

Man

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Christian Anthropology

- “The depths of depravity to which man has fallen, as shown in the vignette above, demonstrate the need for divine intervention.
- Anthropology = *anthropo* (man) + *logos* (reason)—study of man
- Christian anthropology..says man is **created**, the object of God’s purposeful love. Its **body theology** upholds the “permanent integrity of the human body as given in creation, affirmed in the incarnation of Jesus Christ, nourished in the sacraments of the Christian churches, and to be glorified in the resurrection of the body” (Nelson)
- Man is **culture-creating** in history, performing acts that coincide with God’s creative and redemptive purposes.
 - Furthermore, man is **social** and **political**, not merely individualistic; **church life** is his model.
 - Body theology affirms man’s human sexuality and with it erotic love.
 - Social equality is anchored in God’s acceptance of all persons without discrimination.
 - Linked to nature, man is responsible for its protection and ecology.
 - Man is a **moral being**, yet “unfulfilled, frail and to be completed by resurrection life. He is **fallen**, leading to disorders in the self and society but **recoverable** through the perfect man, Christ”(Dyson)

We will explore the implications of these assertions.

What is Culture?

- “the artificial, secondary environment which man superimposes on the natural environment. It comprises language, habits, ideas, beliefs, customs, social organization, inherited artifacts, technical processes and values. “ (Malinowski) [It is] “a corporate undertaking in which people succeed in establishing a distinctive style of living based on common values [preferences?]” (Jenkins)
- Throughout Israel's history she “becomes vulnerable to cultural complacency which besets all settled societies, forever turning faith into culture-religion.
- The essence of Israel's original faith “lay in her dependence on her Lord and her continual openness to fresh disclosures of his will from the one who is only really known in the commitment of venture and into the unknown. Once that openness was lost, Israel had no barrier against cultural assimilation to the nations around her and no distinctive purpose, no power of self-criticism.”

- “The lessons about culture are clear: we must always love our Lord more than the cultural gifts given to us.
 - Jesus grew up within Jewish culture, yet rejected the cultural forms by which Israel expressed herself. In fact, these cultural forms became barriers against entering God’s kingdom.
 - Paul also rejected these cultural forms. For him, “the possession of the gifts of the Spirit means a rejection of the old patterns and a new outburst of cultural creativity”
- Yet what is man divorced from his culture?
 - Man can form a new culture, but can he eschew culture entirely?
 - Is culture necessarily bad?
 - New Testament Christian socialism
 - Monasticism
 - utopian communities

Christ and Culture

1. Book based on 1949 lecture series by Richard Niebuhr at Austin Seminar.
2. Two thousand year struggle by Christians to decide what it means to be faithful disciples

The book has seven chapters:

- The Enduring Problem
 - The Problem
 - Toward a Definition of Christ
 - Toward a Definition of Culture
 - The Typical Answers
- Christ Against Culture
 - The New People and “the World”
 - Tolstoy’s Rejection of Culture
 - A Necessary and Inadequate Position
 - Theological Problems
- The Christ of Culture
 - Accommodation to the Culture in Gnosticism and Abelard
 - “Culture-Protestantism and A. Ritschl
 - In Defense of Cultural Faith
 - Theological Objections
- Christ Above Culture
 - The Church of the Center
 - The Synthesis of Christ and Culture
 - Synthesis in Question
- Christ and Culture in Paradox
 - The Theology of the Dualists
 - The Dualistic Motif in Paul and Marcion
 - Dualism in Luther and Modern Times
 - The Virtues and Vices of Dualism
- Christ the Transformer of Culture
 - Theological Convictions
 - The Conversion Motif in the Fourth Gospel
 - Augustine and the Conversion of Culture
 - The Views of F. D. Maurice
- A “Concluding Unscientific Postscript”
 - Conclusion in Decision
 - The Relativism of Faith
 - Social Existentialism
 - Freedom in Dependence

From his study of theology and movements of Christian thought Niebuhr abstracts five approaches that meaningfully address the enduring problem:

“Five sorts of answers are distinguished, of which three are closely related to each other as belonging to that median type in which both Christ and culture are distinguished and affirmed; yet strange family resemblances may be found along the whole scale.”

