

**Discovering Truth:
The Necessity of Utilizing Emotion and Logic in Interpreting Scripture**

Levi Smith

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Discovering Truth: The Necessity of Utilizing Emotion and Logic in Interpreting Scripture

Genesis 1:27 states that God created humans in His own image and created them male and female. The two genders have the same creator yet often appear to think in different ways.¹ Some of these differences are seen as early as infancy.² Boys are often more intrigued by mechanical things, while girls appear to respond more to faces.³ As they grow up boys tend to excel in math and geometry, while girls exhibit better interpersonal and language skills.⁴ These facts might lead some to conclude that boys' thinking is more logical, "reasoning conducted or assessed according to strict principles of validity."⁵ While girls' thinking is more emotional and based on feelings. Which would mean making judgments based on how one feels rather than on objective facts.⁶ In

¹ Zeenat F Zaidi, "Gender Differences in Human Brain: A Review," *The Open Anatomy Journal* 2 (2010): 41. <https://doi.org/10.2174/1877609401002010037>.

² Ryan T. Anderson, "Neither Androgyny nor Stereotypes: Sex Differences and the Difference They Make," *Texas Review of Law & Politics* 24, no. 1 (Fall 2019): 240–41. <http://aaron.swbts.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&site=eds-live&db=lgh&AN=142497647>.

³ Larry Cahill, "His Brain, Her Brain," *Scientific American* 292, no. 5 (2005): 43. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/26060993>.

⁴ Zaidi, "Gender Differences," 43.

⁵ "Logic." *Oxford Reference*. <https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10/1093/oi/authority.20110803100112542>.

⁶ Alexandru I. Tiba, "Feelings-As-Embodied Information: Studying the Role of Feelings As Images in Emotional Disorders," *Frontiers in Psychology*, vol. 9 (Feb. 2018): EBSCOhost, doi:10.3389/fpsyg.2018.00186.

an article in *Neuroscience & Biobehavioral Review*, Leonardo Christov-Moore, et al, observe, “Stereotypically, females are portrayed as more nurturing and empathetic, while males are portrayed as less emotional and more cognitive.”⁷ So the conjecture tends to be that males would contemplate the facts without considering feelings, and females contemplate feelings without considering facts.

However, scholars posit that humans, fundamentally, have two systems of thinking which parallel each other and interact in operation.⁸ System 1 is faster, more emotional, and operates on instinct; system 2 is slower, methodical, and more logical.⁹ Through these two systems, both sexes are apparently harmonizing emotional and logical thinking constantly through-out every day without realize it.

While male and female brains appear designed to differ in the interaction between their hemispheres,¹⁰ the two distinct cerebral hemispheres have the same operation in both sexes.¹¹ Apparently, men and women vary in their expressions of emotional and logical thinking, but both still have the capacity to use emotion and logic. Thus, it is

⁷ Leonardo Christov-Moore, et al. “Empathy: Gender Effects in Brain and Behavior.” *Neuroscience & Biobehavioral Reviews* 46 (October 4, 2014): 604.
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5110041/>

⁸ Seymour Epstein, “The Rationality Debate from the Perspective of Cognitive-Experiential Self-Theory,” *Behavioral and Brain Sciences* 23, no. 5 (2000): 671.
<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0140525X0028343X>

⁹ Keith Frankish and Jonathan St. Evans, “The Duality of Mind: An Historical Perspective,” *In Two Minds: Dual Processes and Beyond* (2009): 19.
<https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199230167.003.0001>

¹⁰ M. Ingalhalikar, et al., “Sex Differences in the Structural Connectome of the Human Brain,” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 111, no. 2 (February 2013): 826.
<https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1316909110>

¹¹ Susan Bacorn Bastable, *Essentials of Patient Education* (Sudbury, MA: Jones and Bartlett Publishers, 2006), 84.

reasonable to believe both systems of thinking are important when trying to understand Scripture, God's message to His creation.¹² This is evident when one examines the dangers of relying on either logic or emotion while ignoring the other.

This paper will argue that failure to balance emotional and logical thinking when interpreting Scripture may lead to radical misunderstandings of Scripture's intended message. First, this paper will explore Pharasaical legalism, which led some to challenge Jesus' authority. It will look at the life of theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer and his nuanced response to ethical dilemmas to see how one might respond against legalism. Second, this paper will discuss the rise of postmodernism and consider aspects of the ideology which are at odds with Christian doctrine. It will look at why the concept of truth is important when refuting postmodernism. This paper will demonstrate the importance of using a balance of emotion and logic when interpreting Scripture by showing that logical thinking that disregards emotion can lead to legalism, while emotional thinking that disregards logic can lead to a postmodernist view of Christianity.

Legalism

In the first five books of the Bible God gave many instructions to the Israelite people. Some of the more familiar instructions came in the form of the Ten Commandments, found in Exodus 20. The breakdown of these commandments give a glimpse into the purpose of the Law given to the people. The first four commandments

¹² Deuteronomy 6:5, Matthew 22:37, Mark 12:30, Luke 10:27 express the importance of loving God with heart, soul, and mind. Isaiah 1:18 and 2 Corinthians 10:5 mention reasoning and being careful with one's thoughts respectively, which lend to the idea that both emotional and logical thinking are important in Scripture. 2 Timothy 3:15-17 demonstrates Scripture as God's instructions to mankind.

focused on the people's relationship with God, and the next six dealt with the people's relationships with each other. This simple summary demonstrates that the Law was acting as a guide for people in their interactions with God and other people. However, the Ten Commandments were also pointing to something that was to come.¹³ While God promised Israel blessings in return for their obedience,¹⁴ God was always more concerned about their heart towards Him than the rituals they performed.¹⁵ God wanted the people to trust in Him, which they could demonstrate by following His rules. But the rules themselves were not the main focus of the relationship God wanted with His people. When people focus on living by the Law and doing "good works" in order to secure righteousness, they have missed the mark. As Thomas R. Schriener states, "the use of the law to establish one's own righteousness is the very heart of legalism."¹⁶ Thus, if someone relied on following the law perfectly to achieve salvation, he or she would be sadly mistaken. Not only is it impossible for anyone to keep the Law perfectly,¹⁷ having such an outlook shows a fundamental misunderstanding of the spirit of the Law.

The Lamb of God

Correctly understanding the spirit of the Law is especially relevant to one's view

¹³ Galatians 3:24-25

¹⁴ Deuteronomy 6:1-3

¹⁵ Hosea 6:6

¹⁶ Thomas R. Schreiner, "Israel's Failure to Attain Righteousness in Romans 9:30-10:3." *Trinity Journal* 12, no. 2 (Fall 1991): 209–20.
<http://aaron.swbts.edu/login?url=https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&site=eds-live&db=lsdar&AN=ATLA0000846445>

¹⁷ Romans 3:23

of Jesus. Christians believe the second person of the Trinity emptied Himself to become human, walked the earth as a one of His creation,¹⁸ and endured temptation yet without sinning.¹⁹ As Paul writes in 2 Co 5:21, “For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”²⁰

The doctrine of the sinless Christ is no trivial matter. Part of Jesus’ eligibility to be the sacrificial atonement for the sins of mankind rests on Him living a perfect, guilt-free life. John the Baptist, recognizing who Jesus was, proclaimed to the crowd: “Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world!”²¹ John’s usage of the title the “Lamb of God” was deliberate and is extremely significant. In *The New American Commentary* G. L. Buchert explains:

This Lamb-of-God concept in John is most probably a synthesis of two biblical motifs: the servant of the Lord theme as represented in a passage like Isaiah 53 and the theme of Passover. But this Lamb is a special kind of lamb—one that “takes away [*airōn*] the sin of the world.” The theme of taking away sin is directly related to the Hebrew *kpr*, which involves “wiping away” or getting rid of sin. Such “getting rid” is not merely done by “covering” it over and acting as though it were gone. The getting rid of sin in the Bible is done by the smearing of blood, the symbol of God’s “pardoning” of humanity through death and the consequent “reconciliation” of humanity with God.²²

The Passover, as recorded in Exodus 12, started just before God delivered Israel out of bondage in Egypt. The Lord threatened to destroy the firstborn of every family in

¹⁸ Philippians 2:5-8

¹⁹ 1 Peter 2:22; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Hebrews 4:15; 1 John 3:5

²⁰ All Scripture quotations are from the ESV translation, unless otherwise noted.

²¹ John 1:29b

²² Borchert, G. L., “John 1–11” *The New American Commentary* Vol. 25A. (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers 1996), 135.

the land of Egypt, but those who trusted God were to take a lamb without blemish²³ and put the blood of that lamb on their door post.²⁴ “The blood shall be a sign for you, on the houses where you are. And when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and no plague will befall you to destroy you, when I strike the land of Egypt.”²⁵ The firstborn of the people who put their trust in God would be saved because the household was covered by the blood of the lamb.

Sadly, like all humans, the people of Israel were prone to sin, which damaged their relationship with God.²⁶ When that happened, the relationship needed to be mended. God instructed Moses on how His people were to atone for their sins in Leviticus 1:1-4. “When any one of you brings an offering to the LORD, you shall bring your offering of livestock from the herd or from the flock. If his offering is a burnt offering from the herd, he shall offer a male without blemish. . . . He shall lay his hand on the head of the burnt offering, and it shall be accepted for him to make atonement for him.” Deuteronomy 17:1 states, “You shall not sacrifice to the LORD your God an ox or a sheep in which is a blemish, any defect whatever, for that is an abomination to the LORD your God.” One can see a pattern here, God demanded every animal brought forward for sacrifice to be without blemish. From the original Passover lamb to the various sacrifices at the Temple, this requirement always remained.

The Day of Atonement was also significant, as William Barrick noted:

²³ Exodus 12:5

²⁴ Exodus 12:7

²⁵ Exodus 12:13

²⁶ Isaiah 59:2

Of all of the sacrifices and festivals, the Day of Atonement exceeds all others in its significance to Israel's relationship to the Lord. . . . Its historical setting belongs to God's judgment on Nadab and Abihu (10:1-20)—a stark reminder of the holiness of God and its incompatibility with human sinfulness.

