

EPISTEMOLOGICAL BEGINNINGS OF FAITH (Hebrews 1:1)

by Paul T. Butler, Th.D., with extensive quotations

Every sane, rational human being has a “faith-system,” i.e., has a *basis* upon which he trusts beyond all reasonable doubt and decides and acts in all matters relative to his own interests or circumstances. **All** human beings come to this *basis* only after they have accepted or admitted certain epistemological presuppositions. The very process of thinking must begin with certain *understood* axioms, i.e., certain “grants.” Thus, epistemological presuppositions must precede all “faith-systems.” Epistemology is the *fundamental* science to which human beings ought to devote their peremptory attention.

“The central problem in contemporary theology is neither theism nor ecclesiology, but epistemology” —Clark Pinnock, in *A Defense of Biblical Inerrancy*.

“Christian faith should be defended in terms of criteria which center in rational objectivity as the norm of truth and evaluation. If, as Peter urges, believers in Christ are to give a reason for their hope to *every* man, then they can do it only in terms of criteria which ought to be acknowledged by all such men so far as they think and act rationally in their concourse with life and experience. This consideration means, in turn, that if Christian faith is obligatory for men, then it is so because it embodies objective truth for all rational minds...As over against the stimulus and conviction of apologetics thus conceived in terms of rational objectivity as a norm, there stands the morass of irrationalism and voluntarism that characterizes the great body of Christian apology at the present time, whether evangelical, liberal, or neo-orthodox...refusal to defend faith on the battle field of a reasoned interpretation of experience is to my mind nothing short of suicide for the relevance of the Christian message...I have no interest in the defense of beliefs that are otherwise grounded than through a rationally self-consistent interpretation of experiential data, at whatever level these data might appear.”----Stuart Hackett, in *The Resurrection of Theism*.

Epistemology is “the theory or science of the method and grounds of knowledge, especially with reference to its limits and validity.” Philosophers have attempted for centuries to establish a point in thinking at which humans may declare they have reached absolutely indubitable, incontestable, unquestionable, pure knowledge—a knowledge impervious to any doubt or presuppositional “leaps.” They have not found it in human philosophical systems. All have had to make one presuppositional admission or another. The best human philosophers have been able to produce is a system by which human beings may say, “We know that to be a fact (or to be true) beyond all reasonable doubt.” On that basis human beings live, conduct business, administer judicial decisions, form governments, love, marry, and unite common aspirations in various social compacts and contracts. Human beings, exercising the capacity to think (ideate) within the reasonable rules of logic (laws of contradiction, identity, etc.), affirm they “know” (and/or “believe”) what they know beyond a reasonable doubt by applying orthodox or conventional “rules of evidence.”

Epistemology furnishes the basis for all other branches of philosophy, including metaphysics and theology. If a person cannot give a knowledge-basis for his propositions about reality, then his assertions are beyond the pale of intelligent discussion or consideration. Epistemology is the first inquiry (“How do you know?”); all other inquiries are secondary. If the rational faculty of man is dismissed or disappears, man disappears, because rational faculty is the distinguishing characteristic of humanness (see study on “Human Beings Have Souls.”).

The basis of the possibility of knowing rests on a “belief” (presupposition or axiom) in the rationality of the human mind. Apart from “belief” in rationality, knowledge is impossible. Unless the organizing ability of the mind be granted, it is impossible to know. Unless the human mind starts thinking by having granted its own organizing capabilities, it could not organize its thoughts to think about organization. The data organized by granted-rationality are the data of human experience. The acceptance by faith of that which can never be demonstrated by any system of logic is the necessary postulate of all knowing.

There are three major axioms (or “grants”) of rationality (logic) without which we could have no rationality (logic or thinking or knowing). These principles are ultimate axioms (those beyond which we can not “grant” or suppose) to any type of reasoning (inductive or deductive). They are:

1. The principle of identity: “If p is true, then p is true,” i.e., All A is A.
2. The principle of Non-contradiction: “Not both p is true and p is false,” i.e., Not both A and not-A.
3. The principle of Excluded Middle: “ p is either true or false,” i.e., Either A or not A.

These are “laws” or axioms of thinking. They are actually “givens” or presuppositions. But they are necessary “givens” that we call them “laws.” Without them it would be impossible to think, communicate, imagine, or function in any way except by sheer animal instinct. Without these “laws” there would be no possibility of freedom of choice and without that no responsibility, obligation, morality---no judicial, political, or property rights would be valid. There are of necessity “laws” by which reason exists, e.g., “If equals are added to equals, the sums are equal,” and, “A thing cannot both exist and not-exist at the same time.”

If one thinks at all, one must think according to the laws of thinking (i.e., non-contradiction, etc.). If these did not exist as necessary laws—if indeterminism or unnecessary were the state of state of affairs, then no reasonable knowledge would be possible. With the termination of necessity (“laws of logic”) comes the end of rationality, the end of purpose, the end of meaning, the end of communication, the end of knowing.

Apparently, it is possible for human beings to chose to (at least, to pretend to) circumvent the necessity of logic or rationality by deliberately and morally refusing to acknowledge the data (facts, events, objects) of thought (cf. Isa. 30:9-11; 44:18-20; Rom. 1:18-32; 2 Thess. 2:9-12; 2 Tim. 4:3-5; 1 Pet. 3:15; 2 Pet. 3:5, etc.). Immanuel Kant once remarked on the “perversity of those philosophers who sought to show, by marshaling the most ingenious reasons, that they were incapable of reason.” One must be morally perverse to deny the necessity of logic.

Experience, i.e., physical sensations (touch, sight, hearing, etc.) cannot provide the mind with *all* the *ideas* it needs by which to *think* (to classify, categorize, organize); it must be “granted” (presupposed) that there are already in the mind certain other ideas (innately) which the experience itself could never provide. The facts we interpret and the truths we acknowledge depend for their “knowledge-quotient” upon the *a priori* existence of certain innate criteria of the mind. St. Augustine taught that the mind, by natural endowment from the Creator is possessed immediately (upon “creation”) of those criteria by which the human being makes its search for the true, the good, and the meaningful.

The Scriptures indicate that humankind has innate capacities by which it is permitted a moral search for the true, the good, and the meaningful by focusing on the experiential facts of the creation (Rom. 1:18-23; Psa. 19:1-6; Psa. 8:1-2; Acts 14:15-18; 17:22-31; 1 Cor. 15:1-58; 2 Thess. 2:9-12; 2 Tim. 3:1-9; 4:1-5, etc.); this obligatory search may be refused and rejected by choosing (immorally) to search for the false (cf. Isa. 30:8-14; 2 Thess. 2:9-12; 2 Pet. 3:5). Human valuation is a sovereign matter granted by the Creator to the creature. God does not force moral choices. His method is persuasion through love and reason.

That which is systematically consistent and coherent, which is conducive to the well-being of humanness, and which is purposeful, harmonious or teleological according to *a priori* (innate) categories is, alone, of moral (conscionable) value. Man’s entire intellectual volitional and emotional experience revolves around what he conceives to be valuable. Intelligent (rational and right) human values are determined as “facts” and filtered through the categorical grid of mental *a prioris*. The human mind is, however, capable of being morally “short-circuited” with a false “categorical grid” so that it may value “facts” in an irrational, inconsistent, and incoherent manner.

Every possible source of the knowledge of Ultimate Reality (Meaning) or God, apart from propositional (word-language) revelation, is “nature” or general revelation (Rom. 1:18ff, etc.). In “natural” (created) knowledge, there is a knowledge of god from the creature-self. Descartes’ famous dictum, *cogito ergo sum*, i.e., “I think, therefore, I am,” established the *a priori* source of knowledge apart from external sense perception.

