

## BOTH/AND: THE UNCOMFORTABLE APOLOGETIC

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1 Peter 3:15 could be the clarion call of the Church's mission every bit as much as the more familiar Matt 28:19-20 or Acts 1:8. All facets and dimensions of the Church's mission are present. The Church can truly acknowledge Christ as Lord only as each member who makes up the body of Christ individually acknowledges and submits to his lordship. Similarly the collective hope, the confident expectation, of the full and complete manifestation of his lordship is to be shared with the world. The members of the world, the given community, have a right to demand an accounting of the anticipation and realities of the new creation, the community of faith.

Closely associated with missiology, as this verse indicates, is apologetics. Edward J. Carnell thought of this passage as the perfect pattern of apologetics:

*The preparation:* "In your hearts reverence Christ as Lord."

*The assignment:* "Always be prepared to make a defense to anyone who calls you to account for the hope that is in you."

*The mood:* "Yet do it with gentleness and reverence."<sup>1</sup>

*Apologia* ("defense") means a reasoned defense of one's position and perspective (à la Socrates' *Apology* as recorded by Plato), while "account" is the Greek *logos* ("word" or "study") as seen for example in "missiology" and "theology."

Missiology and apologetics cannot be divorced. From one perspective they are nearly one and the same as evidenced by Paul's numerous apologies of his mission as an apostle ("sent one") of the Church before Felix, Festus and Agrippa. Though the apologetic thrust may differ depending on the era and geographical location of the Church, mission and apology have of necessity walked hand in hand. Therefore I wish to focus on three primary apologetic issues of the present era in the context of the Church's mission. These three issues have always been before the Church, but perhaps more acutely today—and certainly in a different manner than in the past. The issues are Scripture, methodology and culture.

One more preliminary word is required. It is my conviction that many of the solutions to the problems that abound in these three areas are offered at the expense of the other extreme of the continuum. For instance, just as Calvinists and Arminians do battle over the relationship of God's sovereignty and man's responsibility, my working framework over the past several years for many theological and philosophical debates is what I have called "both/and: the uncomfortable apologetic." It will be obvious that while my suggestions and insights are neither exhaustive nor novel, they offer the balance that I believe is needed for the accomplishment of the present missiological-apologetic task.

The absolute framework of a both/and apologetics is the Biblical doctrine of creation. While the historic problem of the one-and-the-many is given an answer if not a total understanding by the Christian doctrine of the tri-unity of God who

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<sup>1</sup>E. J. Carnell, *An Introduction to Christian Apologetics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1948) 85.

is both one and many, so the Christian doctrine of creation affirms that there is both the Creator and the created, the infinite and the finite, the absolute and the contingent, the unconditional and the conditioned. This inherent duality is the ontological reality in which believer and unbeliever exist, whether they recognize it as such or not.<sup>2</sup> Therefore no missiological outreach or intellectual tract can ultimately be successful if neglectful of the structure of reality, uncreated and created.

This is true of much of the contemporary debate over Scripture in evangelical circles. Some forget that Scripture is God's and so overemphasize the contingencies of history and the limitations of man that even God is restricted from communicating accurately his revelation of himself and the delineation of his will. Others, becoming so enamored with this Book, forget that it did come via man in history and did not fall from heaven *en bloc*, and thus the Book is open to the various historical and textual investigations of any other book of antiquity. (Of course the latter is done in the context of remembering that, unlike other ancient texts, this is God's Book. Thus expectations must be higher, and finite perspectives must at times be curtailed from immediate or rash judgments.)

What then does this mean? It means simply what the Christian Church through the centuries has insisted on: Scripture is at one and the same time both the Word of God and the word of man. There remains no missiological task if we do not have a definitive revelation from and of God. As the mission of the Church is really God's mission in Christ, which Christ has commanded and equipped us to accomplish through the constant energizing force of the person of the Holy Spirit, so he similarly commanded, equipped and energized men of a former era to accomplish the missiological task of recording this revelation of himself in the Old and New Testaments. Bernard Ramm put it succinctly:

The mystery and marvel of Scripture is that it is the result of a dual authorship, the apostle and the Holy Spirit, yet in such a way that the originative authorship of each is not infringed upon by the other! . . . Although written by man it is God's truth; and although God's truth it is the product of human authors. Their words are their words yet God's word; and God's word is uniquely his word though in the garments of man's words.<sup>3</sup>