Emphasis thus fell on the necessity of atonement even for the priests' own sins. If the priests were defiled, they could not mediate between the people and God. Without mediators, sinful Israelites could not approach God's presence and the Presence of God could not continue to reside in their midst.²⁷

Hebrews 10:1-14 describes Jesus' mission to become the sacrifice for the sins of mankind, particularly verses 9b-10: "He does away with the first in order to establish the second. And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus once for all." So Jesus came to establish a New Covenant between mankind and God. But in order to be the sufficient sacrifice, the Lamb of God would have to be completely spotless, without blemish. For Christians to claim Jesus as the atonement for their sins, the ultimate Passover sacrifice, and believe they are covered by His blood, the "blood of the Lamb," Jesus would have to meet all the necessary criteria to be such a sacrifice. Thus, the doctrine of the sinless Christ is essential to Christian beliefs. If Jesus had sinned, it would completely unravel any claims of His eligibility to take away the sins of the world. Which is also why the Pharisees' accusation that Jesus broke the fourth commandment is so important. If Jesus broke the fourth commandment by performing a healing on the Sabbath, He would not be eligible to be the perfect sacrifice.

This commandment, found in Exodus 20:18, states: "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or

²⁷ William D. Barrick, "Penal Substitution in the Old Testament," *The Master's Seminary Journal* 20 (2): (Fall, 2009), 159.

your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates.” The religious elite not only zealously adhered to this commandment found in the book of Exodus, but they also followed the rabbinic oral tradition surrounding the commandment.²⁸ This tradition was said to have been passed down through Moses after he received the Ten Commandments and was thought to act like a commentary that could aid in interpreting the laws.²⁹ These traditional interpretations were eventually compiled into the Mishna which was then used for the Gemara and the Talmud.³⁰ The common people believed the Pharisees were the authority on interpreting God’s Law, so they followed what these men said and were in no position to refute their claims.³¹ Unfortunately, the Pharisees’ interpretations added undue burdens on the people. This issue is discussed in the Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible specifying how restrictive the Sabbath laws had become:

Two tractates of the Mishna are devoted exclusively to these sabbath rules and regulations. Their main purpose is to define work (one tractate does so under 39 headings) in an attempt to show every Israelite what is and is not permitted on the sabbath. Unfortunately, though well intended, this led to such hairsplitting complexities and evasions that ecclesiastical lawyers often differed among themselves in their interpretations—with the inevitable result that the main purpose of the sabbath became lost beneath a mass of legalistic detail.³²

²⁸ Paul Robertson and Douglas Estes, “Pharisees, *Critical Issues*,” ed. John D. Barry et al., *The Lexham Bible Dictionary* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016), np.

²⁹ John C. Johnson, “Mishnah,” ed. John D. Barry et al., *The Lexham Bible Dictionary* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016), np.

³⁰ W. A. Elwell, and Barry J. Beitzel, “Mishna,” *In Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible* Vol. 2, (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988), 1475.

³¹ W. A. Elwell, and Barry J. Beitzel, “Pharisees,” *In Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible* Vol. 2, (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988), 1671.

³² W. A. Elwell, and Barry J. Beitzel, “Sabbath,” *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible* Vol 2, (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988), 1877.

The Pharisees were used to people listening to their judgments and strictly adhering to the rules they set in place.³³ But then came Jesus, a man from Galilee accumulating followers and speaking with authority. Part of His mission was to shed light on what God desired from man, to help them understand the spirit of the Law and show them how to live. He was not relaxing God's Law but pointing out the error of Pharisaical legalism. Blomberg notes, "If coming to Jesus provided rest for the whole of life, then it is not surprising that he should come into conflict with regulations that prevented various kinds of work on one specific day out of seven. At the very least, Jesus shows that he feels free to disregard the oral laws that had grown up around the Sabbath."³⁴

When Jesus healed the man with a withered hand³⁵ in the synagogue, the Pharisees believed He was guilty of working on the Sabbath. In light of all of the meticulous rules passed down in the oral tradition, it is easy to understand their claim. Also, if one simply reads the words of the the Law but disregards the purpose, one can see why the additional rules in the oral tradition made sense to the Pharisees. If the Pharisees were right, Jesus would be disqualified as the Lamb of God since He would no longer be without blemish.

Thankfully, Jesus was sinless. His miracle of healing performed in the synagogue was not breaking the spirit of the fourth commandment. When the Pharisees questioned if

³³ Bradley T. Johnson, "Pharisees," ed. John D. Barry et al., *The Lexham Bible Dictionary* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016), np.

³⁴ C. Blomberg, *Matthew*, The New American Commentary Vol. 22. (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers 1992), 195-196.

³⁵ This story is related in Matthew 12:9-14; Mark 3:1-6; and Luke 6:6-11.

it was lawful to heal on the Sabbath He replied, “Which one of you who has a sheep, if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will not take hold of it and lift it out? Of how much more value is a man than a sheep! So it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath.”³⁶ Jesus called out the Pharisees’ legalistic mindset. Even they would have to acknowledge they would “work” on the holy day in certain circumstances. Jesus did not fault them for this fact either; He would have encouraged them to “do good” on the Sabbath even if it was considered work. Though the letter of the Law states that you cannot work on the Sabbath, the reason for the Law was to help the people of Israel, not to burden them.

This point is reaffirmed with Jesus’ declaration in Mark 2. After the Pharisees saw Jesus’ disciples plucking grain to eat, they confronted Him and asked why His disciples did what was not lawful on the Sabbath. Jesus replied, as He often did, with a question; He asked if they had not heard about the situation recorded in 1 Samuel 21:1-6 when David and his men entered the house of God and ate the bread of the Presence. The Pharisees would have known this story well, and Jesus was pointing out that, because of their great need, those who partook of the bread were not punished. Though it would have been unlawful, God was merciful to those who were in need. In Mark 2:27, Jesus reaffirms the purpose of the fourth commandment by stating: “The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.” As J. A. Brooks comments, “Jesus meant that human beings were not created to observe the Sabbath but that the Sabbath was created for their benefit.”³⁷ It is important for people to take some rest from work and reflect on what God

³⁶ Matthew 12:11-12

³⁷ J. A. Brooks, *Mark*, The New American Commentary Vol. 23. (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1991), 67.

has done for them. The fourth commandment was a way to teach the Israelites to depend on God and to employ healthy working habits. They could do this while helping those in need or rescuing their livestock without breaking the spirit of the commandment and, therefore, not be guilty of rebelling against God's Law. In Matthew 11, Jesus invited people to find rest in Him. He explicitly states, "My yoke is easy and my burden is light,"³⁸ and this statement lends credibility to Dr. Akins' declaration, "Jesus' liberating vision of the Sabbath frees us from legalistic constraints instead of binding us with unbearable burdens."³⁹

Legalism appears to have made the Pharisees feel superior to the rest of Israel. They were highly praised for being pious individuals, as they prayed aloud so all could hear, gave money to the poor for all to see, and were meticulous with their tithe (even down to spices). They were wealthy, so it appeared to others that they were being blessed by God and were keeping all the laws just as God had intended. This is why the disciples were shocked when Jesus told them their righteousness would need to exceed the Pharisees in order to get into heaven.⁴⁰

But the Pharisees had missed the mark; they were not keeping the laws correctly. They were also making up arbitrary rules based on their own ideas. David Platt, commenting on Jesus' declaration in Matthew 23:16-22 about the man-made rules on swearing an oath, observes: "Jesus refers to taking oaths by the sanctuary, the gold of the

³⁸ Matthew 11:30

³⁹ Daniel L. Akin, David Platt, and Tony Merida, *Exalting Jesus in Mark*. (Nashville: Holman Reference, 2014), 61.

⁴⁰ Matthew 5:20

sanctuary, the altar, etc. He's referring to rules that had been concocted to allow people to swear by certain things and not be bound or swear by other items and be bound. In essence, people only had to keep a promise under certain circumstances."⁴¹ Jesus reprimanded the religious elite for such things and pointed out that they might look pious on the outside, but their hearts were not in the right place. Mounce in his *Good News Commentary* states: "Their hypocrisy lay in their desire to appear conscientious about even the minute details of religious law while ignoring those central issues that were infinitely more important."⁴² Though they were careful to observe parts of the law, they, unfortunately, neglected what should have been paramount. Jesus, as R. T. France observes, "points out the absurd lack of proportion involved (*strain out a gnat but swallow a camel!*) when they went into meticulous detail over tithing garden herbs but forgot about *justice, mercy and faithfulness*."⁴³ One wonders how the Pharisees overlooked this. It is not as if God hid His intentions.

Micah 6:8 states: "He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?" The Pharisees were not adhering to this instruction. In Luke 20:46-47 Jesus warned the crowd around him and His disciples: "Beware of the scribes, who like to walk around in long robes, and love greetings in the marketplaces and the best seats in the

⁴¹ David Platt, *Exalting Jesus in Matthew*. (Nashville: B & H Academic, 2013), 304.

⁴² Robert H. Mounce, *Matthew, A Good News Commentary*. (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1985), 223.

⁴³ R. T. France, *Matthew*. In D. A. Carson, R. T. France, J. A. Motyer, & G. J. Wenham (Eds.), *New Bible Commentary: 21st century edition* 4th ed. (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994), 934.

synagogues and the places of honor at feasts, who devour widows' houses and for a pretense make long prayers. They will receive the greater condemnation." These religious leaders were clearly not doing justice or loving kindness, and humility was nowhere to be found. As R. H. Stein, in his commentary on Luke, states: "Because of their self-seeking and lack of humility, they would be punished more severely (20:47) and humbled (14:11)."⁴⁴ If they would not walk humbly with the God they claimed to follow, He would humble them, and their punishment would be much greater than it otherwise would have been because the "teachers of the law" should have known better.

The Pharisees' feeling of superiority was evident to Jesus. He noticed their pride and did not hold back when admonishing them. Jesus said, "The Scribes and Pharisees sit on Moses' seat, so do and observe whatever they tell you, but not the works they do. For they preach, but do not practice." He was saying that what they taught, the Law found in Scripture, is good. However, they did not practice what they preached, and their hearts were far from the Lord. They taught the Law but proceeded to hold themselves to their own standard in complete disregard for the Law Giver.

Having the appearance of doing good, and being praised by others, they arrogantly used Holy Scripture. They twisted the meaning and interpreted the Law for their own benefit. For those reasons Jesus chastised them severely, as recorded in Matthew 23. He called them whitewashed tombs and a brood of Vipers; He said they would wash the outside of the cup and plate but inside they were greedy. He accused them of appearing righteous to others while they were really hypocritical and lawless. In

⁴⁴ R. H. Stein, *Luke*, The New American Commentary Vol. 24. (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 507.