Warfield says, “To know self implies, therefore, the co-knowledge with self of that on which it is dependent, from which it derives, by the standard of which its imperfection is revealed, to which it is responsible.” In other words, *a priori* knowledge of the “self’s” contingency (dependence, created-ness) is bilateral with knowledge of the “self’s” existence. Acts 17:22-31 and Romans 1:18-23 and Romans 2:12-16 are in exact agreement with St. Augustine’s *veritates* (or, *rationes aeternae*—eternal concepts) that “along with his reason...every man possesses by nature, that is, by his constitution as a man, a body of ideas; they belong to his

nature as a rational being.” Thus every man both by reason and conscience knows God as that Being over against Whom he is perpetually set, upon Whom he completely depends, and to Whom he is finally responsible.

All human beings know by nature (conscience) there is a “right” which should be chosen against a “wrong.” Humans know this *prior* to sensations. Conscience is an *a priori* is substantiated by the universality of human morality and the obvious distinction between humans and beasts.

Immanuel Kant (who posited certain *a priori* “categories”, as well as conscience or morality, which he called, the “categorical imperative”) was awed by the starry heavens (cosmology) above and the moral law within (conscience). These two factors should awe any person who will take the time to cogitate long enough for them to “sink in.” In these two facts of all the knowledge from contingency, order, efficient cause, and motion have their source. If the mind of man has no *a priori* substance except *tabula rasa* (“blank tablet”) its very first sensate experience could not be categorized as “ordered, non-contradictory, extended,” etc. If we have no prior truth or knowledge before coming to sensation, the world is neither rational nor irrational—such terms would be meaningless. If man did not know what (“invisible nature, eternal power and deity” of the Creator) to look for when he observed nature, it would be pointless for the apostle Paul to declare sensate nature as the means to bring all men under moral condemnation, (Rom. 1:18ff) or demand that they should think in terms of a divinely non-contingent Being (Acts 17:24ff) as the source of their being.

Leaving the “natural” revelation of God in *a priori* knowledge and in creation to go on to special, propositional (Bible) revelation is not a bifurcation of epistemology. That the bible is God’s propositional revelation of himself (Ultimate Reality) is an hypothesis that is posited with the same carefulness as any other scientific or historical hypothesis. It is an hypothesis that is verified, beyond reasonable doubt, when it results in an implicative system which is horizontally self-consistent and which vertically fits the facts.

Faith in the Bible to be God’s propositional revelation rests in the worthiness of the evidence. Consider—no cogent philosophic hypothesis that precludes the possibility of revelation is arguable as long as rationality is postulated and the existence of objectivity is accepted! One can know whether God has revealed himself or not, only after an examination of as many facts as are available and are submitted to reason and logic.

Furthermore, to posit the impossibility of special propositional revelation from God without reasoning from all the facts available is to open oneself to the possibility that any one fact overlooked might be the very revelation itself!

It will not do to arbitrarily posit the bible as the divine, infallible, propositional revelation of god. It is posited on the basis of knowledge. But to elect any other posit would be to fly in the face of the facts and rationality. And that is precisely the dichotomy that exists (or schizophrenia) when a person apprized of the empirical evidence for the bible rejects its claims!

Immanuel Kant’s arbitrary rejection of the actuality of knowledgeable facts beyond the empirical was a contradiction in his own epistemology since he posited “knowledge” prior to sensations in his “categories.” But his arbitrary rejection of Biblical statements concerning the miraculous or the eternal (“unseen”) as reality was a moral rejection of the authority of Jesus Christ and scripture, since the testimony of the Gospel documents meets all the criteria of knowledge (source, validity, nature) without reasonable doubt. The “bottom line” in faith is the issue of authority. And the issue of authority is ultimately the issue of honesty and choice. Honesty and choice may be swayed by values (*edokimasan*, judgment as to fitness, Rom. 1:28). Man, sovereign over his value-judgments and knowledge-choices, may pervert and prostitute the *imago dei* in himself to think irrationally and inconsistently. In doing so he rebels against divine authority and disbelieves.

A more lucid and persuasive statement regarding the epistemological “grants” or presuppositions necessary to rationality could not be found than the one by the late Dr. C. C. Crawford in his book, *Common Sense Ethics*, 1955, We. C. Brown, pp. 61-66. We quote herewith at length:

“VI. There are certain facts which any man can know about himself simply through the use of his own common sense. Alexander Pope (1688-1744), the English poet of the Restoration was the author of these well-known lines:

‘Know then thyself, presume not God to scan,

The proper study of mankind is man.
 Placed on this isthmus of a middle state,
 A being darkly wise and rudely great:
 With too much knowledge for the skeptic side,
 With too much weakness for the stoic's pride,
 He hangs between; in doubt to act, or rest,
 In doubt to deem himself a god, or beast'
 In doubt his mind or body to prefer;
 Born to die, and reasoning but to err;
 Alike in ignorance, his reason such,
 Whether he thinks too little or too much:
 Chaos of thought and passion, all confused;
 Still by himself abused, or disabused;
 Created half to rise, and half to fall;
 Great lord of all things, yet a prey to all;
 Sole judge of truth, in endless error hurled;
 The glory, jest, and riddle of the world.'

Shakespeare (1564-1616), however, wrote of *Homo sapiens* in more extravagant terms: 'What piece of work is a man; How noble in reason! How infinite in faculties! In form and moving how express and admirable in action how like an angel! In apprehension how like a god; The beauty of the world! The paragon of animals...."

Jonathan Swift (1667-1745), the English satirist, at the opposite pole of thinking, once exclaimed: 'I hate and detest the animal called man.' But Aristotle strikes a saner, more felicitous, yet more realistic note: 'Man, when perfected, is the best of animals, but, when separated from law and justice, he is the worst of all; since armed injustice is the more dangerous, and he is equipped at birth with arms, meant to be used by intelligence and virtue, which he may use for the worst ends. Wherefore, if he had not virtue, he is the most unholy and the most savage of animals, and the most full of lust and gluttony.'

What is man? Let us approach this question from the point of view of personal experience. What are the facts that I know about myself (that any man can know about himself)?

1. I know that I am. The *cogito, ergo sum*, 'I think, therefore, I am' (or *dubito, ergo sum*, 'I doubt, therefore I am') of the French philosopher Descartes (1596-1650) is the beginning point of all philosophy. If there were not an 'I,' an Ego, a Self, to think, there could be no thought. Thought presupposes a *thinker*; love presupposes a *lover*; activity presupposes a *being to act*; the first category of human thought is being. The one fact I cannot successfully deny is that of my own existence; to try to do so would be a mark of insanity.
2. I know that within me there is a world the vastness of which staggers the imagination—a world of impulses, urges, drives, inhibitions, desires, affections, emotions, impressions, images, memories, and thoughts. In my waking hours I can only stand on the threshold of this world and peer at the mysteries which lie hidden within its depths. In my waking hours I can only stand on the threshold of this world and peer at the mysteries which lie hidden within its depths. Sometimes, in my dreams, I seem actually to enter into this inner world, and I become amazed at its vastness and its potentialities. I find that in my dreams I can re-experience the events of an entire period of my life within the time required for the tick of a clock; that even while my body may be at repose upon my bed at home, I myself may be bathing in the surf at Atlantic City, or, perhaps, picking strawberries again on the little Illinois farm of my childhood days. The glimpses which I get occasionally of this inner world—the world of the self—prove beyond any doubt that it is unlimited by our human concepts of distance, space or time. It seems to be an infinite world—this vast world of my interior being. And it is a world exclusively my own; in the very nature of the case it cannot be anyone else's world. (It may well be that this is the world into which I shall emerge at death with the dissolution of my body.).