“Answers of the first type emphasize the *opposition* between Christ and culture. Whatever may be the customs of the society in which the Christian lives, and whatever the human achievements it conserves, Christ is seen as opposed to them, so that he confronts men with the challenge of an “either-or” decision.” [**Christ Against Culture**]

“Recognition of a fundamental *agreement* between Christ and culture is typical of the answers offered by a second group. In them Jesus often appears as a great hero of human culture history; his life and teachings are regarded as the greatest human achievement; in him, it is believed, the aspirations of men toward their values are brought to a point of culmination; he confirms what is best in the past, and guides the process of civilization to its proper goal...” [**Christ in Culture**]

“Three other typical answers agree with each other in seeking to maintain the great differences between the two principles and in undertaking to hold them together in some unity. They are distinguished from each other by the manner in which each attempts to combine the two authorities. One of them, our third type, understands Christ’s relation to culture somewhat as the men of the second group do: he is the fulfillment of cultural aspirations and the restorer of the institutions of true society. Yet there is in him something that neither arises out of culture nor contributes directly to it. He is discontinuous as well as continuous with social life and its culture. ...Christ enters into life from above with gifts which human aspiration has not envisioned and which human effort cannot attain unless he relates men to a supernatural society and a new value-center. Christ is, indeed, a Christ of culture, but he is also a ***Christ above culture***.”--Niebuhr

“Another group of median answers constitutes our fourth type. In these the duality and inescapable authority of both Christ and culture are recognized, but the opposition between them is also accepted. To those who answer the question in this way it appears that Christians throughout life are subject to the tension that accompanies obedience to two authorities who do not agree yet must both be obeyed. They refuse to accommodate the claims of Christ to those of secular society, as in their estimation, men in the second and third groups do. So they are like the “Christ-against-culture” believers, yet differ from them in the conviction that obedience to God requires obedience to the institutions of society and loyalty to its members as well as obedience to a Christ who sits in judgment on that society.”--Niebuhr **[Christ and Culture Paradox]**

“Finally, as the fifth type in the general series and as the third of the mediating answers, there is the ***conversionist*** solution. Those who offer it understand with the members of the first and the fourth groups that human nature is fallen or perverted, and that this perversion not only appears in culture but is transmitted by it. Hence the opposition between Christ and all human institutions and customs is to be recognized. Yet the antithesis does not lead either to Christian separation from the world as with the first group, or to mere endurance in the expectation of a transhistorical salvation, as with the fourth. Christ is seen as the converter of man in his culture and society, not apart from these, for there is no nature without culture and no turning of men from self and idols to God save in society. “--Niebuhr

Christ against Culture

“uncompromisingly asserts the sole authority of Christ over the Christian and resolutely rejects culture’s claims to loyalty.” Christians who adhere to this approach draw a sharp line between the redeemed people of God and fallen society and culture...Christian moral commitments find expression primarily in the church, Christian institutions, or individual lives. Adherents have few expectations about influencing the world.

- Tertullian—“What has Athens to do with Jerusalem?”
- Medieval Monasticism and Mysticism
- Anabaptist Movements—“The Mennonites have come to represent the attitude [Christ against] most purely, since they not only renounce all participation in politics and refuse to be drawn into military service, but follow their own distinctive customs and regulations in economics and education. (Schleitheim Confession of 1527)” John Howard Yoder argues Niebuhr misperceived Mennonite motivations.
- Tolstoy—sold all he had and gave to the poor. Rejected the state and the church for being a vassal of the state

Evaluation of Christ Against Culture

- Niebuhr: necessary but inadequate, as it abdicates “responsible engagement in cultural tasks.”
- Withdrawal approach is not faithful to the great commission nor to be the salt and light of the earth.
- “Rather than seeking a discerning ethical stance amid the complexities of life, these Christians seek the easier path—all or nothing.”
- Denies creation theology. “These believers are certainly right to emphasize the special and distinct work of God within the believing community, the church, but God has not and will not abdicate divine reign over the good world he created.”