Scripture thus is for the created but fallen realm and therefore comes through that realm.<sup>4</sup> God acts and speaks in history—that is, the created realm. Revela-

<sup>2</sup>Unbelievers obviously refuse to recognize such because it immediately means that they are not infinite, absolute or unconditioned. In other words, they are not autonomous and are called to account by One who is, contrary to them, infinite, absolute and unconditioned. Believers usually have the other side of the problem (except in moments of temptation or even sin) as they forget that while God has spoken, he has spoken in and through this created world; that while God is innately transhistorical, his revelation of himself is not; and that while I am a member of a new community, it is nevertheless a community still resident in this world.

<sup>3</sup>B. Ramm, *Special Revelation and the Word of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1961) 179.

<sup>4</sup>We are concerned here only with special revelation. Obviously general revelation also comes through the realm of creation, but differently. While special revelation must be mediated through creation, general revelation is immediate with creation. Creation and general revelation are one and the same. At the moment of creation there was also the general revelation of the fact and majesty of God. Adam knew immediately (innately, if you wish) in his unfallen condition that he was a creature of God, being capable of receiving subsequent special revelation from God as evidenced by God's commands and communication with him prior to the fall. General revelation is given to man simply because he is a creature of God in the midst of God's creation. While he can deny it or even be epistemologically blind to it, he cannot escape it or be ontologically absolved from it and continue to exist as man.

tion per se is for and through the created, not the Creator. Revelation, like creation, is a product of God's initiative.

Unlike general revelation, special revelation is not logically necessary, given the fact of creation. It is a prerogative of divine grace and love, as special revelation post-fall is primarily redemptive in intent. It is the story of God's provision and is therefore the event and the written record of God's redemptive activity on behalf of his fallen creation.

Special revelation is thus a projection of God that makes a difference. This is obviously seen in the history of Israel. From Abraham on, the nation of Israel was the recipient of God's revelatory/redemptive activity that distinguished her from among the nations. Since sin and penultimate judgment are historical, deliverance from sin and judgment must be via revelatory-historical events initiated by a God of holiness and love, grace and forgiveness. Thus from the passover experience through the crossing of the Sea of Reeds to the institution of the sacrificial system, Yahweh was progressively revealing (uncovering) both his person and will through his redemptive program of which Israel was continuously reminded (e.g., Deut 7:18-19; Josh 24:17).

Revelation as historical event, however, is in need of revelation as Word, and vice versa. Historical events are open to diverse interpretations as even a cursory reading of the NT illustrates concerning the acme and culmination of God's progressive revelation in the person of himself, Jesus Christ of Nazareth (e.g., Matt 12:24-28). God therefore provides his revelation in history with an interpretive word. Event and word must be nearly one or the event itself will be misinterpreted or, even worse, meaningless. Inspiration is therefore inseparable and indispensable as both event and word together are revelation. Scripture is the very Word of God as it is the inerrant and propositional interpretation of God's person, will and redemptive activity.<sup>5</sup> Frequently the Word comes prior to the event, as in prophecy (e.g., Christ's second coming), but usually the events transpire prior to the interpretive Word (e.g., cross and empty tomb are interpreted throughout the NT).<sup>6</sup>

This reference to Christ demands a few more comments. Jesus Christ is both the supreme event of revelation and the definitive Word of God's speaking (Heb 1:1-2). He is the final expression of revelation both as historic event and divine Word as God himself takes on flesh and enters into the flow of history. His deed and word are one, and we cannot choose between them (John 10:37-38). Nothing more can be uncovered of God as God has manifested himself in person, so to speak. (This is why nothing is to be added to the Revelation of Jesus Christ: Rev 22:18-19; cf. also John 1:1, 2, 14; 14:6; 17:14.) Jesus Christ is the epitome of the revelation of God's person and will as well as the culmination of redemption. As such he is the center of both history and revelation and thus subject to pre-interpretation (OT) and post-interpretation (NT).<sup>7</sup> The only Christ is the Christ re-

<sup>5</sup>Defining "revelation" as the demonstration and sharing by God of his person, will and redemptive activity is a conscious attempt to say that revelation is both propositional and existential—that is, personal.