Matthew 23:23 Jesus reproved them: “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness. These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others.” Jesus’ response indicates the Law was not just a set of rules God wanted to make people follow—there was a purpose behind it. In Matthew 5-7, known as the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus acknowledges the Law is important; but He also states in 5:17 that He has come to fulfill the Law and the Prophets. What is commonly referred to as the Old Testament by modern Christians is an example and a guide for people.⁴⁵ In Galatians 3:24-26 Paul states: “So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian.” The word translated as “guardian” is the Greek word παιδαγωγόν (transliterated *paidogogon*) which denoted a person that wealthy families would hire to take care of their children after they outgrew a “nanny” around the age of 6. Timothy George explains: “At that time they came under the supervision of another household servant, the *paidagōgos*, who remained in charge of their upbringing until late adolescence. The pedagogue took over where the nanny left off in terms of offering menial care and completing the process of socialization for his charge.”⁴⁶ So the Law was a teacher and guardian, but then Jesus came to fulfill it and ultimately explain its purpose. And just like a child eventually outgrows its guardian, humans were to remember the teachings of the Law and to follow those principles but ultimately put their faith in Jesus

⁴⁵ Romans 15:4; 1 Corinthians 9:10; 10:5, 8.

⁴⁶ Timothy George, *Galatians*, The New American Commentary Vol. 30 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 265.

for salvation. Following the Law cannot save anyone, only the work of the Holy Spirit can, and He works through faith. With man-made religions, reaching the end goal depends on an individual working to do the right things, but Jesus does the work Himself and only requires mankind to put their faith and trust in Him.

This comes into focus in Matthew 22 when a lawyer asked Jesus what was the greatest commandment of the Law. Jesus' response is recorded in Matthew 22:37-40: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets." While the Pharisees were adding rules to make up for their lack of understanding, Jesus simplified the rules. Jesus said that, if one loves God with his whole being, with everything he is, and loves his neighbor as himself, this will fulfill the Law. Once again, the crux of the matter is not necessarily the letter but the spirit of the Law.

Do these ideas hold up throughout the rest of Scripture? There are good arguments to suggest so. Further, understanding concepts like the "weightier matters of the law" will help provide context for some of the Old Testament stories. Both the story of the Egyptian widwives Shiphrah and Puah (recorded in Exodus 1) and the story of Rahab (recorded in Joshua 2) contain seeming contradictions. However, correctly understanding the purpose of the Law can shed light on these issues and show the harmony within Scripture.

The Midwives Disobey Pharaoh

After the death of Joseph in Egypt, Israel continued to live in Egypt and God

blessed them. They grew large in number as a people and were mighty. A new Pharaoh, who the Bible states did not know Joseph,⁴⁷ began to rule over Egypt. He saw the people of Israel had grown, and he feared that they might join Egypt's enemies to fight against them. So, he decided to deal cruelly with them—he enslaved the people and made them build cities. The people of Israel continued to multiply, so Pharaoh decided to deal even more harshly with them and told the midwives Shiphrah and Puah to kill any male baby that was born to the Hebrews. When these midwives disobeyed the command of Pharaoh, he summoned them to ask why. “The midwives said to Pharaoh, ‘Because the Hebrew women are not like the Egyptian women, for they are vigorous and give birth before the midwife comes to them.’”⁴⁸ There is no indication this was true. The midwives apparently lied to the King! They had also disobeyed a direct order from their governing authority. And yet in the next verse, Exodus 1:20, Scripture says: “So God dealt well with the midwives. And the people multiplied and grew very strong.”

Why would God deal well with the midwives? Anyone who has been to Sunday school knows the Bible says not to lie. And though the Ten Commandments had not been given to the people yet, that does not mean God had no Law. When God was promising Isaac's offspring would become a great nation (Genesis 26:5), He stated: “[It was] because Abraham obeyed my voice and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws.” Thus, God must have had some rules for people to follow, even if they were not written down at the time. Lying would certainly seem to be one that God

⁴⁷ Exodus 1:8

⁴⁸ Exodus 1:19

forbade, as Proverbs 12:22a states: “Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord.” So how does one make sense of God blessing these midwives who seemed to break the ninth commandment?

There are some who claim that Shiphrah and Puah may not have lied to the king; perhaps they were being honest about the vigor of the Hebrew women—“It is a conjecture, to be sure, but a reasonable one that the actual difference between the two groups was a matter of family style rather than of physiology.”⁴⁹ This may be possible, but there is no sign in the rest of Scripture to suggest this was the case or to assure the reader that the midwives did not really intentionally deceive Pharaoh. Others criticize the deception as a weakness: “Their faith inspired them with such courage as to risk their lives, by disobeying the mandate of a cruel tyrant; but it was blended with weakness, which made them shrink from speaking the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.”⁵⁰ Still others would call this a “dutiful lie”⁵¹ since Shiphrah and Puah were protecting the lives of the babies.

In *The Big Book of Bible Difficulties*, Norman Geisler and Gordon Howe state,

First, the moral dilemma in which the midwives find themselves was unavoidable. Either they obeyed God’s higher law, or they obeyed the lesser obligation of submitting to Pharaoh. Rather than commit deliberate infanticide against the children of their own people. The midwives chose to disobey Pharaoh’s order. God commands us to obey the governmental powers, but He also commands us not to murder.

⁴⁹ D. K. Stuart. *Exodus*, The New American Commentary Vol. 2. (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2006), 81.

⁵⁰ R. Jamieson, Fausset, A. R., & Brown, D., *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible* Vol. 1. (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc, 1997), 48.

⁵¹ For an interesting look at the concept of the “dutiful lie” read Raymond A. Blacketer, “No Escape by Deception: Calvin’s Exegesis of Lies and Liars in the Old Testament.” *Reformation & Renaissance Review* 10 (3): 267–89, 2008 in it he discusses multiple historical theologians’ views on the subject of lying.

Second, the text clearly states that God blessed them ‘because the midwives feared God’ (Ex. 1:21). And it was their fear of God that led them to do what was necessary to save these innocent lives. Thus, their false statement to Pharaoh was an essential part of their effort to save lives.⁵²

These midwives chose to uphold the “weightier” matter of the Law, which is protecting human life. That was more important than obeying the authority who was governing in a way that would displease the Lord. Though Proverbs 12:22 does say lying lips are an abomination, the rest of the verse states: “But those who act faithfully are his delight.” Even if the midwives lied to Pharaoh, they feared God and obeyed Him.⁵³ One can see the similarity between their actions and the question posed by Peter and John in front of the Sanhedrin—“Which is right in God’s eyes: to listen to you, or to him?”⁵⁴—and the apostles’ statement in Acts 5:29 “We must obey God rather than man.”

Rahab Hides the Spies

The same type of issue arises in Joshua 2. Joshua had sent out two spies into Jericho to search out the land the Lord was giving them. Word came to the king of Jericho that the spies had entered the house of known prostitute, Rahab, so the king sent men to find them. Joshua 2:4-5 states: “But the woman had taken the two men and hidden them. And she said, ‘True, the men came to me, but I did not know where they were from. And when the gate was about to be closed at dark, the men went out. I do not know where the men went. Pursue them quickly, for you will overtake them.’” This was clearly

⁵² Norman L. Geisler, and Thomas Howe. *The Big Book of Bible Difficulties*. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 64.

⁵³ Exodus 1:17

⁵⁴ Acts 4:19 (NIV)

a lie! Rahab knew exactly where the spies went since she had told them where to hide, and Joshua 2:8-10 makes it plain that Rahab know who the spies were:

Before the men lay down, she came up to them on the roof and said to the men, “I know that the LORD has given you the land, and that the fear of you has fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land melt away before you. For we have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red Sea before you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to the two kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan, to Sihon and Og, whom you devoted to destruction.”

Rahab acted on the belief that God was giving His people the land and recognized the God of Israel as the one true God, so she threw her lot in with the Israelites. According to Joshua’s narrative, it appears she saved herself and her family as a result of hiding the spies and subsequently lying to their pursuers. She may have deceived the men of Jericho, but she showed great faith in the Lord. She knew if she was wrong about these spies and the God they served she would likely be condemned as a traitor; that did not stop her from taking a bold step in faith. This idea may have been the thinking of Peter Barnes as he wrote an article for *The Reformed Theological Review* in which he states: “We ought not to be surprised that Rahab’s lie is never criticised (sic) in the Word of God. Truth-telling takes place in concrete situations, and can never be treated as though it occurs in a vacuum. . . . Rahab’s commitment was to the God of Scripture, and also to His people. Her lie, therefore, was no sin.”⁵⁵

Barnes also notes that Rahab’s vindication of her lie ties back into Jesus’ message in Matthew 23:23. He states: “It is vital to note that this exoneration of Rahab does not rest upon the shifting sands of situation ethics. The law is not abolished but upheld; the

⁵⁵ Peter Barnes, “Was Rahab’s Lie A Sin.” *The Reformed Theological Review* 54, no. 1 (January, 1995), 9. <https://search-ebscohost-com.aaron.swbts.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=lsdar&AN=ATLA0000895840&site=eds-live>.

only point is that murder—or complicity in murder—is a ‘weightier matter’ than lying, and so demands the stronger repudiation.”⁵⁶

Scripture is clear that God does not only pay attention to the actions of people, but He takes note of their motives as well. Jeremiah 17:10 says, “I the LORD search the heart and test the mind, to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his deeds.” Using this principle, one can deduce that what God is most concerned about in these specific matters is not whether the individual uttered a falsehood, but rather why that falsehood was uttered. Though human beings cannot always understand the motive behind someone’s actions, a person’s true motive is never hidden from God, as Hebrews 4:12-13 testifies: “For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eye of him to whom we must give account.” Scripture does not justify most instances of lying; but, in cases where telling the whole truth in a situation leads to a worse evil, the weightier matter must be considered. In an article for the *Southeastern Theological Review*, Daniel Block discussed the role of the Law in the lives of the Israelites: “God and Moses perceived true obedience to the law to be the external expression of an inward disposition of fear and faith in God and covenant love toward him. True biblical religion has always been a matter of the heart.”⁵⁷ This is why Jesus quoted Hosea 6:6 to the Pharisees in Matthew 9:13: “I desire mercy, and not

⁵⁶ Barnes, “Was Rahab’s Lie A Sin,” 7-8.