Christ of Culture

“Adherents see no tension between the best of culture and the heart of Christian thought and values, for both are expressions of God’s goodness. Hence, one can simultaneously embrace faith and many societal and cultural norms with a minimal sense of dissonance...In theology this means one can wrap the faith in the language of science, psychology, philosophy, or sociology without tension. In social ethics, one can embrace societal structures as vehicles for expressing or inducing the kingdom of God...Jesus is, therefore, often seen as the great reformer, philosopher, and educator whose teaching and life are commensurate with the larger world.”

- Peter Abelard—Jesus compatible with Greek philosophers and his death was a moral example.
- Cultural Protestantism (Classical Liberalism)
- Harry Emerson Fosdick—“It’s not a question of a new theology or old, but a question of a new theology or no theology.” “The modernists, as they were sometimes called, stressed the immanence of God in the world, working hand in hand with human efforts to make a better world: ‘Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of man’” “Whenever Christians attempt to equate their faith with a particular political or economic system, remnants of this type exist.”
- Perspective endorses use of cultural affectations for evangelism (Christian Rock music, high tech worship, “Schuller is reluctant to use the traditional language of sin and instead focuses on self-esteem that the gospel can bring to people.”)

Evaluation of Christ of Culture

“While there are limits to contextualization, all forms of Christianity are contextualized, and this approach recognizes such. [But] Niebuhr points out that in this embrace of culture and society, the Christian faith is distorted and the specter of false gods emerges: ‘A God without wrath brought men without sin into a kingdom with judgment through the ministrations of a Christ without a cross.’”

Difficult “to critique culture from a reality beyond the culture...Barth was appalled that many of his former teachers, seeped in a theological liberalism without transcendence, lacked the ethical framework and moral power to stand against the evils of Nazism.”

The Middle Ground

- The three intermediary positions are the synthesist, Christ Above, [Corwin calls this Medieval Catholic position] the dualist, Christ and Culture in Paradox, [Corwin ignores this type] and the conversionist, Christ the Transformer of Culture. They share many perspectives that separate their group from the end positions, but each distinguishes themselves from each other as well.
- The center rejects both the anti-cultural radicals and the accommodators of Christ to culture for distorting the gospel revelation. In seeking a middle ground they seek a more complex understanding of the Christ-culture issues.
- The Center finds a theological viewpoint on the Christ-culture question as subsumed in the relationship of God and man. “Jesus Christ is the Son of God, the Father Almighty who created heaven and earth.... Christ and the world cannot be simply opposed to each other” —the world is the Father’s creation. Culture is the consequence of the created order, hence cannot be viewed as godless.

The synthesist has a distinct viewpoint

“The synthesist affirms both Christ and culture, as one who confesses a Lord who is both of this world and of the other. [But] there is in the synthesist’s view a gap between Christ and culture that accommodation Christianity never takes seriously enough, and that radicalism does not try to overcome”

“Hence, when he affirms both Christ and culture, he does so as one who knows that the Christ who requires his loyalty is greater and more complex in character than the easier reconciliations envisage.”

“Something of the same sort is true of his understanding of culture; which is both divine and human in its origin, both holy and sinful, a realm of both necessity and freedom, and one to which both reason and revelation apply. As his understanding of the meaning of Christ separates him from the cultural believer, so his appreciation of culture divides him from the radical.” --**Neibuhr**

The synthesist attempts to establish a systematic response that supplies a unifying understanding of the duality, a response that rationalizes the duality. Niebuhr presents **Clement of Alexandria** as a 2nd century synthesist and **Thomas Aquinas** as a thirteenth century synthesist. In the similarities of their arguments we discern the distinctiveness of this approach. It argues that from the goodness of creation and a rational extrapolation of God's intentions for man in that creation, guided by the additional revelations of Jesus Christ, Christians can deduce the pathway that they are meant to tread ("Some are called to live in the world with its mix of good and evil; others are called to leave it for the sake of the kingdom and the world itself.")