<sup>6</sup>It may be appropriate here to note that methodologically ontology (reality) is prior to epistemology (knowledge of reality). Thus in one sense we should not say that it is true because the Bible says it, but rather the Bible records it because it is true.

<sup>7</sup>Note in this regard especially Luke 24:24-27 and John 20:30-31.

vealed to us in Scripture. This written witness of the life of Christ is the extension of his spoken word. One cannot therefore today accept the authority of Christ's spoken word or understand his message without understanding and accepting the authority of the NT.

It is this authority of the NT that must seemingly settle the second of our three issues: apologetic methodology. This issue has been debated rather heatedly in evangelical circles for the past thirty years or so. I have no intention of reviewing that debate here.<sup>8</sup> It seems to me, however, that the debate between the evidentialists and presuppositionalists, empiricists and rationalists, historicists and revelationalists, must end in a both/and framework that does not inhabit one or the other polar region of truth. This attempt to maintain both poles simultaneously is uncomfortable because it will not be driven to either pole by promoters of logical consistency at the expense of actual reality. It is not, however, inherently contradictory but reflects the actuality of both man and God, both body and spirit, both fact and mind, both event and interpretation. It is the Biblical balance of NT evangelism and apologetics, seen here in a brief overview of the Luke-Acts material.

It is a given of Luke-Acts, as well as the entire Scriptures of course, that man must respond to God and that God graciously provides for man both physically and spiritually. It is this relationship between man and God that sets the tone for all other apologetical questions of method as I see it. For some, man can know nothing aright until he knows God, and thus God must be the epistemological starting point. But autonomous, fallen man cannot, because he will not, start with God. Thus the unbeliever and the believer are not simply morally exclusive of one another but intellectually disparate as all must be theistically presupposed. The other apologetic track believes fallen man can arrive at God from the non-god, that is, *a posteriori* argument from the world as it is to the perfect Creator, an hypothesis that Hume rightly believed dubious.

Calvin, I believe, sensed this dilemma:

Our wisdom, in so far as it ought to be deemed true and solid wisdom, consists almost entirely of two parts: the knowledge of God and the knowledge of ourselves. But as these are connected together by many ties, it is not easy to determine which of the two precedes, and gives birth to the other.<sup>9</sup>

Without quoting Calvin further, I believe that what he suggests in the following paragraphs is that in regard to personal identity and historical reality we of necessity must begin actually with ourselves, but in regard to ultimate meaning and eternal verities we must begin logically with God.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>8</sup>Two books, themselves with differing orientations, that have reviewed these various apologetic methodologies and perspectives recently are G. R. Lewis, *Testing Christianity's Truth Claims* (Chicago: Moody, 1976), and N. L. Geisler, *Christian Apologetics* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1976).

<sup>9</sup>J. Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (trans. H. Beveridge; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), I, 1, 1.

<sup>10</sup>This may not seem any different than when Van Til writes that if "the human consciousness must, in the nature of the case, always be the proximate starting point, it remains true that God is always the most basic and therefore the ultimate or final reference point in human interpretation," but I take the proximate starting point more seriously than Van Til does in his actual practice because of his denial of univocity in our analogical knowledge of God. C. Van Til, *The Defense of the Faith* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1972) 77.

This is what occurs, in one way or another, from the opening paragraph of Luke-Acts. Writing to Theophilus, Luke intends to emphasize “the things (facts/events) that have been fulfilled among us.” These “things” are the empirical facts concerning historical events that eyewitnesses have “handed down to us” so that Theophilus “may know the certainty of the things you have been taught.” We could get off on a very devious and discursive philosophical analysis of the problem of the subject and the object, and/or the problem of historical knowledge. But it is sufficient here simply to point out that the pragmatic experience of successful communication between individual subjects indicates that we adequately, if not exhaustively, “know” the objects of empirical experience in spite of the different retinal images (perceptions). In other words, as Christians we know the “why” of the complementariness of subjects and objects if not a complete and explicit explanation either scientifically or philosophically of the “how.”