⁵⁷ Daniel I. Block, “Preaching Old Testament Law to New Testament Christians.” *Southeastern Theological Review* 3 (2) (2012): 214. <https://search-ebscohost-com.aaron.swbts.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=lsdar&AN=ATLA0001942070&site=ehost-live>.

sacrifice.” This harkens back to Jesus’ proclamation that all of the commandments can be summed up in loving God and loving one’s neighbor as oneself.

Considering these stories in Scripture and understanding the heart behind the actions of these individuals, a truth emerges that seems to be overlooked by legalists— withholding information from someone who is preparing to carry out evil is not always wrong. When people are pursuing evil and intending harm, taking a stand to prevent the evil they are planning is the right thing to do. When one is protecting others, one is not breaking the spirit of the Law. A more modern example of this concept can be found in the story of Dietrich Bonhoeffer.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer⁵⁸

Dietrich Bonhoeffer was one of the more prolific writers among German theologians and has a very interesting life story. From his upbringing, to his travels, to his theological musings, to the ethical dilemmas he encountered, his story is well worth investigating for the topic at hand.

His parents, Karl and Paula Bonhoeffer, both descended from well-respected and wealthy families. Paula Bonhoeffer, a teacher, was the daughter of a military chaplain, Karl Alfred von Hase, who had become chaplain to Kaiser Wilhelm II; he likely achieved this position partially due to his father, Karl August von Hase, who was a famous theologian. Paula’s maternal side of the family had well-known and accomplished musicians and artists. Karl Bonhoeffer was a psychiatrist and a descendant of wealthy

⁵⁸ Nearly all of the information on Dietrich Bonhoeffer in this paper comes from the work of Eric Metaxas, in *Bonhoeffer: Pastor, Martyr, Prophet, Spy*. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2011). Any information from other sources will be annotated.

bean farmers. This is how the name “Bonhöffer” originated—the family dropped the umlaut sometime after 1800 and were known as Bonhoeffers from then on. Karl Bonhoeffer’s father was Friedrich Philipp Tobias Ernst Bonhoeffer, a prominent judiciary official who ended his career as president of the Provincial Court in Ulm before he retired to live in Tübingen. Friedrich Bonhoeffer was so revered that the king awarded him a personal peerage upon his retirement.

Karl Bonhoeffer was not a believer but rather considered himself agnostic. Nevertheless, he was always supportive of Paula leading the family in worship and studying Scripture, a daily occurrence in the Bonhoeffer household. The two were committed to raising their children to do the right thing and respect others’ feelings and opinions. Paula ran the household as they raised their eight children together. She taught the older five children when they were young, but appointed governesses to tutor the younger three children: Dietrich, his twin Sabine, and their younger sister Susanne. These governesses were also committed Christians, which was no doubt important to Paula. While she gave most teaching duties to the governesses, she still oversaw every aspect of her children’s education. By the time Dietrich was thirteen, he had chosen to study theology, a decision which surprised his siblings. Though, they were not opposed to religion, as is evident from their mother’s influence, such a profession was not popular in their social circle at that time.

The two oldest boys Karl-Friedrich and Walter were called up to war and in 1918, when Dietrich was only twelve. Walter would succumb to shrapnel wounds in France; but Karl-Friedrich, who had taken his physics textbook to the front, would return and become a brilliant scientist. Klaus, the third Bonhoeffer son, became a top lawyer at

Lufthansa, a German airline. The two older surviving Bonhoeffer boys were the most opposed to Dietrich's chosen vocation since both had a negative view of the church. Though the family had grown up with Scripture teachings, singing hymns, and praying, they rarely attended church. Karl-Friedrich was committed to a more materialistic view of the world and accused Dietrich of giving in to the fog of metaphysics, ignoring verifiable reality. But Dietrich was determined in his decision. His parents were of the mindset that he should pursue a vocation as a musician, since he was very accomplished and loved to play, but they were ultimately supportive of his choice.

Dietrich's upbringing was a great blend of personalities for the blossoming theologian. His mother was very artistic and passed on her love of the arts to her children. They enjoyed dressing up and putting on plays for themselves and the adults. They did a family puppet theater and Paula was known for performing "*Little Red Riding Hood*" every year on her birthday. The family held musical evenings every Saturday night where all the children would participate and demonstrate what they had learned that week. On the other side, Dietrich's father had taught the children to only speak when they had something to say, he would not tolerate emotionalism or sloppiness in communication. He taught them to control their emotions and eschew self-pity, selfishness, or a boastful attitude. The contrast between emotional expression in art and logical thinking seemed to help Dietrich have a sensible temperament which he would keep into adulthood. His career as a teacher and theologian seems to have benefitted from this balance.

Dietrich lived close to his family for most of his years. For the year he studied at Tübingen University, a school which was almost considered a duty for a Bonhoeffer to attend, he lived with his grandmother. Then, after a trip to Rome with his brother Klaus,

Dietrich returned to study at Berlin University where his father was a professor, and he once again lived at home. Some may think living with his family constantly would lessen his exposure to different people groups and cultures, however, he traveled quite often in his life. His trip to Rome with his brother Klaus after his first year at Tübingen would prove to have a huge impact on the eighteen-year-old Dietrich. He and Klaus had been raised to respect the culture in Rome and its great history of the ancient past. They spent a great deal of time exploring the amazing architecture and even attended a mass at St. Peter's. During this mass Dietrich observed people of different skin colors, all in clerical robes, united. This seemed ideal to him and he started to realize the universality of the Church. Christianity was for everyone, regardless of ethnicity or national identity; the church transcended these characteristics and existed outside of Germany and Rome—it was all over the world. This line of thinking would help him reject the nationalism in Germany; he would not be deceived by the messages of Hitler's regime and the so-called "German Christians" who preached a national identity as synonymous with Christianity.

After Dietrich returned from Rome, he enrolled in classes at Berlin University, where he would earn his doctorate at age twenty-one. He was influenced by theologians Adolf von Harnack, a disciple of Friedrich Schleiermacher; Karl Holl, regarded as possibly the greatest Luther scholar of the generation; systematic theologian Reinhold Seeberg, under whom he would write his doctoral thesis; and Adolf Deissman who introduced him to the ecumenical movement which would prompt him to become involved in the conspiracy against Hitler. He would also be influenced by the teachings of Swiss theologian Karl Barth. Upon returning to Germany from some time in the United States, Dietrich had the opportunity to meet Barth. The two had some great

discussions and became friends. Bonhoeffer's openness to different theological ideas and his love of discussion put him in a great position. "He could appreciate the value in something, even if he ultimately rejected that something—and could see the errors and flaws in something, even if he ultimately accepted that something."⁵⁹ This mindset led Bonhoeffer to use both Protestant and Catholic traditions in the illegal seminaries he ran in Zingst and Finkenwalde in 1935 and would ultimately lead to his conclusions that allowed him to participate in the conspiracy against Hitler.

Bonhoeffer was not one to be tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine. He was steadfast in his views on the importance of Scripture, being a disciple of Christ, and preaching the Gospel. When he attended Union Theological Seminary in New York he was appalled by the way many treated issues surrounding the cross, the Gospel of Jesus, and sin and forgiveness. These issues, which should have been preeminent, were given little consideration, even to the point of seeming like an afterthought. He noticed this detriment in his discussions with fellow students and even the classes held at the seminary. To Bonhoeffer, seeing Christ as Lord was important. He sometimes spoke about "religionless Christianity", and, though the concept was misunderstood by many, Eberhard Bethge had a good explanation, as Metaxas states,

This "religious" Christianity had failed Germany and the West during this great time of crisis, for one thing, and he wondered whether it wasn't finally time for the lordship of Jesus Christ to move past Sunday mornings and churches and into the whole world. But this was simply an extension of his previous theology, which was dedicatedly Bible centered and Christ centered.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ Metaxas, *Bonhoeffer*, 60.

⁶⁰ Metaxas, *Bonhoeffer*, 466.

So Bonhoeffer's idea of "religionless Christianity" was not one of relaxed commitment to Christ in shunning "religion," but of full devotion to Christ that surpassed legalism.

Bonhoeffer was a principled man and committed to spiritual disciplines. This is evident in his book *Discipleship*. In a section discussing the command to love one's enemies and the difficulty this involves for the flesh he states: "Thus in daily and extraordinary exercise and discipline, the flesh must learn to understand that it has no rights of its own. The daily, orderly exercise of prayer helps in this. So does daily meditation on the word of God, as do all sorts of practices."⁶¹ He believed keeping to these spiritual disciplines was necessary, but this was not legalism. He would not have kept the disciplines for the sake of the disciplines themselves. In fact, Bonhoeffer did not believe that principles were any more than tools. He wrote in *Ethics*:

The wise man is aware of the limited receptiveness of reality for principles; for he knows that reality is not built upon principles but that it rests upon the living and creating God. He knows too, therefore, that reality cannot be helped by even the purest of principles or by even the best of wills, but only by the living God. Principles are only tools in God's hand, soon to be thrown away as unserviceable.⁶²

Living out principles is not the end goal of Christianity; rather, the end goal of Christianity is following Christ and glorifying Him. Some might shy away from Bonhoeffer's thinking, however, because it may sound dangerously close to postmodern ideology or at least antinomianism. However, there is no evidence Bonhoeffer was any more against the Law than the author of Hebrews 7:18-19, who wrote: "For on the one hand, a former commandment is set aside because of its weakness and uselessness (for

⁶¹ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Discipleship*. Edited by John D. Godsey and Geoffrey B. Kelly. (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 2003), 159.