3. I know that within this internal world of my own being, I sustain certain definite relations. When I look within myself, I apprehend clearly the interplay of certain faculties or powers—the powers of thought, feeling, conscience, and will. (1) I know that I think, or at least that there goes on within me an activity (whatever its basic character may be, whether ‘physical’ or ‘mental’ or both) that goes by the name of thinking. Impressions coming into me from the external world produce sensations within me; then some sort of a power within my own being (Aristotle called it the ‘active intellect;’ Kant, the German philosopher, ‘the synthetic unity of apperception,’ ‘apperception’ being defined as the process of adding present to past perceptions) binds these sensations together into a perception (of an object). Then when I, having perceived an object, predicate something of that object (e.g., that a rose is red), this constitutes an act of judgment, an assent of my own mind to a specific fact. Finally, when I think connectedly, from this to that, and reach a conclusion, I perform the process of ratiocination or reasoning. (Real thinking, said John Dewey, is problem-solving). This faculty or power of *reason* within me I know to be the power most characteristic of me as a human being. (2) I know, too, that I experience certain affections, desires, emotions. I love, this love being essentially an attraction toward its object. I may hate—I am repelled by the object of my hate. I experience fear, anger, joy; I weep and I laugh; I mourn, sing, dance, fight, sulk, exult, as the case may be. These are experiences which, whatever their true nature or function may be, I know that I have from day to day, from time to time. (3) I know that I deliberate, decide, make a choice: in a word, I will either to act or not to act, or to act in this way instead of that. It is no doubt true that factors of heredity and factors of environment, and perhaps physical factors within my own organism, do influence my deliberation and my ultimate choice, because I certainly do act from motives. But in every act of mine there is, in addition to all these factors, a personal reaction. That is to say, within a certain framework there is in every act of mine an exercise of what is commonly called ‘free will.’ I know that within the area of my acquaintanceship *I do make choices*: I know this directly, as a matter of personal experience, and I want no one trying to tell me otherwise. I know that in the vast majority of my acts I have not been necessitated (compelled); that in the instances in which I have done evil, I could have chosen to do the good. Every person who is willing to be honest with himself knows this to be true of his own acts. (4) Finally, introspection convinces me that in every act of mine these powers of intellection, feeling, desire, and will are in some measure present and active; that there is always an interplay of these internal powers, crystallizing ultimately in the volition which is essentially the human act. No line of separation can be drawn between thought, feeling, and will (as separate ‘faculties’) in the evolution of a human act; it is essentially an act of the organism as a whole (we do not say, ‘My eyes see,’ ‘My ears hear,’ etc., but we say, ‘I see,’ ‘I hear,’ etc.). This is in harmony with contemporary psychology.
4. Again, I know that, in addition to the world within me, there is a world outside me—a world of things, inanimate and animate: a world of rocks, trees, plants, animals, and fellow human beings. And I know that the impressions coming into me all the time from that exterior world provide me with the sensations which constitute the raw material of my knowledge. To be sure, I know that I am a victim, as long as I am confined to my physical body, of what is called the ‘egocentric predicament:’ that is, that my knowledge of things ‘out there’ is limited to my sensations of those things, and necessary inferences therefrom. But I know, too, that if there were not certain ‘things’ (motions, ‘sense data’) ‘out there’ to produce the sensations in me I would not have the sensations at all. Hence I must conclude that both of these worlds—the interior and the exterior—are in some mysterious sense ‘real.’ (Which of these two worlds—the world within or the world without—is the more ‘real,’ that is, if there are degrees in ‘reality?’ No human thinker has ever provided the certain answer to this question.)
5. Finally, I know that I, as a human being, sustain certain relationships with the external world in its various aspects or ‘parts.’ (1) I sustain a certain relationship with nature as a whole (the cosmos), or, as the Christian (or any theist) would put it, with nature’s God. (Cf. the phrase in the first paragraph of the Declaration of Independence, ‘the Laws of Nature and of Nature’s God,’ etc.). If ‘Nature’ or

‘Nature’s God’ had not provided the water I drink, the food I eat, the air I breathe, the very ground I walk on, I could not live. Undoubtedly, I am a creature. Neither I nor any other human being is self-sufficient. (2) I sustain a certain relationship toward my fellow human beings. I live in the society of my own kind, my own species—I must do so in order to realize the potentialities of my own being. In a word, I am a person living in the society of persons. (3) I sustain a certain relationship toward all sub-human orders of being: that is, toward the animal, vegetable and mineral orders. Indeed I am compelled to utilize the products of these sub-human orders to sustain myself in existence physically. These are all just matters of common-sense experience.”

“Finally, I enter into all those relationships at birth, and by virtue of having been born into the world: they are inherent in the very nature of things. And wherever I go in this world, these relationships go with me; they are *inalienable*; that is to say, they cannot be taken from me, nor can I escape them myself. Moreover, as we shall see later, my conception of these various relationships, and my attitude toward the obligations which naturally flow out of them, are bound to determine my whole ethical theory and practice.

“In a word, here I am! The world is here, and I am in it! I know that I had nothing to do with my being in this present world in the first place, and I am quite sure that I shall have little do with my going out of it. What, then, shall I do about it while I am here? Truly, it is a world which presents to me a plethora of mysteries—the mysteries of matter, energy, life, consciousness, personality, space, time, and eternity, and the greatest of all mysteries, the mystery of being. It is not only a world of mysteries, but a world of burdens and joys as well, a world of diversities and successes often chaotically intermingled, a world which appears at times to be without rhyme or reason. What, then, shall be my attitude as I make my transitory pilgrimage through it? I can, of course, just as a great many persons have done and are doing, simply ignore all these mysteries and these facts of experience, and go on my way ‘eating and drinking and making merry’—in the words of Omar Khayyam, ‘taking the Cash and letting the Credit go’—living my life in the manner of a grasshopper floating down stream.

Or I can, like the agnostic, throw up my hands in effortless abandon, and cry ‘Oh, what’s the use? It is all unknowable anyway!’ That, however, is simply, in the language of gangland, ‘taking a run-out powder;’ it is hiding one’s head, ostrich-like, in the sands of reality; and I could never warm up to an escapist, much less become one myself. Or, again, I can rebel against this world in which I find myself, rebel against ‘Fate,’ ‘Destiny,’ or ‘God’—however I may choose to designate the great Satirist who, under this view sits upon the throne of the universe—only in the long run to dash out my brains, so to speak, against the stone wall which I thus build around my better self. That, of course, would be living and dying without faith and without hope. (Benjamin de Casseres has written somewhere that the three everlasting symbols of humanity are Prometheus, Cain and Christ: Prometheus the symbol of man in chains; Cain the symbol of man in rebellion; and Christ, the symbol of man in triumph over all circumstances.). Certainly there would be little happiness in this attitude, in fact absolutely nothing to make life really worth living, for the complete cynic must be of all men the most miserable.

“Very well, then, what attitude shall I take? For the answer to this question I shall appeal to my own observation and experience, which testify that the sub-human world, being impersonal, is amoral in itself, and is therefore neither for me nor against me; that, as a matter of fact, man brings most of his troubles on himself, through his own transgressions of the moral law and in general through what has been poetically, yet realistically, called ‘man’s inhumanity to man.’ Common sense tells me, therefore, to accept the world and life as a king of ‘neutral’ laboratory in which an assortment of elements of adversity and of success, of frustration and of achievement, of sorrow and of joy—are bound to be more or less intermingled; hence, to enter this laboratory, take off my coat, and go to work building a life, realizing full well that it is not these ingredients in themselves, but the manner in which I shall make use of them, that will determine whether the life I build shall be crass, dull and barren or rich and fruitful. In a word, common sense bids me to accept the world and life as a challenge. It tells me that by doing so—by doing my very best, in harmony with my potentialities, to meet the challenge—ultimately I shall not be disappointed either in life or in myself.