Luke, and might we add John (John 20:30-31; 1 John 1:1-3), builds his case for the truthfulness of the Christian story on the basis of a definitive interpretation of historical events (objects) and the possibility of relating these facts (objects) intelligibly to his readers (subjects) or hearers (subjects). (Note Peter, in this regard, in light of his climactic appeal: “Know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ—this Jesus whom you crucified.”)<sup>11</sup> While we need explication of these issues both philosophically and hermeneutically, we must do our missiological tasks, like the apostles, in full assurance that the unbelieving mind is still made in the image of God and is capable of relating facts and interpreting historical events via evidence.

Evidence is never open to just any interpretation if it is claiming to be true. Interpretation must correspond to reality, which is ultimately the mind of God.<sup>12</sup> Man’s mind must simply follow God’s mind. This is exactly what Paul does on Mars’ Hill as recorded in Acts 17. The ontological common ground between his pagan hearers and himself is the fact and continuity of nature as well as the inherent religious- and transcendent-seeking faculties of the human species. These facts are not allowed to be interpreted by Paul in any other manner than on the basis of an infinite-personal God because neither is he in need of anything in light of having made the world, nor is he simply gold, silver or a stone since we are his offspring. While there is no explicit appeal to Scripture per se, Paul never drifts from a Scriptural understanding (or presupposition). While there are these common ground facets due to the ontological structure of created and thus conditioned being, Paul never forgets that fallen man does not have adequate epistemological tools without the meaning given to created reality by unconditioned Being, the revelation of the very mind of God himself. His exposition of their experience therefore is thoroughly Biblical and congruent with his subsequent statement on the meaning and significance of general revelation in Romans. Paul

<sup>11</sup>Jesus, similarly, innately connects event and interpretation in regard to both his pre-cross ministry (John 10:37-38) and the crucifixion experience itself from the context of OT pre-interpretation of these events (Luke 24:25-27, 44-47). Luke 24:45 is particularly significant: “Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures.” (Facts and minds do relate, as do events and interpretation.)

<sup>12</sup>A helpful paper at the national ETS meeting was delivered by Norman Geisler on December 28, 1979, entitled “Inerrancy and the Question of Truth,” in which he persuasively argued that the Bible’s theory of truth is that of correspondence to historical and/or ontological reality.

realized that there are common facts between believer and unbeliever because they are both God's creatures living in God's universe, but the unbeliever will not rightly interpret these facts because he lives without God and therefore lacks his definitive interpretation.

Paul did not stop with the building of bridges via what we might call cross-cultural ontological structures. Both prior to and concluding the Areopagus experience, Paul preached the climactic revelatory events of Christ and the resurrection. The majority responded in laughter. But some believed. It will always be the case, given man's willful hardness but God's gracious initiative. Our missiological endeavor, like any apologetical task, must always treat man with dignity and tact as the summit of God's creation, but the defeat of sin and the surrender of a willful autonomy will always be the work of the Holy Spirit who convicts the world "about sin, because men do not believe in me; about righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer; and about judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned" (John 16:9-11).

Only one last methodological (perhaps theological) problem can be briefly addressed before we turn our attention to the last facet of the both/and apologetic in regard to Christ and culture. If men laugh at the resurrection account as Paul presents it, can they understand anything concerning the truthfulness of the gospel prior to new birth? Seemingly the Holy Spirit convicts unbelievers (world) of sin, lack of righteousness, and the necessity of judgment if associated with a defeated ruler through the means of orderly and logical presentation of the gospel. Certainly this cannot happen to those who have no gospel proclaimed to them (Rom 10:12-15). Does such conviction mean that all so convicted will be saved? Perhaps so, but I find this unlikely. If not, then there must be some rational comprehension of the significance of the gospel, if not the acceptance of its actual truthfulness and accompanying spiritual insight and relevance, prior to regeneration.

This is of course denied by some presuppositionalists because of the ultimate self-authentication of Scripture as Scripture. Since I believe that there is no higher authority than God's written Word, I must allow it to be the ultimate authority even for itself or I deny what I say by what I do evangelistically and missiologically. But this does not necessitate an irrational fideism as seemingly advocated by some, because if self-authentication makes the concept and content of a God-inspired Scripture irrational prior to regeneration, it will still be irrational after regeneration and we are lost with either Kierkegaard or magic.<sup>13</sup> I believe we can affirm an intrinsic and ultimate self-authentication without making Scripture totally irrational for unbelievers as it is still true and evidential in our common world of creation's ontological structures that pertain to both objective facts and subjective minds—that is, events and interpretation. It is thus a problem of accepting evidence as true that is a problem of both the will and the affection (John 3:19: "Men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil"), and not that it "becomes" rational and true after regeneration.