⁶² Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Eberhard Bethge, *Ethics* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2002), 70.

the law made nothing perfect); but on the other hand, a better hope is introduced, through which we draw near to God” or the Apostle Paul who wrote in Galatians: “But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. . . . If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit.”⁶³ Bonhoeffer felt as though he was keeping in step with the Spirit in his life. As Metaxas notes,:

For Bonhoeffer, the relationship with God ordered everything else around it. A number of times he referred to the relationship with Jesus Christ as being like the *cantus firmus** of a piece of music. All the other parts of the music referred to it, and it held them together. To be true to God in the deepest way meant having such a relationship with him that one did not live legalistically by “rules” or “principles.” One could never separate one’s actions from one’s relationship to God. It was a more demanding and more mature level of obedience, and Bonhoeffer had come to see that the evil of Hitler was forcing Christians to go deeper in their obedience, to think harder about what God was asking. Legalistic religion was being shown to be utterly inadequate.⁶⁴

This reasoning led Bonhoeffer to his decision to join the Abwehr, a military intelligence agency. In the records of the military, he was an agent for German Military Intelligence, posing as a pastor to gather intel for the Nazis. In actuality, he was a pastor who would really be gathering intel and recruiting others to join in working against the Nazis. He also continued to write pro-Jewish literature, notably his work *Prayerbook of the Bible* which was written on the Psalms. When he was confronted, he claimed the work was scholarly literature and that he had no idea it would go against the National Socialists. For some this would seem unthinkable behavior since he was living a life of deception as a spy. How could this minister be involved in such deceit? Bonhoeffer believed it was warranted under the circumstances. Metaxas explains Bonhoeffer’s

⁶³ Galatians 5:18, 25

⁶⁴ Metaxas, *Bonhoeffer*, 366

thought process in this matter:

God's standard of truth entailed more than merely "not lying." In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said, "You have heard it said . . . but I say to you." Jesus took the Old Testament laws to a deeper level of meaning and obedience, from the "letter of the Law" to the "Spirit of the Law." Following the letter of the law was the dead "religion" of which Barth, among others, had written. It was man's attempt to deceive God into thinking one was being obedient, which was a far greater deception. God always required something deeper than religious legalism.⁶⁵

In opposition to this conclusion, Christopher Tollefsen, in his book *Lying and Christian Ethics*, holds to the view that it is never right to tell a lie, though, when he is addressing the issue of the Nazi at the door, he does make a case that the Nazis may have lost the right to the truth because of their evil intentions. Nevertheless, he still stands staunchly against lying, so he makes the claim: "One must not, therefore, lie to the Nazi. But equally, it is clear, and as I have stated elsewhere in this book, one must not tell him this truth to which he is not entitled."⁶⁶ How is one to accomplish this? Tollefsen explains: "Again, in Chapter 6, we saw that here are persons to whom, and circumstances in which there are reasons, and even strong obligations, not to disclose what one knows. But there are many ways of not disclosing truth, which range from the obviously permissible (e.g. keeping silent) to the morally questionable (e.g. speaking equivocally)."⁶⁷ So Tollefsen's argument appears to be that one should not tell a lie but should withhold the truth. To his credit, he is not advocating telling where Jews are hidden and then washing one's hands of the effects of such a decision. Still, he does

⁶⁵ Metaxas, *Bonhoeffer*, 365-366.

⁶⁶ Tollefsen, Christopher, *Lying and Christian Ethics*. New Studies in Christian Ethics. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 146.

⁶⁷ Tollefsen, *Lying and Christian Ethics*, 148.

state” “One should refuse to answer, by keeping silent or by evading in some way the question. Still, the Nazi is a human being, and a child of God,⁶⁸ and one cannot assume that his soul is beyond saving.”⁶⁹ Thus, the recommendation is to not tell a lie but rather to tell the Nazi he is engaged in wrongful behavior. Presumably, though not explicitly stated in the text, the next action is to preach the Gospel to the Nazi. These are admirable ideas, and it is true the Nazi’s soul is not beyond saving; however, these claims do not prove that lying is unjustified, just that Tollefsen is opposed to the concept.

Tollefsen’s stance becomes less clear when he states: “In the previous chapter, I suggested a number of different evasive, deceptive, and dissimulating strategies, that can, under various circumstances, be legitimately adopted. Where circumstances permit, such strategies might be reasonable and perhaps obligatory to adopt in response to the Nazi.”⁷⁰ This statement appears to assert it is not okay to tell a lie but it is okay to engage in deception. Unfortunately for Tollefsen, this argument does not hold up to scrutiny. In what way is engaging in deception different from lying?

Tollefsen says of people who lie for a good reason, “Can it really be known with certainty that they will not become disposed to lie in other contexts as well?”⁷¹ No, that is not known. However, the plague of legalism flourishes with such ideas. Intentionally

⁶⁸ Though this topic is not in the purview of this paper, it is important to point out, stating all human beings are children of God is an erroneous claim. It is true that all humans are creations of God, and because of His love for people, while they were still sinners, Christ died for them (Rm 5:8); However, John states clearly that those who receive Him and believe in His name, it is those whom He gave the right to become children of God. (Jn 1:12) Believers are thus adopted into the family of God, not having previously been in this position.

⁶⁹ Tollefsen, *Lying and Christian Ethics*, 177.

⁷⁰ Tollefsen, *Lying and Christian Ethics*, 178

⁷¹ Tollefsen, *Lying and Christian Ethics*, 97.

deceiving someone who is bent on doing evil, is a different situation than lying to those who are not trying to do evil. As Tollefsen admits, one does not know what sins someone will commit in the future. However, if one is keeping in step with the Spirit, as Bonhoeffer believed he was, it is entirely possible one might continue to keep after the Spirit. It is always possible for a Christian to fail, however, “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”⁷²

It is important to recognize that there are very few circumstances in which lying would be justified. Much of the time lies seem to be told for selfish ambitions rather than the pursuit of righteousness. But in cases where a weightier matter of the Law is at stake, it is reasonable to conclude the act of deception is justified. What appears to keep someone from this conclusion is an aversion to considering things that would go against the letter of the Law. To logical thinkers “hard truths” are more acceptable, if the logic is sound; thus, they deem it reasonable that there is never a justified lie. To them, lying is against the Ten Commandments and must never be accepted. However, sound logic does not necessarily equal truth, and one must consider the spirit of the Law to truly understand the way in which God was instructing humans to act.

Jesus healed on the Sabbath and was accused of sinning. Shiphrah and Puah lied to Pharaoh instead of carrying out his murderous plan. Rahab lied to the guards who were after the spies and helped the Israelites. Dietrich Bonhoeffer deceived the Nazis attempting to prevent them from carrying out their heinous crimes. The logical end of following the “letter of the Law”, according to strict principles of validity, would accuse

⁷² 1 John 1:9

all of these individuals of sinning against God. However, Jesus was the spotless lamb, the sacrifice for our sins. Shiphrah, Puah, and Rahab were blessed for obeying God rather than men. And it is reasonable to believe Bonhoeffer followed where the Holy Spirit led him. Those who would claim that one must rigidly follow the Law to achieve righteousness are promoting legalism, not following the spirit of God's Law.

On the other side of this conundrum is the emotional argument. As with anything, extremes can be very dangerous. Those who reject legalism because of its rigidity must also be careful to not go too far the other direction. If one is thinking mainly in the emotional sense and disregarding logic, one may be in danger of falling into postmodernism which rejects the exclusivity of the Christian faith. D. A. Carson addressed this issue in his book, *The Gagging of God: Christianity Confronts Pluralism*. In the book Carson discusses philosophical pluralism, an ideology which contends "any notion that a particular ideological or religious claim is intrinsically superior to another is necessarily wrong."⁷³ Carson notes this is the main feature in what is labeled postmodernism.⁷⁴ This postmodernism has led to some erroneous conclusions from people who profess the Christian faith. The next section will explore some of the issues associated with postmodernism, its effects on the church, and a discussion about the necessity of truth.

Postmodernism

Scripture states, "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; fools

⁷³ Carson, D. A., *The Gagging of God: Christianity Confronts Pluralism*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), 19.

⁷⁴ Carson, *The Gagging of God*, 19.

despise wisdom and instruction.”⁷⁵ So what happens when human beings decide they are now the authority? Reading the book of Judges can offer some insight. The main problem is seen through-out Judges 17-21. Both verses that begin and end this pericope (17:6 and 21:25) state the problem plainly: “In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes.” This concept may sound good to modern people, especially those living in the United States. There is no king and everyone is free to live as he or she chooses! That sounds like the deeply held belief of most freedom-loving Americans, right? Well, not exactly. As one of the founding fathers and second President of the United States, John Adams, wrote to officers in the Massachusetts Militia, “Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious People. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other.”⁷⁶ When everyone simply does what is right in his or her own eyes, without regard to any higher power, it leads to a world full of selfishness and destruction. Autonomy, a word literally meaning “self-law,” is dangerous when one is relying alone on one’s own emotions. Jeremiah warns: “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?”⁷⁷ The founders of the United States, men who were products of the Enlightenment, believed in freedom and liberty as a right. But they recognized those rights came from a higher power. That is why the preamble to the Declaration of Independence states people were endowed by their Creator with

⁷⁵ Proverbs 1:7

⁷⁶ “From John Adams to Massachusetts Militia, 11 October 1798,” Founders Online, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Adams/99-02-02-3102>.

⁷⁷ Jeremiah 17:9

certain unalienable rights.⁷⁸ These men were not rejecting authority altogether; they were rejecting a tyrannical government. They set up a democratic republic to allow for the people to exercise their God-given freedoms and not be forced to worship in the way a human government told them they must. They were not anarchists; they were revolutionaries who recognized that while being subject to a tyrannical government is a terrible fate, people should not live as if there is no authority outside of themselves. This is where postmodernism goes wrong.

The Rise of Postmodernism

Before the Enlightenment, the prevailing assumption was that authority and knowledge came from God (or the gods) who passed authority and some of that knowledge down to monarchs and religious leaders.⁷⁹ Classical Greece saw a Philosophical shift because of the Greek philosophers Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, who are noted for recognizing order in nature and the ability of humans to reason. In fact, Aristotle is credited as establishing formal logic: arguments based on deductive reasoning as well as using syllogism and mathematics.⁸⁰ These Greek ideas were carried on by the Romans who, after Alexander the Great had conquered the known world, took over and began to make commerce between distant lands easier. Roads were constructed for better

⁷⁸ The Declaration of Independence can be found at <https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/declaration>

⁷⁹ Callum G. Brown, *Postmodernism for Historians*. First edition. (New York: Routledge, 2013), 12. <http://aaron.swbts.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&site=eds-live&db=cat03589a&AN=swbts.b1871386>.

