, but a dance between these extremes.
    - b. So the problem is not historical development, but sin.
    - c. Nor is popular culture less bad than high culture or folk culture.

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<sup>2</sup> Pratt, *Postmoderns: Opponents or Opportunities?* Photocopied Lecture Outline, 1.3-1.8.

## Lecture 4: Christians in Our Culture

- I. Should Christians Go to Movies?
  - A. Vs. extremes of abstinence, indulgence. We are neither forbidden nor commanded to make films a major part of our lives.
  - B. The young should be protected, but trained to live as lights in the world.
  - C. Decisions should also be based on one's gifts, calling, station in life.
  - D. Arguments against moderate use of movies:
    1. "Graphic violence debases its audience."
      - a. Mixed statistical evidence.
      - b. Film violence essentially choreography.
      - c. Perspective is important: consider that we live in a violent world.
    2. "Sexual scenes in movies excite impure lusts."
      - a. Depends somewhat on the viewer. Some should avoid.
      - b. Wrong to observe acts that are sinful in themselves? That is the responsibility of the filmmakers more than of the viewer.
    3. "Modern films promote a non-Christian philosophy of life."
      - a. True, to a large extent.
      - b. But the same is true of secular poets, novelists, composers, philosophers.
    4. "We should not give our money to such a debased industry."
      - a. Jesus (Matt. 22:21) and Paul (1 Cor. 8) allowed Christians to render taxes and payments, even though these were used to support pagan worship.
      - b. Not wrong to boycott, but Scripture doesn't require this.
  
- II. Film and Culture
  - A. Film is both a cultural mirror and a former of culture.
  - B. Film ideology is typically more liberal than the culture as a whole.
  - C. Egalitarianism, political correctness.
    1. The God of Scripture treats people equally in some ways, non-equally in others.
    2. He makes choices, because he is a person, not an impersonal force.
  - D. Relativism and dogmatism; irrationalism and rationalism, pessimism and optimism.
  - E. But sometimes the truth shines through: "Chariots of Fire," "Tender Mercies," "Trip to Bountiful."
  
- III. Questions to Ask of Films
  - A. Who made it?
  - B. Aesthetic quality.
  - C. Honest, true to its own position?
  - D. What genre?

- E. What world view?
- F. Describe the plot: what are the problems? Compare with Scripture's view of man's predicament.
- G. Are the problems soluble? If so, how?
- H. What is the moral stance of the film?
- I. In comedy, what is funny? Who is the butt of the jokes?
- J. Are there allusions to events, literary works, other films, etc., that give clues to where the filmmakers are coming from?
- K. What are the chief or significant images or symbols of the film?
- L. Any explicit religious themes? Echoes of redemption?