“Common sense tells me, in the second place, that my very best effort can be nothing short of an earnest quest for an understanding of the meaning of human life and destiny—an understanding sufficient at least to

enable me to orient myself within the cosmic environment in which I ‘live and move and have my being.’ (It is said that Margaret Fuller once exclaimed, in a moment of exuberance, ‘I accept the universe!’ Crusty old Thomas Carlyle, on hearing of the statement, caustically remarked, ‘Gad, she’d better!’). I want to know; I want to know more; I want always to be fascinated by the More that lies beyond the present known. Common sense tells me, in the third place, that I can attain such knowledge only by positive and constructive thinking and living. I am convinced that no man ever got very far on the road to a unifying philosophy of life (and hence to a satisfactory solution of the broad problems of human relations) by negative and destructive thinking. As Maurice Maeterlinck says, ‘Let our ignorance be a constructive one.’ Common sense tells me, in the fourth place, that I must pursue this quest for a satisfactory *Weltanschauung* (German for “World View”) in a spirit of humility, in full realization of the fact that I am a creature, and that, being a creature, I am hedged about by the limitations of my own being. I cannot expect to find the answers to all problems in any system of thought. I must be content, therefore with the system that provides the most satisfying answers to the great number of problems, the view that gives the greatest measure of coherence and meaning to the world I live in and to my life in that world. Beyond this, no human being will ever be able to go, in the present life, at least. For there is little doubt that the most profound mysteries of this universe lie beyond the reach of mere human intellection. For this reason, humility is an evident characteristic of all truly great scientists, and in fact of all truly great souls.

“To all those students who are willing to approach the study of human life, human relations, and human destiny, in this spirit, the content of the present course is recommended. To those who are unwilling to approach these subjects in such a spirit, perhaps no course of study will ever be of any great practical value.”

An Introduction to Christian Apologetics, by Edward John Carnell, Eerdmans, 1956,
chapter, “What Is Faith,” pp. 65-88

“We can believe only what we know, i.e., what we intelligently apprehend. If a proposition to be announced to us in an unknown language, we can affirm nothing about it. We can neither believe nor disbelieve it...Too often faith is used as an epistemological device to avoid the hard labor of straight thinking...Surely, if faith is not related to knowledge and truth, it is meaningless...The Christian religion is indeed based upon the act of faith, but faith that is not grounded in knowledge is but respectable superstition.” p. 65

“Faith is but a whole-soul trust in God’s word as true...The Word of God...is self-authenticating. It bears its own testimony to truth; it seals its own validity...faith is founded on testimony...it is not founded on sense, reason, or feeling, but on the authority of him by whom it is authenticated.” p. 66

“The Spirit witnesses to our hearts...mediately through the heart’s apprehension of truth on every level of life. The Spirit of God is active in sealing God’s revelation in word and fact whenever and wherever man sees and appropriates the truth...If the contents of the Bible did not correspond with the truths which God had revealed in his external world and the constitution of our nature, it could not be received as coming from Him, for God cannot contradict Himself. In short, the Christian can say that where there is inconsistency, i.e., where the law of contradiction is broken there the spirit of the evil one is leading; God is the source of consistency. He cannot contradict Himself. Faith, then, is, as Augustine put it, ‘reason with assent.’ ‘Faith is not blind, irrational conviction. In order to believe, we must know what we believe, and the grounds in which our faith rests.’ By uniting proper faith with systematic consistency, the Christian can always plead that ‘there is no legitimate religion unconnected with truth.’” p. 68-69

“All men by nature are qualified to see certain thresholds of truth as they are revealed by God in the facts of nature....(the) test is systematic consistency. If what is being believed makes peace with the law of contradiction and the facts of experience, it is a faith which is prompted by the Spirit of God. If what is being believed fails to correspond with the mind of god, i.e., is not systematically consistent, such a faith is prompted by other than the Spirit of God.” p. 70

“The (Christian) ardently defends a system of authority...What the (Christian) does reject...is the notion that

authoritative decree *per se*, unaccompanied by rational evidences of its authority, can be a basis for faith....It is always more difficult to persuade people of the truth than to instruct them in what they must believe...Without reason to canvass the evidence of a given authority, how can one segregate a right authority from a wrong one?....Without systematic consistency to aid us, it appears that all we can do is to draw straws, count noses, or flip coins to choose an authority....A right faith is always a reasonable faith; that is to say, it is accorded only to an authority which commends itself to reason as a sound authority, which it would be unreasonable not to trust...A normal person does not submit his life to an authority until, guided by reason, he is fully assured in his mind that the authority in question is trustworthy.” p. 72-73

“If rational truth cannot sustain our faith, and if we reject *ipse dixit* (dogmatically) authority, then there is but one major source of assurance left. This way of faith is through the heart (emotions); it yields a subjective or religious intuition which neither an application of systematic consistency nor external authority can provide.” P. 74

“Classic mysticism renders the object of faith meaningless as something to be talked about... ‘Reality’ which is ‘felt in the heart’ cannot be significantly talked about.... ‘No adequate report of its contents can be given in words....No one can make clear to another who has never had a certain feeling, in what the quality or worth of it consists.’ Being ineffable, the object of the mystic experience can neither be established nor refuted.” P. 76

“In the more irrational forms of religious intuition...not only is the object of faith meaningless, but it also makes for a permanent split between theology and science (between the Bible and “nature”). This is a fatal gesture...The difficulty with a faith of this kind is that it runs out into a nebulosity approximating absolute zero. There is nothing in particular that it enjoins us to be, do, feel, or believe. It has defined itself out of existence. On the other hand, it may insist on a content of its own that is aggressively and defiantly irrational. In that case its position is worse. It has thrown down the gauge to reason by insisting that the incoherent may still be real. And so far as it takes that line, as some Barthians are apparently ready to do, theology is declaring war on philosophy and science. I think I know how such a war is bound to end. It will end in the annihilation of theology, as much by internal paralysis as by external attack. I will not argue this matter beyond quoting Dr. McTaggart to the effect that no one every tried to break logic but what logic broke him.” p. 76-77

“Again, with respect to the feeling theology of the classic mystics and the modern neo-supernaturalists...since the object of faith is irrational and since faith and actions go together, our actions may be irrational, too....If a man by an inward ‘crisis’ experience thinks that he is called to rule the world, as Hitler, then the validity of his act is just as secure as the validity of his original heart-vision. The object of the vision is above and beyond the check of the law of contradiction, for the very reason that it is either ineffable or irrational. If the ‘crisis’ can be followed, then irrational actions may be tolerated for the same reason. But this would involve a complete breakdown of the entire ethical system which binds rational men together, since meaningful conduct must stem from meaningful standards. But where the law of contradiction is excluded, there is no meaning! The meaningful is the rational, that and nothing more. On (the) position of religious immediacy, however, the fratricide and the kleptomaniac cannot be consistently thought of as guilty of any crime if they plead that their acts stemmed from a ‘crisis’ experience. God is best experienced by these (criminals) during the acts of crime.” p. 77

“If subjective experience replaces objectively verifiable, propositional revelation, then agreement among competent investigators is impossible, for how can feelings agree when the object of feeling is a directly intuited ‘Reality?’ By feeling alone one cannot even be sure...that what another means by ‘God’ is what he means by the ‘divine undergirding’ of the universe. How can one experience be checked with another? If one says that he has experienced something, there is no higher court of appeal than the testimony of the one having the experience.” p. 78

“Feeling (faith) limits the perception of God to those of a certain physiological construction. Legion...are (those) who testify to no such experience of an inward feeling of God...feelings are not qualified to criticize themselves....If feeling rather than intellect is the most qualified...to know God, it follows that all of the feelings must be normative witnesses....Which of these feelings is the best channel through which to approach the

Divine? We can decide this matter neither by feelings nor by the intellect....How shall I express my religious emotions? Any way I elect!....the emotion which emotes most emotionally is on its own authority best and most valuable....When feeling is made the test for god's existence, then there are as many gods as there are different feelings, inasmuch as God's nature is defined in terms of the particular type of feeling which is employed by the zealot at the time of his discovering 'Reality.'" p. 79-80

"Finally,....feeling theologians have ruined the love of wisdom by defending an unknown God. To know something is to perceive it with the understanding, i.e., to have an intellectual awareness of coherence in the light of the law of contradiction. But when the theologian of feeling contents that God cannot be made subject to the limitations of the reason of man, he says in effect that God is unknowable...with the sluice gate opened to unknowables, the whole philosophic discipline is thrown into confusion, and precision is impossible...A religion based on mere feeling is the vaguest, most unreliable, most unstable of all things. A strong, stable, religious life can be built up on no other ground than that of intelligent conviction." p. 81

"Nehemiah, chapter eight, gives an example of the concomitance of faith and feeling in Christianity. When Ezra opened the law of Moses, the people heard the reading of the word and understood it with their minds. Being convinced in the whole soul that it was the truth, the people wept for their sins. This was contrition. Then they celebrated with eating and drinking and made great mirth, 'because they had understood the words that were delivered unto them' (v. 12).' This was emotional joy. Here, in perfection, we see the Christian doctrine of the primacy of truth and the ability of that truth to assuage the whole man. Proper feeling...follows upon the establishment of the truth of the law of God. Truth establishes feelings; feelings do not establish truth." p. 88

"...philosophy is always the handmaid of theology, or faith, because unproved and undemonstrable presuppositions must be accepted for any philosophical system to begin. Every philosophy must begin somewhere, if it is to begin at all, and the beginning is just that, a beginning. Nothing precedes the starting point; no proofs, no demonstrations; nothing....Strictly speaking, there can be no atheists, no more than there can be philosophies without presuppositions....there can be no person who disbelieves in every possible god; if the person has any thoughts, i.e., any philosophy at all, he believes in a god. Belief is inescapable and unavoidable.