⁸⁰ Justin Humphreys, "Aristotle," Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy, accessed July 13, 2021, <https://iep.utm.edu/aristotl/>.

traveling; and instead in contrast to the Greek city-states which largely excluded outsiders, the Romans incorporated outsiders into their way of life. This led to the 200 years of peace in the Roman Empire, or the “Pax Romana.” All of this allowed other people groups to assimilate and become Romanized, bringing different nationalities together.⁸¹ These changes opened the door for more ideas being exchanged between different cultures. The concepts and theories discussed in Athens, the center of philosophical thought during its heyday, could be spread further. It appears that only the elite were involved in these philosophical advancements. Likely those who were poorer had less time for reading and contemplation because they had to work to survive. Those who could afford leisure time were able to think through and discuss these thoughts. Thus, the ones in power were still the focal point of knowledge and authority. This would continue until the Enlightenment swept through Europe.

Scottish historian Callum Brown states, “The Enlightenment created a new centre of intellectual life erected upon a concern for rationality. Rationality was a system of thinking based on Empiricism—discovering reality (or the truth)—then applying reason to derive conclusions and further new thoughts from that knowledge.”⁸² The Enlightenment was a movement spurred on by European intellectuals in the 17th and 18th centuries. They challenged the accepted norms and, seemingly influenced by the ancient Greek philosophers, relied heavily on their own logic and reasoning capabilities, also

⁸¹ Richard Hingley, *Globalizing Roman Culture: Unity, Diversity and Empire* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 34.

⁸² Brown, *Postmodernism for Historians*, 13.

called empiricism.⁸³ Art and philosophy shifted; new political ideas forged new governments; and people's ideas about nature, humanity, morality, and God started to change drastically as well.⁸⁴

Two of the major philosophers of the Enlightenment, Immanuel Kant and David Hume, discussed morality but diverged from each other in significant ways. While Kant did not believe one could know that there is a God, he argued that it would be a misuse of the mind to not operate as if God exists.⁸⁵ Hume and Kant both believed in the individual's ability to reason; but Hume was a naturalist, who believed morality could be explained without a "supreme being." Kant commented on Hume in his *Critique of Pure Reason*:

If I were to ask the dispassionate David Hume—a philosopher endowed, in a degree that few are, with a well-balanced judgment: What motive induced you to spend so much labour and thought in undermining the consoling and beneficial persuasion that reason is capable of assuring us of the existence, and presenting us with a determinate conception of a Supreme Being?—his answer would be: Nothing but the desire of teaching reason to know its own powers better, and, at the same time, a dislike of the procedure by which that faculty was compelled to support foregone conclusions, and prevented from confessing the internal weaknesses which it cannot but feel when it enters upon a rigid self-examination.⁸⁶

Hume held a high view of reason and believed it was necessary to distinguish between right and wrong. However, he did not believe that reason was the ultimate authority; human passion, he felt, is what drove people to act. Hume wrote, "Reason is, and ought only to be the slave of the passions, and can never pretend to any other office

⁸³ Brown, *Postmodernism for Historians*, 16-17.

⁸⁴ Brown, *Postmodernism for Historians*, 16-17.

⁸⁵ McCumber, *Time and Philosophy*, 20.

⁸⁶ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*. (Auckland: The Floating Press, 2009), 783.

than to serve and obey them.”⁸⁷ As a naturalist, Hume discounted metaphysics and claimed its ideas were illegitimate. He was also opposed to the idea of miracles. In his famous works disputing the occurrence of miracles he would argue that they were a violation of the laws of nature. Hume may not have explicitly stated that miracles were impossible, but he did not believe that humans could prove a supernatural miraculous event had occurred and, thus, miracles were rendered at the very least highly improbable. Hume believed that, if one examined the claim of a miracle further, one would find the cause of the event to be within nature and, in fact, conclude that humans are incapable of really *knowing* anything that is outside nature. This inevitably led Hume to the conclusion of agnosticism—the belief that mankind cannot know if there is a God. Based on Hume’s influence, naturalistic ideas started to thrive; and there was a push to consider emotions, the passion which was most responsible for human actions, as more important than, or at least equal to, logic and reason in trying to determine truth.

From the Enlightenment came what is known as “Modernism.” Coming about in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, modernism was a rejection of institutions and traditions that were considered “outdated.”⁸⁸ There was hope of a utopian future for human life and society, spurred on by a belief in human progress. Early modernists still relied heavily on logic and rationalism as the basis for belief with an emphasis put on scientific discoveries. Scientists were becoming the accepted authority on many topics and the majority of people still believed that one could determine whether something was

⁸⁷ David Hume, *Treatise of Human Nature: Being an Attempt to Introduce the Experimental Method of Reasoning into Moral Subjects*. (Kithcner: Batoche Books, 1998), 285.

⁸⁸ Brown, *Postmodernism for Historians*, 8.

true or false (and right or wrong) in a universally objective sense. However, this pillar of thought began to crumble.

The human ability to determine universal, objective truth was being heavily challenged and modernist philosophers started to develop the idea that truth itself was merely relative. Nietzsche, for example, considered truth to be the “last God”⁸⁹ and asserted that truth is purely a matter of perspective. This theory was maintained by postmodernist philosopher Michel Foucault who argued that truth should not be given a position of supremacy. John McCumber states Foucault believed that, “truth is not so special that we should pursue it at all costs.”⁹⁰ If truth is merely perspectival and there is no ultimate authority to which one must submit, then this attitude seems warranted. Postmodernists prefer this line of thinking because they find truth claims problematic. Indeed, they tend to think the idea of a universal truth is only pushed to hold power over others. As Tim Keller explained in *Reasons for God*, “Inspired by Foucault, many say that all truth-claims are power plays. When you claim to have the truth, you are trying to get power and control over other people.”⁹¹

Though postmodernist thinkers pride themselves on not submitting to structure or authority, there are two underlying principles to which they hold. The first is the inability of humans to fully represent reality in what is written, spoken, or seen; and, naturally, that means no one person can really be an authority on anything, much less everything.

⁸⁹ John McCumber, *Time and Philosophy: A History of Continental Thought*. (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2011), 329.

⁹⁰ McCumber, *Time and Philosophy*, 319.

⁹¹ Timothy Keller, *The Reason for God: Belief in an Age of Skepticism*. (New York: Penguin, 2018), 37.

Callum Brown puts it this way: “With an inability to represent reality, no authoritative account can exist of anything. Nobody can know everything about a subject, and there is never only one authority on a given subject. This means that the definition I (or anybody else) provide of postmodernism will never be complete or authoritative.”⁹² This also means there is no way to truly nail down what those who are “postmodern” believe because their beliefs are built on subjectivism. Even in his book *Postmodernism for Historians*, Brown expects his readers to be left with questions and have doubts. Brown goes on to say, “Postmodernism is not an ideology. It is not like Marxism, or liberalism, or conservatism, or fascism. Nor is it a state of government . . . nor is it a set of coherent beliefs (like a religion). . . . However, postmodernism does have ideological implications. It *enables* a whole host of ideologies to exist.”⁹³ It “enables” other ideologies to exist because it denies the ability of humans to know absolute objective truth. Thus, humans are incapable of saying anything is completely wrong. Still, postmodernists see there are many problems in the world and they seem to believe there are answers, even if humans are not capable of fully knowing the truth. James Beilby observes,

The defining characteristic of *postmodernism* is best thought of as a loss of confidence in the modern project and its attempt to formulate perfect, indubitable answers to the questions humans ask. Postmodernism (in its nonrelativistic variety), therefore, does not question the possibility of truth or knowledge. It questions only whether our beliefs are absolutely certain and whether our descriptions of reality are perfect and exhaustive.⁹⁴

According to Beilby, postmodernists do not reject that truth exists, just that

⁹² Brown, *Postmodernism for Historians*, 7.

⁹³ Brown, *Postmodernism for Historians*, 9.

⁹⁴ James K. Beilby, *Thinking about Christian Apologetics: What It Is and Why We Do It*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2011, 125.

humans are incapable of knowing an objective, universal truth. This likely came about because of the myriad of perspectives one encounters on any given subject. Beilby says, “This loss of confidence in the modernistic quest for certainty was caused, at least partially, by the realization that all human knowledge is perspectival or contextual and, therefore, to some degree subjective. There is no perfectly neutral perspective from which we can assess the truth value of beliefs.”⁹⁵ This sounds reasonable when considering human beings—even the wisest people who have ever lived were still only in their own context and did not have perfect insight into all situations and cultures on the planet. So how could they know everything there is to know? It is impossible for humans.

But what if there is a being who is outside of the natural realm and unconstrained by the finite human mind? A being who *does* know everything, all possible perspectives, and could inform humans of objective, universal truths? Christians believe there is such a being. He is the spaceless, timeless, immaterial, intelligent, omnipotent, Creator of the universe who has revealed Himself and universal objective truths to human beings through the Bible.

Though Christian tradition accepts the Bible as the revealed Word of God, the Christian church is still full of human beings who are prone to deception and will be affected in some ways by the culture. The following section will discuss this reality.

Postmodernism and the Church

Scripture warns repeatedly about false teachers⁹⁶ and states God gave apostles,

⁹⁵ Beilby, *Thinking about Christian Apologetics*, 125.

⁹⁶ Matthew 23, Acts 20:28-30, 2 Timothy 4:3-4, and 2 Peter 2 to name a few.

prophets, evangelists, shepherds, and teachers to equip the saints to keep them from being swept away by different teachings (paraphrased from Ep 4:11-16). Still, the church has not been immune to the ideas of postmodernism. Just as in the secular world, in the body of Christ there have been changes in ways individuals think. Pre-modern thinking according to Reverend W. Manning back in 1913, reflected the previously accepted authority of councils and traditions: “Men were content to believe because of the decision of Councils or the traditions of the Church.”⁹⁷ This is consistent with the mindset that God passed knowledge and authority down to the monarchy and religious leaders. But even before the Enlightenment there was a huge shift in thinking which eventually turned into the Protestant Reformation.

The Roman Catholic Church was seen as the main authority on all religious matters in the west and had become a political power as well.⁹⁸ Most of the common folk could not read so the ultimate authority to which people must submit, the Bible, was not accessible to them. They relied on the clergy to lead them in the truth of God’s revealed word. But when the clergy were not acting faithfully to Scripture, how would the people really know?