Faith, then, refers to both the objective factual evidence that can be only probable and is the object of belief (*fides*) and the subjective response of the person who reaches out in trust (*fiducia*), leaving behind a self-willed egoism by

<sup>13</sup>Pascal warned us of "two extremes: to exclude reason, to admit reason only." These are the extremes at which evidentialists and presuppositionalists have often been found. *The Thought of Blaise Pascal* (New York: Doubleday, n.d.), no. 253.

means of a new and provided love of God, a return to theonomy from autonomy. While objective belief can only be probable, subjective affirmation is sealed in the certitude of the Holy Spirit.<sup>14</sup> Both apologetic traditions are correct. Belief based on historical evidence is only probable. But faith is not exhausted by belief, though it is a prerequisite of the existential dimension of trust. Faith as belief is rational (propositional word) but insufficient, given the experience of the demons (James 2:19). One must both comprehend the message and “throw one’s entire being out upon the Lord” (personal).<sup>15</sup> The latter is not possible without the work of the Holy Spirit in creating a new will and love by means of the new word provided in the gracious gift and work of Christ. Regeneration is not prior to faith as some would have it, but neither is faith totally the product of man. On the basis of a belief that desires to “turn” but cannot (Ps 85:4; Jer 31:18; Lam 5:21), God brings about a new birth, a new creation with a new orientation toward holiness and trust and away from sin and selfishness.

Much more needs to be said, but there is time for only one additional reference. Hebrews 11:1 (NIV) defines (?) faith thus: “Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.” The word for “sure” (KJV “assurance”) is Greek *hypostasis*, which refers to the apprehension of the reality by the individual. It denotes the subjective certitude provided by the Holy Spirit. The word for “certain” (Greek *elengchos*, KJV “evidence”) pertains to the factual basis of evidence and conviction upon which the subjective certitude is based. It is *fides* (a believing that) rather than *fiducia* (a believing in). Biblical faith is thus both belief and trust, both objective and subjective, both rationally propositional and existentially personal.<sup>16</sup> As Carl Henry has recently written, “the gospel is a message to be communicated and understood before it can be accepted or rejected.”<sup>17</sup>

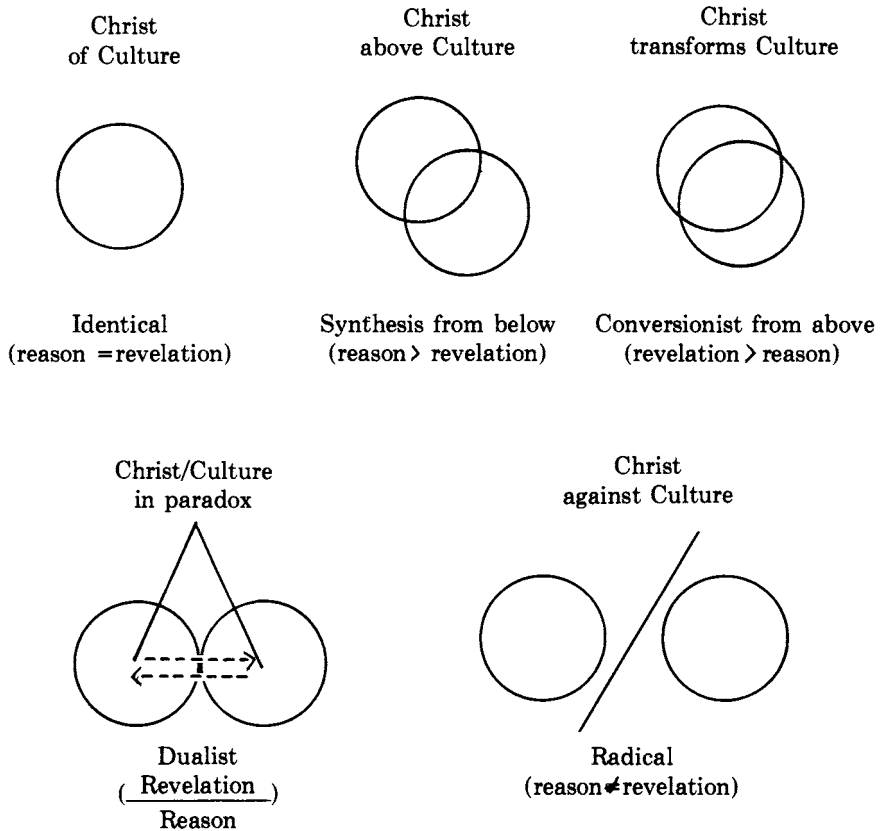
<sup>14</sup>I agree with Pascal’s understanding of faith when he wrote: “Faith indeed tells what the senses do not tell, but not the contrary of what they see. It is above them and not contrary to them.” *Ibid.*, no. 265.