The question arising is quite simple: in which god or gods (i.e., which presuppositions?" —*Answer to Ayn Rand*, John W. Robbins, Mount Vernon Pub., 1974, pp. 68-69.

The following are quotations from, *The Case For Orthodox Theology*, Edward John Carnell, Westminster Press, 1959:

"Faith is the capacity of belief or trust. This capacity relieves the mind of a critical desire to reassess the grounds of settled judgment. Samuel Johnson observes that of an opinion that when it is no longer doubted, the evidences cease to be examined. When we believe in a product, we buy it with confidence. When we trust a person, we yield ourselves in fellowship." p. 23

"A wise man is critical about many things, but not all things. He does not believe contradictions, and he does not trust a fool. But he forthrightly believes whenever he confronts sufficient evidences. He is wise because he knows when to believe and when not to believe. He has faith." p. 23

"The capacity of belief or trust belongs to man as man. It is not necessarily a religious virtue." p. 23

"Zealots often contend that faith requires a leap of the will or risk of the intellect. Orthodoxy repudiates this in the name of both common sense and revelation. To believe on insufficient evidence—what is this but to believe what may not be true?" p. 24.

"...all belief rests on authority....and what else is authority if not the power of sufficient evidence to elicit assent?" p. 24.

"Although faith traces to a satisfied judgment, a state of faith is not induced by the sheer display of sufficient evidences; for personal interest may build a protective wall around the intellect." p. 25.

"A man of faith is a man of character, and character implies a spiritual willingness to be honest before the facts. Pride says, 'Believe what is contingent with personal interest.' Honesty says, 'Believe things are they are.' Faithless men play fast and loose with evidences; their testimony is inadmissible. The rational life cannot get on with it unless the moral life is firm." p. 26.

“Before a husband can embrace his wife, he must be convinced that it is his wife, and not a stranger, before him. The same is true in our approach to God. We must be convinced that we are confronting God, not a counterfeit.” p. 29-30.

Quotations from Alexander Campbell

“Reason deciding that the testimony is true, is believing; reason deciding that the testimony is false, is disbelieving; reason unable to decide, is skepticism.” —from an Address on Reason and Faith, New York City Concert Hall, December 7, 1834.

“FACT. Fact means something done...Truth and fact, though often confounded, are not the same. All facts are truths, but all truths are not facts....The simple agreement of the terms of any proposition with the subject of that proposition, or the representation of any thing as it exists, is a truth. But something must be done or effected before we have a fact...Facts have a power which logical truth has not; and therefore we say that facts are stubborn things. They are things, not words. The power of any fact is the meaning; and therefore the measure of its power is the magnitude of its import. All moral facts have a moral meaning; and those are properly called moral facts which either exhibit, develop, or form moral character....all his (God’s) works, when properly understood, exhibit both his physical and moral character when viewed in all their proper relations....The work of redemption is a system of works, or deeds, on the part of Heaven, which constitute the most splendid series of moral facts which man or angel ever saw. And they are the proof, the argument, or the demonstration, of that regenerating proposition which presents God and Love as two names for one idea. When these facts are understood, or brought into immediate contact with the mind of man, as a moral seal or archetype, they delineate the image of God upon the human soul. All the means of grace are, therefore, only the means of impressing this seal upon the heart—of bringing these moral facts to make their full impression on the soul of man. Testimony and faith are but the channel through which these facts, or the hand of God, draws the image on the hart and character of man....These moral facts (of the Gospels)....are the seal which testimony conveys to the understanding, and faith brings to the hearts of sinners, by which God creates them anew and forms them for his glory...”

“TESTIMONY. ...Now, be it observed, that, as by our five external senses we acquire all information of the objects of sense around us; so by testimony, human or divine, we receive all our information upon all facts which are not the objects of immediate exercise of our five senses upon the things around us....To appreciate the full value of testimony in the divine work of regeneration, we have only to reflect that all the moral facts which can form moral character, after the divine model, or which can effect a moral or religious change in man, are found in the testimony of God; and that no fact can operate at all where it is not present, or where it is not known. The love of God in the death of the Messiah never drew a tear of gratitude or joy from any eye, or excited a grateful emotion in any heart among the nations of our race to whom the testimony never came. No fact in the history of six thousand years, no work of God in creation, providence, or redemption, has ever influenced the heart of man or woman to whom it has not been testified. Testimony is, then, in regeneration, as necessary as the facts of which it speaks.”

“FAITH. No testimony, no faith: for faith is only the belief of testimony, or confidence in testimony as true....To believe without testimony is just as impossible as to see without light. The measure, quality and power of faith are always found in the testimony believed. Where testimony begins, faith begins; and where testimony ends, faith ends...The quality or value of faith is found in the quality or value of the testimony...The power of faith is also the power or moral meaning of the testimony, or of the facts which the testimony represents. If by faith I am transported with joy, or overwhelmed in sorrow, that joy or sorrow is in the facts contained in the testimony, or in the nature and relation of those facts to me. If faith purifies the heart, works by love, and overcomes the world, this power is in the facts believed. If a father has more joy in believing that a lost son has been found, than in believing that a lost sheep has been brought home to his fold, the reason of this greater joy is not in the nature of his believing, but in the nature of the facts believed....a very popular and

pernicious error....is that the nature or power and saving efficacy of faith is not in the truth believed, but in the nature of our faith, or in the manner of believing the truth....Who ever believed in Christ without hearing the history of him? ‘How shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard?’ Faith never can be more than the receiving of testimony as true, or the belief of testimony; and if that testimony be written it is called history, though it is as much history when flowing from the tongue as when flowing from the pen....the efficacy of faith is always in the fact believed or the object received, and not in the nature or manner of believing....This holds universally in all the sensitive, intellectual, and moral powers of man. All our pleasures and pains, all our joys and sorrows, are the effects of the objects of sensation, reflection, faith, etc., apprehended or received, and not in the nature or the exercise of any power of capacity with which we are endowed...It is neither the faculty of perception, nor the manner of perception, but the thing perceived, that excites us to action; it is not the exercise or reflection, but the thing reflected upon; it is not memory, nor the exercise of recollection, but the thing remembered; it is not imagination, but the thing imagined; it is not reason itself, nor the exercise of reason, but the thing reasoned upon, which affords pleasure or pain—which excites to action—which cheers, allures, consoles—which grieves, disquiets, or discommodes us....Ascending to our volitions and our affections, we shall find the same universality. In a word, it is not choosing, nor refusing; it is not loving, hating, fearing, desiring, nor hoping; it is not the nature of any power, faculty, or capacity of our being, nor the simple exercise of them, but the objects or things upon which they are exercised, which give us pleasure or pain; which induce us to action or influence our behavior....There is no connection of cause and effect more intimate—there is no system of dependencies more closely linked—there is no arrangement of things more natural or *necessary*, than the ideas represented by the terms *fact, testimony, faith and feeling*. The first is for the last, and the two intermediates are made necessary by the force of circumstance, as the means for the end. The fact, or the thing said to be done, produces the change in the frame of mind. The testimony, or the report of the thing said or done, is essential to belief; and belief of it is necessary to bring the thing said or done to the heart. The change of heart is the end proposed in this part of the process of regeneration; and we may see that the process on the part of Heaven is, thus far, natural and rational; or, in other words, consisted with the constitution of our nature.” —from, *The Christian System*, Alexander Campbell, The Standard Publishing Co., 1832, pp. 90-96.