Martin Luther, incensed at the corruption he saw in the Catholic leaders, nailed his 95 Theses to the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg, on October 31, 1517. These were 95 points of debate—the issues Luther had with the way the papacy conducted its

⁹⁷ William T. Manning, “What Is Modernism?” *Modern Churchman* 2, no. 12 (March 1913): 583. <http://aaron.swbts.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&site=eds-live&db=lsdar&AN=ATLA0001942545>.

⁹⁸ Pierre Berthoud, and Pieter J. Lalleman, *The Reformation : Its Roots and Its Legacy*. (Eugene, Oregon: Pickwick Publications, 2017) np. <https://search.ebscohost.com.aaron.swbts.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=1619377&site=eds-live>.

dealings with the people and carrying out their duties. He was adamant that the priests were abusing their power and misleading those who looked to them for spiritual guidance. The Catholic church had been selling “indulgences” which were meant to ease the punishment in the next life for sins committed in this life. The doctrine held that people would end up in Purgatory, a place people went after death to continue to pay off their sin-debt. Luther questioned these teachings, especially the teaching on working one’s way into heaven which is contradictory to Scriptural teachings, particularly Ephesians 2:8-9, “For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.” Luther was steadfast in proclaiming the real authority was Scripture alone, and salvation came about from faith through grace, not by works.⁹⁹

Luther’s “rebellion” against the Catholic church was the beginning of the Protestant Reformation. Soon other Protestant denominations would come about, led by men like Ulrich Zwingli and John Calvin. Though King Henry VIII was originally a staunch defender of the Catholic church, he became upset Pope Clement VII would not annul his marriage to Catherine of Aragon so he could marry Anne Boleyn. After King Henry married Anne in a secret ceremony and had his marriage to Catherine declared invalid, the Pope excommunicated the king. The king found that parliament had passed

⁹⁹ Bridget Heal. “Martin Luther and the German Reformation.” *History Today* 67, no. 3 (March 2017): 28–36.
<http://aaron.swbts.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&site=eds-live&db=rlh&AN=121659765>. (This whole article contains a lot of information on the reformation that was used in this section).

an act stating the crown was the true head of the English Church,¹⁰⁰ so Henry took up the mantle and continued to be separate from the Roman Catholic Church while still promoting most Catholic doctrines. The English church would stay under the headship of the English monarchy and eventually become the Protestant “Anglican” denomination. All the chaos that came out of this tumultuous time likely caused many people to question who really had authority on religious matters. As K. Scott Oliphint notes, the effects of the reformation were huge: “The reformation brought with it, not only reform in theological thinking per se, but a reform in the way in which theology relates to philosophy, and thus in the way in which we think about the relationship of faith to reason.”¹⁰¹

After the Enlightenment, which occurred around 200 years after the Reformation, more and more people started to put their trust in empirical science and rely heavily on reason, which many believed was incompatible with faith. Advances in the natural sciences brought naturalistic explanations for things which used to be attributed to “the gods” in ancient times. This led atheists to suggest they had disproven the existence of God. While anyone who was involved in religion would not believe that the existence of God had been disproven, they were less likely to hold to a faith simply because the leaders of the church told them it was true. They would either try to justify their faith rationally or hold to the belief that their own personal experiences were enough evidence

¹⁰⁰ W. J. Torrance Kirby, “Lay Supremacy: Reform of the Canon Law of England from Henry VIII to Elizabeth I (1529-1571).” *Reformation & Renaissance Review* 8, no. 3 (December 2006): 353. <https://doi.org/10.1558/rrr.v8i3.349>.

¹⁰¹ K. Scott Oliphint, *Reasons for Faith: Philosophy in the Service of Theology*. (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Pub, 2006), 5.

for it to be true. According to Manning, modernism may have driven deeper held beliefs. He states, “But I say this, with the firmest conviction, that the things we really believe, the faiths by which we live, are the truths that we have appropriated, tested, experienced.”¹⁰² Manning believes that faith is “more real” to the individuals who have experienced it, and those individuals are more likely to adhere to their beliefs.

There is truth to this, Christians believe in a personal relationship with Jesus, and the Holy Spirit who guides.¹⁰³ But it is important to not simply trust in one’s own experiences and feelings. Christians are instructed to take every thought captive¹⁰⁴ and not rely on their own understanding.¹⁰⁵ The danger of relying too heavily on personal feelings is that one may start to believe oneself to be the ultimate authority. C.S. Lewis pointed out in *God in the Dock*, “The ancient man approached God (or even the gods) as the accused person approaches his judge. For the modern man, the roles are quite reversed. He is the judge: God is in the dock.”¹⁰⁶ Instead of submitting to Him, people have decided that they are the authority and will decide if God measures up. They compare and weigh Him according to their own flawed judgment.

The elevated perception of personal feelings, along with the rejection of the possibility of mankind to know absolute, universal truth, has brought about a new movement among those who claim to be followers of Christ. This is the Emergent

¹⁰² Manning, “What Is Modernism?”, 583.

¹⁰³ John 15:26

¹⁰⁴ 2 Corinthians 10:5

¹⁰⁵ Proverbs 3:5

¹⁰⁶ C. S. Lewis, *God in the Dock: Essays on Theology and Ethics*. Ed. Walter Hooper. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014), 268.

Church movement. This “Emergent” church movement came out of the “Emerging” Church movement that was formed after the Leadership Network hosted a conference discussing what it meant to be the Church among the growing postmodern culture. This Emerging group included many young pastors, among them: Doug Paggitt, Brian McLaren, and Mark Driscoll. According to Driscoll, “the Emerging church is a broad category that encompasses a wide variety of churches and Christians who are seeking to be effective missionaries wherever they live.”¹⁰⁷ Driscoll still claims association with the Emerging Church but has distanced himself from those who are in the Emergent Church camp. In the article “A Pastoral Perspective on the Emergent Church” Driscoll states, “What ties each of these types of Emerging Christians together is a missiological conversation about what a faithful church should believe and do to reach Western culture. However, beyond that there is little unity because there is widespread disagreement on what counts as faithful doctrine and practices.”¹⁰⁸ Driscoll says growing theological differences caused him to distance himself from the others. Though he still considers many of the men in the Emergent movement friends, he makes it clear he is worried about their doctrine. In the article he points out eight important theological issues, the last point being authority.

This issue is perhaps the most difficult of all. Much of this conversation is happening online with blogs and chat rooms. However, as the conversation becomes a conflict, the inherent flaw of postmodernism is becoming a practical obstacle to unity because there is no source of authority to determine what constitutes orthodox or heretical doctrine.

¹⁰⁷ Mark Driscoll, “A Pastoral Perspective on the Emergent Church.” *Criswell Theological Review* 3, no. 2 (Spr 2006): 89.
<http://aaron.swbts.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&site=eds-live&db=lsdar&AN=ATLA0001556921>

¹⁰⁸ Driscoll, “A Pastoral Perspective on the Emergent Church,” 90.

With the authority of Scripture open for debate and even long-established Church councils open for discussion (e.g. the Council of Carthage that denounced Pelagius as a heretic for denying human sinfulness), the conversation continues while the original purpose of getting on mission may be overlooked because there is little agreement on the message of the mission of the Church.¹⁰⁹

Rob Bell, another influential leader in the Emergent movement wrote a book called *Velvet Elvis: Repainting the Christian Faith*. In this book he questions the necessity of holding on to some Christian doctrine. He considers these teachings to be like springs on a trampoline that can be taken out, examined, stretched, and replaced. He argues that some Christians treat doctrine like they are bricks in a wall, and if you take one out it all falls apart. He asks, “But if the whole faith falls apart when we reexamine and rethink one spring, then it wasn’t that strong in the first place, was it?”¹¹⁰ Earlier in the book he wrote, “Jesus at one point claimed to be the ‘the way, the truth, and the life.’ Jesus was not making claims about one religion being better than all other religions. That completely misses the point, the depth, and the truth. Rather, he was telling those who were following him that his way is the way to the depth of reality.”¹¹¹ Bell appears to be putting a postmodern spin on the words of Jesus. After Jesus made the above mentioned statement He continued with, “No one comes to the Father except through me.”¹¹² To say that this does not demonstrate Jesus making an exclusive claim over any other religion is baffling. Later in the book, Bell says he affirms the virgin birth of Christ, doctrine of the

¹⁰⁹ Driscoll, “A Pastoral Perspective on the Emergent Church,” 91-92.

¹¹⁰ Rob Bell, *Velvet Elvis: Repainting the Christian Faith* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2012), 13.

¹¹¹ Bell, *Velvet Elvis*, 5-6.

¹¹² John 14:6b

Trinity, and inspiration of the Bible; yet he also questions if the virgin birth is really an important doctrine to uphold. Though it is not wrong to ask questions about doctrine, for a “pastor” to have seemingly so little understanding of Scripture’s purpose and what constitutes essential Christian doctrine is alarming to say the least.

Another leader in the Emergent movement is Doug Pagitt, who participated in a book with Mark Driscoll, John Burke, Dan Kimball, and Karen Ward titled *Listening to the Beliefs of the Emerging Churches*. In this book Pagitt writes, “I hold that a reading of history ought to instruct us to create ways of thought that are useful but temporary. Complex understandings meant for all people in all places, for all times, are simply not possible.”¹¹³ To justify his comment he points out that Peter did not believe God would work through Gentiles until the conversion of Cornelius in Acts 10. However, this change came from a revelation from God, not just Peter feeling an uneasiness with Biblical teaching. And this was revealed to Peter through a dream which the Holy Spirit confirmed with signs through the Gentiles. In another book, *A Christianity Worth Believing*, Pagitt states, “The Bible gains its authority from God and the communities who grant it authority.”¹¹⁴ He continues this thought and says that he believes the Bible because he believes in God but thinks anyone who does not believe in God will not believe the Bible. But does the Bible lack authority just because someone rejects God? That assertion sounds illogical. A child can decide his parent is not the authority all he

¹¹³ Robert E. Webber et al., *Listening to the Beliefs of Emerging Churches: Five Perspectives*. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), 137.

¹¹⁴ Doug Pagitt, *A Christianity Worth Believing: Hope-Filled, Open-Armed, Alive-and-Well Faith for the Left Out, Left Behind, and Let Down in Us All*. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2008), 64.

wants but that does not change who the parent is in the relationship.