Evaluation of Christ Above Culture

- “As Niebuhr puts it, ‘The effort to bring Christ and culture, God’s work and man’s the temporal and the eternal, law and grace, into one system of thought and practice tends, perhaps inevitably, to the absolutizing of what is relative, the reduction of the infinite to a finite form.’ Cultural and societal activities are then too easily equated with God’s activity.
- What is, is right (cultural conservatism)
- “There has always been an assumption among its adherents that humanity and culture, while fallen, retain great moral capacity.” This attitude within the Roman Catholic church engendered the Protestant Reformation.
- “In practice, a two-tiered system of spirituality and morality tends to let most Christians off too easily. It does not generate a strong commitment among all believers that they are called by God to live for God’s glory and to be involved in the mission of the church.

Christ and Culture in Paradox

“Because all human works are corrupt, culture itself is badly askew. The solution to sinful society, however, is not withdrawal; the solution is God’s grace in the midst of fallen society. Dualists...know that they belong to the world and that there is no escape from its corruption...Living in the midst of the fallen world without the possibility of moral perfection, these Christians accept the paradox of being simultaneously committed to Christ and to the fallen structures of society.”

- Martin Luther—Christians live simultaneously in the kingdom of the world and the kingdom of God, and each has a different ethic. “The two kingdoms are not to be confused and are essentially not at odds with each other. Rather, they point to separate spheres of life in which humans operate...Luther believed that one must live with the tension inherent in being a member of these two kingdoms; there is no escape to a land of moral perfection. Nor can one expect to transform the earthly kingdom into the kingdom of God. The solution to the paradox is God’s grace.”
- Reinhold Niebuhr—*Moral Man and Immoral Society*. “He argued that in collective social reality, power struggles between groups are so great that we cannot apply personal ethical norms directly...For Niebuhr, Jesus’ ethic was therefore not directly applicable to social ethics...The most we can hope for in politics, economics, and international affairs is a relative justice, a tolerable harmony between interests and claims of the various groups.”

Evaluation of Dualism

Niebuhr concludes that the dualistic motif “mirrors the actual struggles of the Christian who lives ‘between the times,’ and who in the midst of this conflict in the time of grace cannot presume to live by the ethics of that time of glory for which he ardently hopes.”

BUT

- too great a separation of the two kingdoms can easily precondition people merely to accept the way things are.”
- “Christian holiness, an extension of redemption in Christ, is an integral part of Christian ethics. It calls individuals to move beyond the way things are and challenges the unrighteousness and injustice of culture. Such ethical holiness is a missing ingredient in the dualist framework.

Conversionist Theological Position

“Though they hold fast to the radical distinctions between God's work in Christ and man's work in culture, they do not take the road of exclusive Christianity into isolation from civilization, or reject its institutions with Tolstoyan bitterness. Though they accept their station in society with its duties in obedience to their Lord, they do not seek to modify Jesus Christ's sharp judgment of the world and all its ways. [In Christology] they refer to the Redeemer more than to the giver of a new law, and to the God whom men encounter more than to the representative of the best spiritual resources in humanity...In their understanding of sin they are more like dualists than synthesists. They note that it is deeply rooted in the human soul, that it pervades all man's work, and that there are no gradations of corruption, however various its symptoms...What distinguishes conversionists from dualists is their more positive and hopeful attitude toward culture. “--**Niebuhr**

The Conversionist Motif Has Been in the Mainstream of the Church From the Beginning

Where St. Paul was taken to speak for dualists, St. John is the earliest representative of the conversionist viewpoint. “It begins where in a sense Paul ends, with the genesis of the Word and the origin of all things through him. Without him nothing has been created; the world made through him is his home...There is no longer any suggestion here that the physical or material as such is subject to a special wrath of God, or that man, being carnal, is sold under sin. The creation, which is fundamentally good as it comes from God though his Word, becomes self-contradictory and God-contradictory in its response to God. God loves the world in His creating and redeeming action; the world responds to that love with denial of its actuality and with hatred of the Word.” —**Niebuhr**

- Charles Wesley "shares with Paul, John, Luther, Augustine, and Calvin the understanding that Christ is not new lawgiver who separates a new people from the old by giving them the constitution for a new kind of culture. Christ is for Wesley the transformer of life; he justifies men by giving them faith; he deals with the sources of human action; he makes no distinctions between the moral and the immoral citizens of human commonwealths, in convicting all of self-love and in opening to all the life of freedom in response to God's forgiving love." —**Niebuhr**

- “There is great variety in the specific goals and ideals of adherents to the transformer motif, and nowhere is that more evident than in the contrast between two recent expressions: liberation theology and the political activities of what is commonly called the religious right.”