Simon Greenleaf

Simon Greenleaf (1783-1853), one of the greatest judicial minds in American history, a professor and head of the Harvard Law School in 1846, wrote a *Treaties On The Laws of Evidence*. In this great work (which was for many years the widely accepted “Bible” in jurisprudence) Professor Greenleaf explained the fundamentals of establishing “knowledge beyond a reasonable doubt.” Professor Greenleaf is classed along with the world’s greatest legal minds (e.g., James Kent [American jurist 1763-1847] and Sir William Blackstone [English jurist 1723-1780]). He drafted the original constitution of the Independent Republic of Liberia; he was an unashamed Christian and president of the Massachusetts Bible Society for many years. He also wrote, *The Testimony of The Evangelists*, from which we quote or paraphrase below:

1. To establish the historicity of the facts of Christianity, nothing more is demanded than is readily conceded to every branch of human science.
2. Christianity does not profess to convince the perverse and headstrong, to bring irresistible evidence, to vanquish every question. All it professes is to propose such evidence as may satisfy the disciplined, teachable, honest, serious searcher for the truth.
3. The foundation of Christianity is based on facts. These facts are testified to as having occurred within the personal knowledge of the Gospel writers. Christianity, then, rests upon the credibility of these witnesses. Are they worthy of implicit belief? This is the question in all human tribunals in regard to persons testifying before them!
4. Every document apparently ancient, coming from the proper custody, and bearing on its face no evident marks of forgery, the law presumes to be genuine, and it devolves on the opposing party the burden of proving it to be otherwise. We (Christians) are entitled to assume the texts of the Gospels are genuine

until the contrary is shown.

5. If it be objected that the originals are lost, and that we have only copies, the principles of municipal law apply here also. For if any ancient document concerning our public rights (U.S. Constitution, Declaration of Independence, Emancipation Proclamation, Gettysburg Address, etc.) were lost, copies which had been as universally received and acted upon as the four Gospels have been, would have been received in evidence in any court of law without the slightest hesitation.
6. In trials of fact, by oral testimony, the proper inquiry is *not* whether it is possible that the testimony may be false (as critics approach it) *but* whether there is sufficient probability that it is true!
7. In weighing the evidence of any proposition of fact, the question to be determined is, when may it said to be *proved*: A proposition of fact is proved, when its truth is *established by competent and satisfactory evidence beyond reasonable doubt*; or by witnesses to the fact who were:
 - a. Competent: Such as the nature of the thing to be proved requires.
 - b. Satisfactory: The amount of proof which ordinarily satisfies an unprejudiced mind beyond any reasonable doubt.
 - c. Sufficiency: Enough to satisfy the mind and conscience of an honest person and cause him to act upon that conviction.
 - d. When one has this degree of certainty, it is unreasonable to require more.**
8. In the absence of circumstances which generate suspicion, every witness is to be presumed to be credible, until the contrary is shown. The burden of impeaching his credibility lies upon the objector.
9. All witnesses are entitled to the benefit of the axiom that men ordinarily speak the truth, when they have no prevailing motive or inducement to the contrary. If the testimony of the Gospel writers is false why would they have lied to bring upon themselves all the misery and persecution of Christianity's enemies?
10. The ability of a witness to speak the truth depends on the opportunities he has had for observing the fact, the accuracy of his powers of observing, and discerning, and the faithfulness of his memory in recalling the facts. We can at least grant to the Gospel writers the abilities of most human beings until the contrary is shown. This is the procedure of legal justice.
11. Number and consistence of the testimony is significant. Is there enough disparity in their testimony to show there was no collusion. Is there enough agreement in their testimony to show they were independent recorders of the same great events?
12. The testimony must conform to the accepted circumstances and experiences within which the fact allegedly occurred. What the Gospel writers saw and testified to was experienced and seen and heard by others (Acts 2:22; 26:26). The testimony should be confirmed with coincidentally collateral and contemporaneous facts and circumstances. It is not possible for the wit of man to *invent* a story, which if closely compared to the actual occurrences of the same time and place, may not be shown to be false. Comparing the Gospels to the histories of that era proves their authenticity. Had the evangelists been false historians, they would not have committed themselves on so many *particulars* (e.g., Luke 3:1-3). False witnesses will not willingly or consciously *detail* any circumstances in which their testimony may be open to contradiction. Nor will they *multiply* circumstances where there is danger of comparisons that could be made and exposure made. The Gospel writers would not reasonably have furnished their opposition with such documents for bringing them in discredit with their readers. False witnesses deal in general statements and broad assertions. When forced to use names and particular circumstances they will try to invent such as will be out of the reach of all investigation and opposing proof.

A Few Scriptures That Refer to Epistemology (theory of knowledge)

Sources of knowledge: John 7:17; 10:38; 20:27; Rom. 1:18-23; 1 John 1:1-4.

Nature of knowledge: Num. 15:39; Jer. 17:9-10; Luke 24:39; John 10:35; Acts 2:22; 26:26; Heb. 11:1-2.

Validity of knowledge: Matt. 12:22-32; Acts 2:32; 17:29; Rom. 12:1-2; 1 Cor. 15:1-58; 2 Thess. 2:9-12; 2 Pet. 1:16-21; 3:1-5.

FAITH

Faith is trust, love, obedience,
commitment. All the below are
instrumental in developing faith.
Faith is an experience based squarely]
on the below pre-requisites.

Δ

ASSENT—CHOICE

Emotion is an experience brought about by the
prospect of some value's being gained or lost. We
become emotional or feel about someone or something
after receiving the moral facts and reasoning on them.
Then we make a choice. The problem is to convince
people of that which is most real—this world
or the spiritual

Δ

THE WILL (OR, THE “HEART”)

The volition, the will, or the “heart” of a person must be
changed or moved by a presentation of “moral facts”
cf. 2 Cor. 5:14-16; 20:3-5; Rom. 10:17

Δ

FACTS

Many facts (truths) are moral facts, i.e., those facts which exhibit or form
moral character or display moral character. All of God's works (both natural
and supernatural) exhibit his moral attributes and character
cf. Psa. 8:3-8; 19:1-10; Acts 14:15-17; 17:22-31; Rom. 1:18-22

Δ

AXIOMATIC POSTULATES

There are two *a priori*s which must be presupposed or granted as axiomatic. And they are absolutely necessary to all reasoning, feeling, believing, willing, or acting.

Rationality-----**Objectivity**

Cogito, ergo sum, “I think, therefore, I am!” or *Dubito, ergo sum*, “I doubt, therefore, I am!”

THIS IS THE RATIONAL PROGRESSION TO FAITH

Every human being lives by a “faith-system” and all humans construct their “system” by these same progressive steps. The difference will be the OBJECT of their faith.