<sup>15</sup>Note the compatibility with the previously explicated doctrine of Scripture. Henry similarly writes of knowledge and acceptance of such: “Although divine revelation opens to us the divine world of ideas, it must contend with the fact that the human mind is not merely passive in the acquisition of knowledge. Man’s knowing activity is conditioned *both* by the intrinsic nature *and* contingent state of his soul; it is qualified, *both* by man’s finitude *and* by the ethical disposition of his will. Knowledge is a function of the whole man. The soul must prepare for reception of the truth, and also embrace it.” C. F. H. Henry, *God, Revelation and Authority* (Waco: Word, 1976), 1. 328 (italics mine).

<sup>16</sup>Augustine is usually said to be a fideist because of his famous statement: “I believe in order to understand.” But this is a misreading of the intent of Augustine’s statement. Augustine also wrote the three following statements that address the balance and indicate that thought (belief, *fides* as used here) is prerequisite to faith. Thus in *On The Predestination of the Saints*, chap. 5, Augustine writes: “For no one believes anything unless he has before thought it worthy of belief. . . . It is yet necessary that everything which is believed should be believed *after* thought has preceded; although even belief itself is nothing else than to think with assent” (italics mine). Similarly in *Sermon 43* Augustine notes: “Nevertheless unless they *understand* what I am saying they *cannot believe*. Hence what he says is in some part true, ‘I would understand in order that I may believe.’ And I, too, am right when I say, as does the prophet, ‘Nay, believe in order that thou mayest understand.’ *We both speak the truth: We are in agreement*. Therefore, understand in order to believe; believe in order to understand. Here is a brief statement of how *we can accept both* without controversy. Understand in order that you may believe my word; believe in order that you may understand the word of God” (italics mine). Lastly, in *Letter 120* Augustine states: “God forbid that He should hate in us that faculty by which He made us superior to all other living beings. Therefore, we must refuse so to believe as not to receive or seek a reason for our belief, since we could not believe at all if we did not have rational souls.”

<sup>17</sup>C. F. H. Henry, “An Agenda for the 1980’s,” *Christianity Today* 24 (January 4, 1980) 27.

We turn to the third dimension of significance for missiological tasks, which is the relationship of the Christian to his cultural and political milieu. Obviously this also is not a new issue. Beginning with the many comments concerning the "world" as the dominion of Satan in the Pauline epistles and the Johannine corpus, through the many theological and Biblical studies on the subject in the history of the Church (perhaps Augustine's *The City of God* is the most famous), we come to Richard Niebuhr's identification of five primary perspectives in his classic *Christ and Culture*. These perspectives can be represented thus:



The Christ-of-culture theme may be dismissed, as most likely is also the case for the Christ-above-culture motif. Let us thus direct our attention to the remaining three outlooks that at least in some degree Niebuhr identifies with the three main divisions of the Reformation.

Foundational to the so-called Calvinistic and Lutheran solutions to the relationship of Christ and culture is the radical separation of the two in men such as Tertullian and various separatist movements throughout history, partially exemplified in the left wing of the Reformation. It takes the split between the kingdom of light and the kingdom of darkness so severely that it forgets that the created realm is still ultimately God's and not Satan's. Man, and especially the renewed



man, is the vice-regent in God's creation. We simply cannot throw away the concern for creation and culture because both have been subsumed under the power of sin and thus manifest both disease and perversion. Even so-called separatist societies create their own culture in their new society, since man can no more escape cultural development and societal obligations than the general revelation itself. As Niebuhr noted, the Christ-against-culture motif is impossible since

it affirms in words what it denies in action; namely, the possibility of sole dependence on Jesus Christ to the exclusion of culture. Christ claims no man purely as a natural being, but always as one who has become human in a culture, who is not only in culture, but into whom culture has penetrated. Man not only speaks but thinks with the aid of the language of culture.<sup>18</sup>