Evaluation of Christ the Transformer of Culture

- “Fails to do justice to the covenantal nature of biblical ethics. That is, it fails to appreciate that while biblical ethics has a potential role outside the faith and the acceptance of divine revelation, its primary focus is those who believe. “
- Adherents have sought to use the world’s means to effect transformation, without recognizing the tensions this creates.
- “tendency to equate particular social and political agendas with God’s kingdom..thus pushing them toward a Christ of culture stance.” “Christians are deluded if we think we will change our culture solely through political power.” —Ed Dobson (Focus on the Family)

Conclusion

“The relationship between Christ and culture is one of the most significant elements in Christian moral discernment... Because the world is ultimately God’s and the result of a good creation, Jesus calls us to live within the world. But because that world is fallen, there is the constant threat that God’s redemptive work will be thwarted, even within those who have embraced redemption in Christ. Therefore, Jesus calls believers to a sanctified life within the world, to a character and pattern of behavior that is distinct. Christians will not reach perfection in this world, and we cannot escape the moral ambiguities and complexities that inevitably face us in a broken, sinful society. But within that world, we are called by God to a life of holiness and faithfulness that seeks to bear witness to God’s created order, the redemptive work in Christ, and Christ’s coming kingdom, when all things will be made new.”

autonomy, heteronomy, and theonomy

"The words "autonomy", "heteronomy", and "theonomy" answer the question of the nomos or the law of life in three different ways:

- **Autonomy** asserts that man as the bearer of universal reason is the source and measure of culture and religion-that he is his own law.
- **Heteronomy** asserts that man, being unable to act according to universal reason, must be subjected to law, strange and superior to him.
- **Theonomy** asserts that the superior law is, at the same time, the innermost law of man himself, rooted in the divine ground which is man's own ground: the law of life transcends man, although it is, at the same time, his own.

Applying these concepts to the relation between religion and culture, we called an autonomous culture the attempt to create the forms of personal and social life without any reference to something ultimate and unconditional, following only the demands of theoretical and practical rationality. A heteronomous culture, on the other hand, subjects the forms and laws of thinking and acting to authoritative criteria of an ecclesiastical religion, or a political quasi-religion, even at the price of destroying the structures of rationality. A theonomous culture expresses in its creations an ultimate concern and a transcending meaning not as something strange but as its own spiritual ground". --Tillich

Tillich was anxious to stress that theonomy was not the negation of autonomy, as such it did not attempt to suppress autonomy or its freedom of creativity. Heteronomy, on the other hand undermines creative freedom and the humanity of mankind and it imposes an alien law, religious or secular, on the mind of the person. Honesty and truth and dignity are destroyed by heteronomy and its symbol is the "terror" exercised by absolute churches or absolute states. Theonomy does not stand against autonomy as does heteronomy. Both autonomy and heteronomy are rooted in theonomy, and both go astray when their unity is broken. Genuine heteronomy claims to speak in the name of the ground of being, and therefore in an unconditional and ultimate way. Theonomy on the other hand does not mean the acceptance of divine law imposed on reason by a highest authority. Theonomy is autonomous reason united with its own depth.

In trying to characterise theonomy, Tillich recognized that theonomy possessed three qualities. The first quality of a theonomous culture is in its communication of the experience of holiness which he understands to be the expression of something ultimate in being and meaning in all of culture's creations. The second quality is the affirmation of the autonomous forms of the creative process. Theonomy is absent where, in the name of the holy, a valid demand for justice is rejected, or a valid act of personal self-determination is prevented by a sacred tradition, or a new style of artistic creation is suppressed in the name of assumedly eternal forms of expressiveness. In these cases theonomy is distorted into heteronomy. This is because the element of autonomy is removed. Autonomy is here interpreted as the freedom which characterizes the human spirit and it is closely allied to the divine Spirit which is seen to be repressed. When this happens autonomy may break through and suppress heteronomy and also theonomy. The third quality, or characteristic of theonomy is its permanent struggle against an independent heteronomy and an independent autonomy. These are seen as elements within theonomy, because, as Langdon Gilkey noted, theonomy is posterior to both. www.jspencer.com.au/dissertation/chapter.2.htm

The Course of American Diplomacy
**THEONOMY,
AUTONOMY,
& HETERONOMY**

by J. K. Sweeney

"Will the United States become again a theonomous society, will the existing heteronomy continue, or will autonomy become the cynosure of American life?"