----by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

THE CHRISTIAN “EXPERIENCE” Grounded in historical objectivity

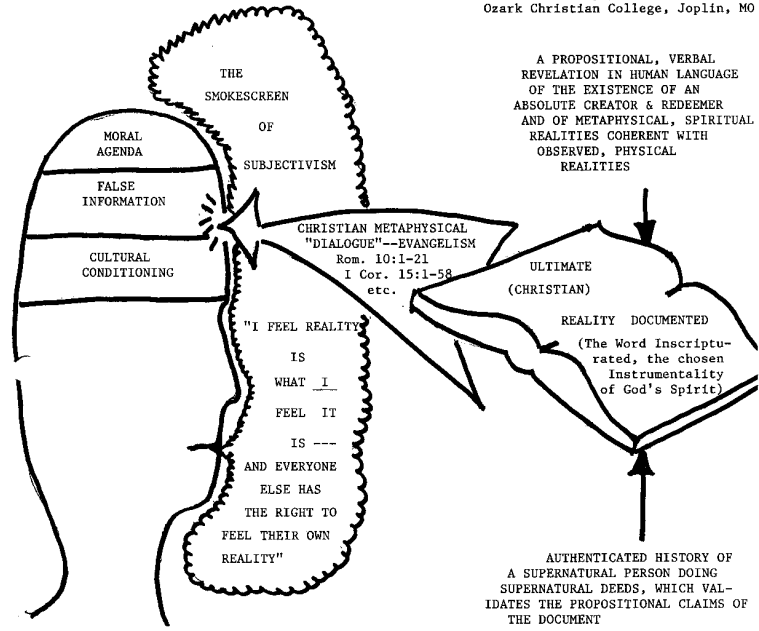
1. FACT ➤	2. TESTIMONY ➤	3. FAITH ➤	4. FEELING
The historical death burial and bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ of Nazareth	The historical credible documents of the Old and New Testaments authenticated by accepted canons of historicity	The person exercising reason and honesty, willing to trust beyond a reasonable doubt In Jesus Christ on the basis of available evidence.	Reconciliation realized and the consequent state of subjective “well being.”

The Christian “experience” moves **indubitably** in the direction of the arrows above. It cannot move in the opposite direction. “Feelings” are always the result of facts. Facts are never **produced** or altered by feelings. Feelings may alter a person’s **perception** of the facts but perception cannot alter facts. People **may willingly** allow their feelings to rule their perceptions and thus act on the basis of **emotional bias**. The realistic course, however, is to acknowledge the facts, evaluate the gain or loss to be achieved, make a choice and commitment of faith, and **let the feelings accrue from the facts**.

...see Alexander Campbell’s book, *The Christian System*, adapted to chart form here by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

CHRISTIAN REALISM IMPLEMENTED FROM A BASIS OF THE NECESSITY OF LOGIC----
THE ONLY WAY TO PENETRATE THE "SMOKE-SCREEN" OF SUBJECTIVISM.

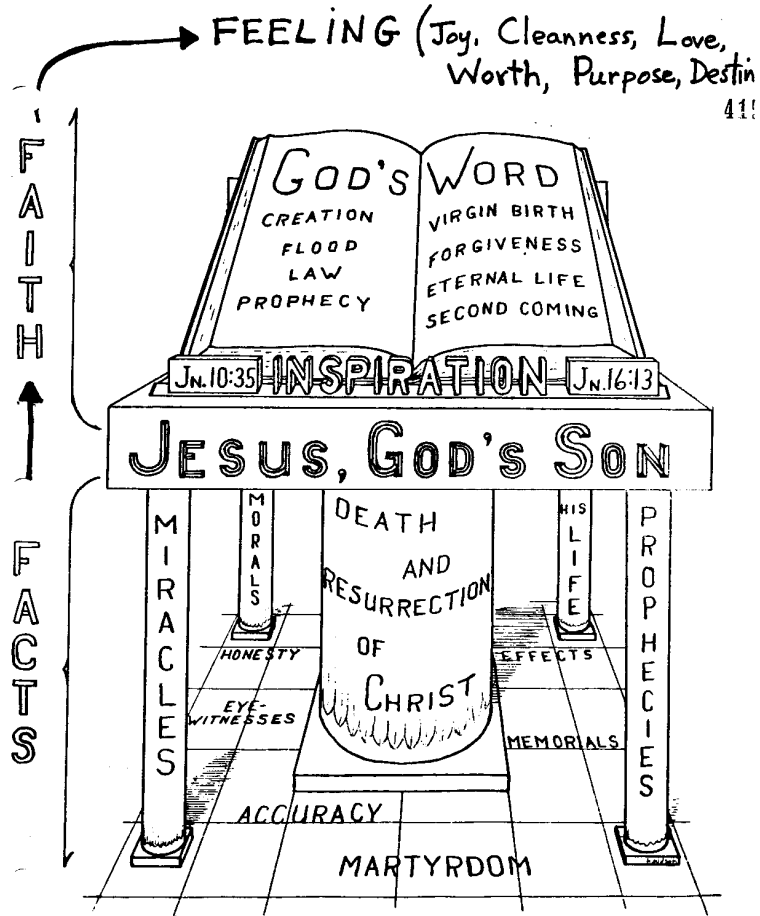
November 14, 1991
Chart by--Paul T. Butler, Th.D.
Prof. Philosophy & Bible
Ozark Christian College, Joplin, MO



CHRISTIAN
REALISM

THE NECESSARY "GIVENS" OF LOGIC...IDENTITY, NON-CONTRADICTION, EXCLUDED MIDDLE...
"To establish the historicity of the facts of Christianity, nothing more is demanded than is readily conceded to every branch of human science...Christianity does not profess to convince the perverse and headstrong, to bring irresistible evidence, to vanquish every question...All it professes is to propose such evidence as may satisfy the disciplined, teachable, honest, serious searcher."

---Hon. Simon Greenleaf, (1783-1853),
Head of the Harvard University Law School, in
his book, The Testimony of The Evangelists.



Grounded in Human History

TWO METAPHYSICAL VIEWPOINTS

Select the one which best corresponds and coheres with physical and mental realities.

Christian (The Bible)

1. God exists. God created all things. The world exists by God's designed order.
2. God created man and woman—they did not evolve from lower animals. Science bears out creation theories of life.
3. God made mankind to have dominion over earth and to fellowship with God. Christ is mankind's salvation to redeem all creation.
4. Accepts the Bible as God's Word, inerrant in its original documents; preserved accurately by divine providence.
5. Man is a sinner. All human beings from Adam and Eve have sinned except the Perfect Man, Jesus Christ.
6. God is sovereign; man is dependent on God. By faith in God and in God's Word, man has the power to solve his earthly problems.
7. Man is God's servant. Man should practice self-denial, seeking to serve God and his fellow man.
8. A compassionate, nationalistic world-view (appointed boundaries) seeing civil government as the servant of God to be used in its ordained place for the redemption of mankind. Permits patriotism.

9. Views life with dignity and eternal value and opposes murder, abortion, killing of the elderly (euthanasia) and suicide.
10. The state should not inhibit religious expression or belief in the government or schools. The church should not control the state, nor vice-versa. But "an impenetrable wall of separation of church and state" is a foreign idea to God and the U.S. Constitution and other American founding documents. It is found nowhere in Scripture or early U. S. history.

Humanist (Humanist Manifestoes I & II)

1. The "universe is self-existing and not created. Life originated by chance.
2. "Man is a part of nature and he emerged as a

- result of continuous process (evolution.)”
Science bears out the theory of evolution.
3. “We can discover no divine purpose or providence for the human species...no deity will save us; we must save ourselves.”
 4. Rejects the divine origin of and the inerrancy of the Bible. Considers the Bible to be at best mythological and irrelevant to modern man.
 5. Man is by nature, basically good, in need only of education and economic parity to eventually establish utopia on earth.
 6. Man is autonomous—self-ruled. He is dependent only upon himself to solve his problems by his own knowledge.
 7. Man is worthy of self-exaltation and self-love. Man should focus on serving himself first.
 8. Upholds a socialistic view. Government is the Benefactor to be used by man to supply only physical parity for all mankind. Deplores national loyalty and patriotism. Believes in a one-world, centralized government.
 9. Taking the life of the unborn is the right of the

mother. Suicide is everyone’s right and option. Euthanasia is reasonable and necessary.

10. The idea of the “impenetrable wall of separation of church and state” is central to eliminating all religious influence and establishing a “non-belief” of atheism. The absence of the Bible will establish a non-believing, scientifically-correct, politically-correct, humane, progressive, ideal, much-more-moral society than one with the Bible and the Christian religion.