More should be said of such a radical misunderstanding of Christ's prayer that we be "in but not of the world." But we hurry on to considerably more optimistic souls who anticipate the transformation of culture in history as "the eschatological future" becomes for them "an eschatological present."<sup>19</sup> While my eschatological understanding makes a greater distinction in the "already and the not yet" than this, the positive emphasis here on creation makes it much easier to accept the world now because it is ultimately God's, if penultimately Satan's. Because of the reality of the latter's domain, however, I cannot so glibly accept the possibility of the actual conversion of culture per se in the time "between the times." Apparently Niebuhr's examples of such universalistic tendencies also experienced difficulty, for we must posit two different men as the author of the gospel of John (taken by Niebuhr as primarily a conversionist) and 1 John (taken by Niebuhr to be a radical separatist) if we are to have a NT example of such optimism.<sup>20</sup> Niebuhr himself notes the difficulty of understanding John's gospel in a conversionist manner when he states that his "universalistic note is accompanied by a particularist tendency," concluding that the fourth gospel combines a "conversionist *motif* with the separation of the Christ-against-culture school of thought."<sup>21</sup> Like Augustine, the Johannine corpus can be more harmoniously understood internally, and externally with Pauline thought, if comprehended as a both/and dualism.

The dualist stands midway between the radical and the conversionist. Like both, he realizes the depravity of the human condition and thus the theoretical and potential wickedness of all cultural and societal creations and perspectives that are wrought in autonomy from the Creator. Unlike the radical, the dualist is

<sup>18</sup>H. R. Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture* (New York: Harper, 1951) 69. K. Bockmuhl states this dilemma very pointedly for "private separatism" or "parallelistic dualism" when he asks: "Could it be that this attitude of separation from society is responsible for the paradox that the catastrophic decay of morals in the modern world is pioneered by the same segment of humanity that boasts the highest percentage of Christians, church-attendance, even born-again believers? Is it that they exercise their faith and ethos strictly in private, to an extent that has never been known in the history of Christianity?" *Christianity Today* 23 (August 17, 1979) 52.

<sup>19</sup>Niebuhr, *Culture*, 195.

<sup>20</sup>*Ibid.*, 49, 197-205.

<sup>21</sup>*Ibid.*, 204-205. Niebuhr has similar difficulties with so classifying Augustine, as he partially admits, in light of Augustine's radical and dualist inclinations as evidenced by his monasticism and his opposition between the city of God and the city of man. I believe these difficulties can be satisfactorily solved by seeing Augustine as a both/and dualist.

not so naive as to believe he can escape all manifestations of worldly culture. He is to be in the world, if not of it. The believer priest is to represent the world to the God who claims the world. But because this is the world that stubbornly denies his claims, it does not mean that the totality of culture will ever be transformed this side of the *eschaton* or that there can be a totally conversionist dimension even in the community of faith. The world, like the poor, we will always have with us until the end. Glimpses of a redeemed culture and society should be manifest in the redeemed community, but culture, like creation, waits to "be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now. And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of the body" (Rom 8:21-23 *NASB*).

There is thus the new creation and the old fallen creation. Each is alongside the other in the "already," which is not the "not yet," the *eschaton*. As Niebuhr comments on Paul:

The new life, moreover, was not simply a promise and a hope but a present reality, evident in the ability of men to call upon God as their Father and to bring forth fruits of the spirit of Christ within them and their community. . . . [But] his experience with Galatian and Corinthian, with Judaizing and spiritualizing Christians had taught him . . . that the anti-Christian spirit could not be evaded by any means of isolation from pagan culture.<sup>22</sup>

The fact that there are always two domains does not preclude their interrelationship, as the prime dualist, Luther, is frequently understood as having taught. Rather, because the dualist, as Niebuhr correctly notes, is an existential thinker, "Luther's answer to the Christ-and-culture question was that of a dynamic, dialectical thinker."<sup>23</sup> While there is a sort of parallelistic dualism that is no better than the radical isolation of Christ and culture that has been practiced both in European Lutheranism and some dimensions of American evangelicalism, this is not what is meant here, nor by Luther, by a both/and dualism, or Christ-and-culture in paradox à la Niebuhr. As Niebuhr himself writes of Luther:

It is a great error to confuse the parallelistic dualism of separated spiritual and temporal life with the interactionism of Luther's gospel of faith in Christ working by love in the world of culture.<sup>24</sup>

It was in this vein of an interactionistic dualism, never to be totally successful or complete in the "between times" but nevertheless a preservative and tasty salt as well as an effective beam of the great Light, that I wrote a number of years ago:

The moderating view between these two outlooks (radical separation of the two realms and the subsequent rejection of political structures, or the subsuming of the one under the other, and vice versa) has been to divide the realms of God and Caesar into two neat separate packages. But this is far from being as simple as some

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., 162-163. This allusion to the anti-Christian spirit by Niebuhr seemingly allows room for John to be understood as a both/and dualist as well as Paul in light of 1 John 2:18-29; 4:1-6. See my article, "The Infilling of the Holy Spirit," *RefR* 28 (Spring 1975) 157-170, esp. 166-169, for a both/and interpretation of these verses in 1 John.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., 150, 179.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., 179.

Christians have thought. The societal complexities of modern life make such packaging impossible. A new conceptual approach is needed! An approach that somehow will preserve the two realms, but at the same time acknowledge that spiritual and secular interests do not only overlap, but *coincide*.<sup>25</sup>

The new community is a holy people "set apart" for God with provisions of a new life, new word, new love—in fact, a new Master.<sup>26</sup> We are a people mandated to mission rather than coddled in seclusion, a people who are to live "before God at all times and in all places" rather than lead double lives in segregated compartments of secularity and religiosity. It means we must not only recognize the realm of culture in which the Scriptures originated but also the necessity of contextualizing it to contemporary cultures, an ongoing ecclesiological and missiological task. John Jefferson Davis contends that if systematic theology is defined as "systematic reflection on Scripture and the contemporary context of ministry in mutual relation, with Scripture as the norm," then an integral link is forged between systematics and ministry" (might I add "Christ and culture").<sup>27</sup>

Hopefully this paper sets some prerequisite parameters for all missiological endeavors. The first emphasis will be readily accepted, while the latter two will be more extensively questioned and perhaps even heatedly debated. But I doubt if the uncomfortable apologetic will crumble in a universe of both Creator and created, both infinite and finite, both absolute and contingent, both unconditioned and conditioned. With J. B. Phillips, the both/and has the "ring of truth."<sup>28</sup>

<sup>25</sup>"The New Testament Doctrine of the State," *JETS* 12 (Fall 1969) 209. Thomas W. Gillespie writes that because the laity (*laos*) of the NT is to be identified with the people of God (Israel) of the OT as seen by means of the LXX, and because of the indwelling presence of God in each individual body-temple (1 Cor 6:19-20), "God's temple-presence as a people-presence means that the profane (from the Latin *profanus*, meaning 'before the temple') recedes before the advance of the community in its ministry to the world. Because God is where the people are, corporately or individually, wherever they are becomes a sacred place. Every activity of this people in the world, whether public or private, business or pleasure, labor or leisure, social or political, is a religious activity. For religion is understood by this people as life that is lived before God in faith. There is no domain within the various dimensions of God's good creation which are by definition 'off limits' or 'out of bounds' to the people of God. The world of economics and politics, of medicine and law, of art and music, of management and labor, of education and research, is the proper sphere of sacred service." T. W. Gillespie, "The Laity in Biblical Perspective," *TToday* 36 (October 1979) 320.

<sup>26</sup>I have attempted to at least seminally describe this in *Religious Ministry in a Transcendentless Culture* (Washington, DC: University Press of America, 1980).

<sup>27</sup>J. J. Davis, "Contextualization as Hermeneutic: Methodological Issues for Evangelical Theology in Cross-Cultural Perspective" (paper delivered at the ETS annual meeting on December 28, 1979, at Bethel Theological Seminary in Saint Paul, MN).

<sup>28</sup>J. B. Phillips, *Ring of Truth* (New York: Macmillan, 1967) 105.