A theonomous United States had placed its faith in a benevolent providence that protected fools and Americans on the international stage while at home an "invisible hand" functioned to lead "the private interests and passions of men" in that direction "which is most agreeable to the interest of the whole society."¹² In the depression decade, however, the United States abandoned the openness of the conditional to the dynamic presence of the unconditional – for what Tillich terms autonomy. Autonomy is "the acceptance of the structures and laws of reality as they are present in the human mind and in its structures and laws." Thus, an autonomous society "replaces mystical nature with rational nature" and "constitutes communities on the basis of purpose, and morality on the basis of individual perfection.... It makes religion a matter of personal decision and makes the inner life of the individual dependent upon itself."¹³ The shift from theonomy to autonomy was, of course, a natural development, for theonomy and autonomy are not opposed in the sense of thesis and antithesis, but in the dualistic manner of *Yin* and *Yang*. Thus, autonomy is the latent principal present in every theonomy.

The self-serving generosity of the Marshall Plan, Point Four, and the Alliance for Progress was accompanied by crusades against the powers of darkness in China, Greece, Turkey, Korea, Iran, Guatemala, Vietnam, and the whole of the Middle East. However, an autonomous culture does not offer as rich an existence as a theonomous one, it is in fact the pale shadow of the past theonomy. The history of autonomous cultures is thus one of a continuous waste of spiritual substance. Therefore, the United States dissipated its spiritual substance whilst pursuing a policy of benevolent perfectionism. A nation that once proudly proclaimed that all "are created equal" engaged in acrimonious debates about who was entitled to enjoy the unalienable rights of life, liberty and property. The national government was increasingly perceived as either "a rogue elephant wandering loose across the countryside [or] a passive bystander in the midst of the great events affecting the country."

In such a situation, with the nation turning circles "like a giant ship whose rudder was stuck" Americans felt suffocated and frustrated as "their freedom to act on matters they faced each day was increasingly circumscribed." It was only natural, therefore, that many should look with favor upon an earlier bucolic existence when God was in heaven and all seemed right with the world—in short, the good old days. Unfortunately, cultures that attempt to restore a theonomous situation, realizing that autonomy is deficient, will achieve, at best, only limited success. More than likely, the result will be heteronomy, for the autonomous road needs must be traveled until that moment a new theonomy appears. Any attempt to force the creation of a new theonomy will be unsuccessful in that it amounts to a negation of autonomy, an attempt to suppress it and its freedom of creativity. It "imposes an alien law, religious or secular, on man's mind" and thereby "destroys the honesty of truth and the dignity of the moral personality."

“There will always be tension between new cultural symbols (*autonomy*) and old (*heteronomy*), but when the best of both is preserved the *theonomy* is at work, melding them together into something that liberates man. In a new burst of freedom, emerging autonomy creates stresses in the economy and the environment, thereby calling forth a new heteronomy: civil unrest”

What is that to me?

I will not suppress an inner drive for meaning, or be discouraged when resisted, but watch theonomy at work, creating what I could never do alone.

19. Postmodernism

“In the twenty-first century the church comes face to face with an unseen, un-coded, leaderless heteronomy called postmodernism.”
..In contrast to the Enlightenment and Modernism, post-modernism is nihilistic [life is without objective meaning, purpose, or intrinsic value. Moral nihilists assert that morality does not inherently exist, and that any established moral values are abstractly contrived.] and atheistic. It denies the possibility of universal moral precepts, rules and principles; instead it stresses a multiplicity of perspectives. It is pessimistic in its hopes, is holistic in spite of being radically relative and pluralistic, stresses the local and communitarian, and doubts that there are any over-arching or unifying myths or narratives. Popular culture films and music are often postmodern.” --Roderick Leupp

Postmodernism is not a movement but rather a pervasive spirit of our age. Corwin likens it to Brahman and Vedanta Monism of Hinduism.