THE PROBLEM OF EVIL AS IT PERTAINS TO FAITH

There are three basic ways of relating God and evil:

1. One may affirm the reality of evil and deny God (atheism).
2. One may affirm God and deny the reality of evil (pantheism).
3. One may attempt to show the compatibility of God and evil.

Atheism: Denying the Reality of God: If God exists, he is not essentially good.

1. Either (a) morality is right because God willed it or else; (b) God willed it because it is right.
2. But if (a), then God is arbitrary about what is right, and he is not essentially good.
3. And if (b), then God is not ultimate, since he is subject to some standard beyond himself.
4. But in either case—if God is not essentially good or not ultimate—God is not what theists claim him to be.
5. Therefore, no theistic God exists.

Answer to Atheism:

1. Good is based on God’s will. God is sovereign, but not arbitrary.
2. God’s nature is the ultimate norm in accordance with which his will cooperates. God wills what is essentially good without there being some ultimate standard beyond himself. The ultimate norm for all good flows from the will of God but only in accordance with the nature of God. God is neither arbitrary nor less than ultimate.

Atheism: Evil is incompatible with God,

1. If God is all-powerful, he could destroy evil
2. If God is all-good, he would destroy evil.
3. But evil exists.
4. Therefore, there is no God.

Answer to Atheism:

1. Premise 3 places an unjustified time limit on God. It says, in effect, that since God has not *yet* done anything to defeat evil we are absolutely sure he never will. But this cannot be known for certain by any finite mind. It is possible that God will yet defeat evil in the future.
2. It may be that God cannot destroy evil without destroying *freedom* of human choice (*freedom of choice* is acknowledged even by most atheists as good). A moral world is possible only where there are free, moral (personal) beings. It may be the only way God could eliminate evil totally would be to make robots out of human beings.
3. Grant the existence of the theistic God we automatically have an answer to the problem of evil: (a) since God is all-good, he has the will to defeat evil; (b) since God is all powerful, he has the power to defeat evil; (c) evil is not yet defeated; (d) therefore, evil will one day be defeated.

Atheism: God and evil are logically incompatible:

1. God and evil are opposites.
2. Opposites cannot exist simultaneously.
3. But evil exists.
4. Hence, God cannot exist.

Answer to Atheism:

1. The atheist fails to prove that God and evil are actually contradictory. They may be only contrary but not contradictory.
2. Let us, for argument's sake, restate the atheistic argument here: (a) God exists; (b) evil exists; (c) there is no good purpose for evil; (d) therefore both (a) and (b) cannot be true; (e) but we know (b) is true; (f) therefore, God cannot exist.
3. The difficulty with this atheistic argument is in proving premise (c) to be true. The only way one can be sure God could not possibly have any good purpose for evil is (a) either to already know God is not all good, which begs the question; or (b) to know the mind of god, which is presumptuous for any finite being. If there is an all-good God, it follows automatically that he does have some good purpose for allowing evil, even if no human being knows what that good purpose is. An important point for the theist to remember—since the point disputed here is logical or conceptual, all the theist needs to do is show some *possible* explanation for evil to defeat the non-theist's claim. Theists are not obligated to show *in fact* that this is the case.

Atheism: Theists use a double standard:

1. God is being excused from evil on the basis of a kind of double standard.
2. God regularly does what people are sent to jail or severely punished for doing.
3. God through nature inflicts sickness, pain and even torment on humans.
4. And eventually, God takes everyone's life—a crime called “murder” in any other case.
5. Why should God be excused and men condemned for these heinous crimes?

Answer to Atheism:

1. God is a set of One. God is sovereign over life—he created it—and hence he has the right to take it (Deut. 32:39; Job 1:21). There is a rule that governs the activity of life-taking and it does apply to all in that class. The rule is this: only the Being who creates life has the right to take it. And it just so happens there is only One Being in the class.
2. It is not wrong for God to take life for some good purpose known to himself, especially if death is (as the Christian claims) the way God brings us to a better place.

Atheism: Why did God create a world that would sin? The theists claim God could have made:

1. No world at all.
2. A world with no free creatures.
3. A world where free creatures would not sin.

4. A world were free creatures might sin.
5. Therefore, wouldn't choices (1) through (3) be morally better than (4)?

Answers to Atheism:

1. World's (1) through (3) are **not morally better**. World #4 is the morally best world. Worlds (1 & 2) are not even moral worlds, since they do not have moral creatures.
2. World (3)—where sin never occurs—does seem to be more desirable than the one we have, where sin does occur. The fact that it seems *logically* possible or conceivable and even *morally desirable*, however, in no way means it is *actually achievable*. In a free world *not* everything logically possible is actually achievable. It all depends on what persons do with their freedom. It is impossible for God to actually create a world that in fact would guarantee sin would never happen. God is absolutely perfect. He will certainly do the best that is possible. Then we can be sure that either—(a) a world in which sin never occurs would not be better than one in which it does, or—(b) no sinless world would ever have occurred.
3. Would a world where sin was never permitted be the **best** world or only a good one? Would it not be better to *permit* evil in order to *defeat* it? Is it not better to permit some evil for achieving the greater good? Certain levels of virtue and pleasure cannot be attained without permitting some pain and evil. It may be that God permitted this evil world as a means of producing the greatest good.

Atheism: But this is not the best of all possible worlds:

1. Just one less murder or one less rape, to say nothing of war and cruelty, would improve the world. But if this is not the best possible world, then God has done an evil in creating and/or permitting it.
2. If there is a morally perfect God, then he must always do his best, morally speaking.
3. But this world is not the morally best world possible.
4. Therefore, there is no morally perfect God.

Answers to Atheism:

1. It may be that this world is not the best world, but only the **best way** to get to the best world. This world may only be a precondition of perfection, the way tribulation is a precondition to patience, endurance, character (Rom. 5:3).
2. The atheistic argument contains an ambiguity in the word “possible.” Does it mean “best world *logically* conceivable” or “best world *actually* achievable?” It may very well be that in the progress of the world toward its final point of perfection, this world is the best world *presently achievable*.

THEISM'S ANSWER TO EVIL

God permits evil in order to produce a greater good.

1. God freely created the world, not because he had to, but because he wanted to do so.
2. God created creatures like himself who could freely love him. But such creatures could also hate him.
3. God desires all men to love him, but will not force any against their will to love him. Forced love is not love—it is rape.
4. God will persuade as many to love him as he can (2 Pet. 3:9). God will grant those who will not love him the consequence of their free choice, forever—eternal separation (hell) from him.
5. God's love is magnified when we return his love (since he first loved us) as well as when we do not. It shows how great he is that he will love even those who hate him.

Thus, in the end, the greatest good will be achieved in several ways:

1. God will have shared his love with all men.
2. God will have saved as many as he could without violating their free choice (1 Tim. 2:1; 1 Pet. 3:9). Those not saved will be given their own freely-chosen destiny; thus the good of their freedom will be respected.

3. Throughout all God will be glorified in that (a) his sovereign will had prevailed; (b) his love is magnified whether it is accepted or rejected; (c) he has defeated evil by forgiving sin (through the vicarious death of Christ) and by separating good from evil forever (through the final judgment); and (c) he has produced the best world achievable (where the most people possible are saved and secured from evil forever).

Two very important aspects of this theodicy that should be stressed:

1. It is a “best way” (verses a “best world”) theodicy. That is, this present evil world is not the best world possible, but it is the best **way** to achieve the best world. Permitting evil is a precondition of producing the best world (Gen. 50:20); Rom. 5:20).
2. This solution is not a soul-making but a soul-deciding theodicy. God is not conceived as a cosmic behavioral manipulator who is programming people into heaven against their will. God operates with men only with their “informed consent.” God never goes beyond freedom and dignity to save men *at any cost* (i.e., not at the cost of freedom or dignity).
3. Whosoever **will** may come, but whoever **won’t** will not be forced to come. In a truly free world, God cannot make souls act against their will. He can only lovingly persuade them and then respect their decision—whatever it may be.