What is that to me?

Be less vague, more precise. Never say “Yes” when you mean “No.” Affirm the good. Admit the bad.

20. Evil

- “As darkness is the absence of light, and cold the absence of heat, so evil is the absence of good. When men turn from good, evil happens.”
 - this is a theological conundrum. For those who have no faith, evil is no problem; it is the way things are. Indeed, the existence of evil is one of the atheological proofs that God does not exist!
- Corwin presents four approaches to rationalizing evil: Evil as non-being, the dualistic view, the Despotic view, and the Moral Theory of evil.
 - God is good, those less than God less good, and the farther we are removed from God the absence of the good is the definition of evil (Thomas Aquinas and Plato).
 - Zoroastrianism posited the world as a struggle between light and darkness, between good and evil. C.S. Lewis replied “the difficulty with dualism is that it gives evil a positive, substantive, self-consistent nature like that of good. What makes good better or more preferred than evil? ...good should be able to exist on its own while evil requires the good on which it is parasitic in order to continue its parasitic existence.”
 - “If God is God, how can we dispute his wisdom in making things the way they are?” (Barth) There is no problem of evil: what is, is right and good because God wills it.
 - This seems to leave little room for God’s compassion.
 - this seems to be “might is right” “Rightness” is not something God does (perfectly) but ANYTHING God does is by definition “right”
 - Goodness must be freely chosen, God cannot create it, he can only create the possibility for it to exist. “The creation of a world in which this end was possible involved three things, which constitute the problem of evil: **pain, suffering, and moral evil.**”
 - pain is a biological safeguard
 - suffering builds character
 - “What we construe as evil may be part of God’s plan for conforming us to the image of his Son. We know that we ourselves are” the problem of evil and also that through the unmerited grace of God the problem has been solved...the ultimate solution of the problem of evil must lie in the fact that the God who created the world is also the God who has redeemed it.”

21 & 22. Pilgrimage

“Postmodernism creates a purposeless and meaningless social malaise wherein man finds himself *alienated*, a term used by Christian anthropology to express *estrangement*, a brokenness between God and man, and between man and man. The way out of it is a process, a pilgrimage [of 10 stages] that begins

- **Conscience:** “For Christians, the conscience is not the sole guide to moral life; rather, informed by scripture, nurtured by grace, inspired by the Holy Spirit, and enacted in love for others, the conscience serves as a flexible yet fallible evaluator of one’s own actions in light of one’s understanding of God’s will.” (Rambo)
 - What about the conscience of non-Christians?
- **Calling:** God’s call “is to be received and obeyed in faith, and those called out of darkness into light are to evidence their calling a manner of life.” (Davies)
 - one can ignore the call (maybe) but one cannot volunteer?
- **Conversion:** from Gk. words *epistrein* (to turn, turn again, return) and *metanoia* (change one’s mind, repent). Conversion has a wide range of meaning in contemporary times, ranging from changing religions to changing from apathetic to devout.
 - Corwin suggests that conversion is the “proper response to God’s calling.” Parents (the village) try to raise children to be Christian, but that does not invalidate the need for conversion.
- **Faith:** from Gk. *pistis* (expressed reliance upon divine oracles). “In Judaism, the word meant loyalty and obedience and was tinged with a sense of merit; the faithful are those who have fulfilled all the commandment and as such come into a special bargaining position with God. “ In the NT it took on the meaning “turning towards God disclosed by preaching.” (Bultmann) Today it ranges from “put faith in the words of God; obedience to revelation received; trust in a person, or his help; loyalty; hope in something that is not quickly discernible or predictable.”
 - faith's object “is summed up in the Romans 10:9 formula, recognizing Jesus as Lord and accepting the miracle of the resurrection.”
 - NT faith is linked with terms such as repentance, forgiveness of sins, obedience. Hence, “in every case, *pistis* is seen to be the act in virtue of which man separates himself from the world and turns around completely towards God in response to God’s eschatological deed in Christ” (Bultmann)
 - “Faith is worked out in each life... [but] by no means can it be subsumed as a work of man.. Pauline faith is a rejection of anything but childlike trust in the finished work of Christ. It is an expectant faith, not in the gnostic sense of escape from life but living in continual submission to the saving acts of God in Christ.
 - “For Luther the work of Christ is giving us the gift of saving faith, which is not belief about Christ, but confidence in God through Christ. Surrendering to Christ begets faith in God. Faith, then is seeing God in the midst of agonies of human existence.”

- **Justification:** from Gk. *dikaiosisune* “refers not to moral quality but to standing in the eyes of the judge or court. To be justified is to have the verdict of just or righteous passed upon one. That no one is justified by his own works is expressed by the formula, justification is by grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus and that the righteousness of faith is the righteousness of God” (Gerrish)
 - Augustine saw justification as an infusion of a love for God
 - Aquinas saw justification as the effect of grace transmitted in the Sacraments
 - Luther thought of Christian righteousness as both healing and forgiving (bestowing , passing on).
 - “It is this justification which properly establishes the basis for human works in God’s economy—not a striving after salvation but the fruit of a new relationship with God.”
- **Adoption:** Gk. *uiothesia* (legal acceptance of both minors and adults into another family) “The five NT occurrences of the word speak of a new relationship we have with God through Christ.” “The believer, freed from sin and fear by Christ, is no longer a slave but, by adoption, a child of God.” (Davies)
- **Perseverance:** from Gk. *upomone* (endurance, patience, or perseverance). “The doctrine of perseverance is derived chiefly from Romans 8:31-39 and directs “the believer to God’s reliable faithfulness and does not leave his future open to uncertainty: God remains faithful to his election, his covenant, and his creation.”
 - medieval Catholic theologians asserted it was possible to forfeit the state of grace (to place more responsibility on human morality).
 - Luther believed that moral sin could drive out the Holy Spirit
 - Most reformers held fast to Augustine’s view, that faith is a gift of God to the elect. “We are to understand Christian faith not as a habitual state (as in the Middle Ages) nor a decision (as in modern times), but essentially as faithfulness to God on the basis of his own faithfulness.” (Moltmann)
- **Character:** *agape* or “love, with the associated themes of living-kindness and grace, mercy and forgiveness and above all fidelity, forms a constituent and constant feature of Yahweh’s covenant commitment to Israel.” (McDonagh) Jesus’ love is to be our standard for loving our neighbor.
 - “Once we enter the kingdom, we need training in righteousness. Such training may seem the opposite of love. Careful balance of *letting-be* and *not-letting-be* within a circle of family and friends can only be maintained by the Holy Spirit.”
 - “Who receives our love and who doesn’t? Must love be held in tension by justice? Or should love transform justice into mercy? Is justice a form of love (tough love)?”

- **witness:** from Gk. *marturos* (martyr—witness before) “When saving faith is understood as a gift, Christian witnessing becomes as natural as breathing.”
 - “God uses our character to engender faith in the faithless.”

- **salvation:** from Gk. *soteria* (wholeness or salvation) In the Gospels salvation is in the present, synonymous with entering the kingdom; healings that took place were signs of salvation. *Soteria* and its cognates, then, refer to spiritual and physical healing in the present, leading to final salvation from God’s wrath.”
 - We can say that in the NT there is a constant interplay of past, present and future tenses when the word salvation is used: we have been saved, are being saved, and will be saved.

The perfect life? The new testament encourages us to seek perfection.

- Wesley saw perfection as part of salvation, hence achievable.
- “The lives of saints have always been for Christians the reminder that in this life men and women of all kinds, temperaments and cultures have touched the height of Christian experience and have committed themselves utterly to the service of their fellows.”

What is that to me?

“These stages are not discreet entities, nor do they follow a sequential order or time-line. Rather they are the map of Christian experience. Today's perfection lies in acknowledging I have not arrived. Without realizing it, I move beyond self and enter the world of others where the real battle begins. Those watching show interest and join the pilgrimage.