Brian McLaren, a main leader of the Emergent movement, if there is such a position, likes to describe the movement as a “conversation.” They are just having a conversation of what God has really said and challenging their own understandings of Scripture. Despite the eerily similar idea present in Genesis 3:1 when the serpent asked Eve, “Did God actually say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden’?”, it is possible to ask these questions honestly with a pure heart. And it would be good to offer the benefit of the doubt to those involved in the Emergent movement. Though, in his book called *A Generous Orthodoxy*, McLaren writes, “I must add, though, that I don’t believe making disciples must equal making adherents to the Christian religion. It may be advisable in many (not all!) circumstances to help people become followers of Jesus *and* remain within their Buddhist, Hindu, or Jewish contexts.”¹¹⁵ One wonders what McLaren means by remaining in the old context. If he means to stay and make disciples in that community, then sure! But Paul makes it clear in Ephesians 4:17-24 Christians are to leave their old lives behind and be renewed in the spirit of their minds.

Both McLaren and Bell have also heartily encouraged readers to study Ken Wilber’s *Theory of Everything*. But who is Ken Wilber? Howard Lew informs, “Although he is primarily Buddhist, he has included many other approaches—Christian mysticism, Vedanta, Zen, Transcendental Meditation, Kashmir Shaivism, Kabbalah, Daism, Sufism and more. Wilber’s writing began as his attempt to piece together for

¹¹⁵ Brian D. McLaren, *A Generous Orthodoxy: Why I Am a Missional, Evangelical, Post-Protestant, Liberal/Conservative, Mystical/Poetical, Biblical, Charismatic/Contemplative, Fundamentalist/Calvinist, Anabaptist/Anglican, Methodist, Catholic, Green, Incarnational, Depressed-Yet-Hopeful, Emergent, Unfinished Christian* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 260.

himself a common map of the highest levels of mystical experience.”¹¹⁶ Wilber claims to have attained a higher level of consciousness and be able to integrate the “on target” elements of various worldviews while he discards the “off target” parts.¹¹⁷ Lew says of Wilber,

Wilber’s perspective is supported by his own direct experience of the highest levels of spiritual consciousness, but he also draws upon a thorough understanding of traditional sources. He has access to the state of nondual consciousness, where spiritual realities are integrated with the ordinary world. He remains conscious as the “Witness” during waking, dreaming, and deep sleep.¹¹⁸

In Wilber’s *Theory of Everything* he discusses the spiral of human development.

A concept of developmental psychology describing how human consciousness progresses. On this chart there are currently nine levels, but this can expand because spirals do not necessarily have an end point.¹¹⁹ Of these possible nine levels, level four is of particular note:

Blue: Mythic Order. Life has meaning, direction, and purpose, with outcomes determined by an all-powerful Other or Order. This righteous Order enforces a code of conduct based on absolutist and unvarying principles of “right” and “wrong.” Violating the code or rules has severe, perhaps everlasting repercussions.¹²⁰

This level sounds similar to teachings found in the Bible. However, according to Wilber, it is considered merely the fourth of nine levels of human consciousness. This

¹¹⁶ Lew Howard, *Introducing Ken Wilber: Concepts for an Evolving World* (Bloomington, IN: AuthorHouse, 2005), 1.

¹¹⁷ Howard, *Introducing Ken Wilber*, 8.

¹¹⁸ Howard, *Introducing Ken Wilber*, 1.

¹¹⁹ Howard, *Introducing Ken Wilber*, 118.

¹²⁰ Ken Wilber, *A Theory of Everything: An Integral Vision for Business, Politics, Science, and Spirituality* (Boston: Shambhala, 2001), 9-10.

level is placed right above the “Power Gods” level which is equated with rebellious youth, epic heroes, soldiers of fortune, James Bond villains, etc. and placed right behind the “Scientific Achievement” level, escaping the herd mentality, and seeking truth and meaning in individual terms. Postmodernists may not like to see they are listed as low as level 6, but at least it is considered the highest level of first-tier thinking. Still, one must make a quantum leap in human consciousness from postmodernism to reach tier two.¹²¹ These observations may cause one to wonder if Wilber believes the teachings found in Scripture rank this low in human consciousness or if he has a different view about what Jesus taught while on earth. Either way, this is the thinking that influences Brain McLaren. In his book *Generous Orthodoxy*, McLaren writes, “In this chapter I am trying (with Ken Wilber’s help) to make clear that I believe there is something above and beyond the current alternatives of modern fundamentalism/absolutism *and* pluralistic relativism.”¹²² He says it has taken him over 10 years to envision this and then states, “This ‘above and beyond’ is, I believe, the way of Jesus, which is the way of love and the way of embrace. It integrates what has gone before so that something new can emerge.”¹²³

Ecclesiastes 1:9 proclaims, “. . .there is nothing new under the sun.” And though Wilber’s approach may sound like a new way of thinking to some, he even admits that it is not all that new. Wilber acknowledges he pulls from ancient wisdom when he states, “The ‘master template’ that is emerging from this modern research is therefore able to

¹²¹ Howard, *Introducing Ken Wilber*, 9-11

¹²² McLaren, *A Generous Orthodoxy*, 287.

¹²³ McLaren, *A Generous Orthodoxy*, 287.

honor and connect with the essence of the world's wisdom traditions. . . . The goal of an integral approach is thus a judicious blend of ancient wisdom and modern knowledge.”¹²⁴

Wilber may believe he is improving on “ancient wisdom” with the help of modern knowledge, but the issue with that line of thinking goes back to the Garden of Eden.

Abdu Murray, in his book *Saving Truth*, explains the reason Adam and Eve were prohibited from eating the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. He says, “If they did so, they would become aware of evil, which would lead to a desire not just to *know* good and evil, but to *determine* good and evil. Satan used our innate human preference to exert our own sovereignty to tempt Adam and Eve away from the communion with God we were created for and towards autonomy apart from God.”¹²⁵

This is possibly why Proverbs 3:5 encourages humans not to lean on their own understanding. It is important for people, not merely to trust their own instincts and ideas, but to honestly search for truth with the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

The Importance of Truth

The assertion that truth is unimportant leads to a plethora of problems. What is the point in reading a book if not to discover the truth about something? And why would someone write a book if not to try and articulate truth to the readers? Surely those who make the claim believe they are correct and have, in fact, hit on the truth. As Keller points out in his criticism of Foucault:

Foucault was pressing the truth of his analysis on others even as he denied the

¹²⁴ Ken Wilber, *The Eye of the Spirit: An Integral Vision for a World Gone Slightly Mad*, (Boston: Shambhala, 2001), 34.

¹²⁵ Abdu Murray, *Saving Truth: Finding Meaning & Clarity in a Post-Truth World*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2018, 20.

very category of truth. Some kind of truth-claims, then, seems unavoidable. The inconsistency of working against oppression when you refuse to admit there is such a thing as truth is the reason that postmodern “theory” and “deconstruction” is perhaps on the wane.¹²⁶

Yes, there must be some kind of truth claim. But why not assume all truth claims are equally valid? Would it not be nice to just affirm everyone’s lived experience? This may sound like a positive solution. However, this is not possible when opposing belief systems make competing claims. For example, an individual who has a belief system that is polytheistic (containing many “gods”) cannot view the Judeo-Christian belief system, which is monotheistic, as equally valid. And neither of those belief systems can accept atheism, because atheism claims there is not even one God, let alone many. There is also the issue of factions in some religions who believe it is “good” to attack those who are not of them. If all truth claims are equally valid, why should one discourage this behavior? Accepting these belief systems as possibly complimentary would be unreasonable. However, this is not surprising since postmodernism is inherently unreasonable. This is observed in the following statement from Callum Brown:

We are proposing to attack the Enlightenment as a philosophy of knowledge, despite the fact that it forms the very basis of the method of the scholar. As the French postmodern philosopher Jacques Derrida wrote in 1967, “the revolution against reason can be made only within it”, So, we use reason as a method to undermine reason as a philosophy.¹²⁷

This does not sound like a winning formula. Postmodernists are attempting to *reason* their way out of needing reason. The absurd truth is that in using reason for this purpose, if they succeed, they disprove their own position.

¹²⁶ Timothy Keller, *The Reason for God: Belief in an Age of Skepticism*. (New York: Penguin, 2018), 37-38.

¹²⁷ Brown, *Postmodernism for Historians*, 31.

An opponent of Christianity might retort, “Perhaps post-modernism is unreasonable, but you claim to have faith. If someone has faith it is basically a blind allegiance to something regardless of the facts, right?” Well, that is what Richard Dawkins says in his book *The God Delusion*—he calls faith “belief without evidence.”¹²⁸ When discussing faith, Dawkins states, “As to whether it is a symptom of a psychiatric disorder, I am inclined to follow Robert M. Pirsig, author of *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*: ‘When one person suffers from a delusion, it is called insanity. When many people suffer from a delusion it is called Religion.’”¹²⁹ Is it not unreasonable to believe something without evidence?

Yes, that would be unreasonable; but Dawkins’ assertion is flat out wrong. There are other definitions of “faith”; and, in common vernacular, people utilize these other definitions frequently. In the book *Stand Firm*, written by Paul Gould, Travis Dickinson, and R. Keith Loftin, faith is referred to as “ventured trust”; and the authors claim, “Faith cannot be ‘belief without evidence’ since it is not a belief to begin with. It is a state that may involve beliefs or may be caused by beliefs, although it is not itself a belief. It seems to be a state of trust.”¹³⁰ Further, former cold case detective J. Warner Wallace, who became a Christian after investigating the claims of the Gospel-writers, states in his book *Cold Case Christianity*: “As I began to read through the Bible as a skeptic, I came to understand that the biblical definition of faith is a well-placed and reasonable inference

¹²⁸ Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion*. (New York: Houghton Mills, 2008), 232.

¹²⁹ Dawkins, *The God Delusion*, 28.

¹³⁰ Paul M. Gould, Travis Dickinson, and R. Keith Loftin, *Stand Firm: Apologetics and the Brilliance of the Gospel* (Nashville: B & H Academic, 2018), 29-30.

based on evidence. . . . I now understand that it's possible for reasonable people to examine the evidence and conclude that Christianity is true."¹³¹

One can also put one's "faith" *in* someone else because one trusts that person. John Lennox explains, "In our everyday usage of the word 'faith' and 'belief', we tend to distinguish between 'belief that something', and 'belief in someone'. Here, once more, it is surely obvious that trust in other human beings is based on evidence, unless we happen to be gullible."¹³² This correlates with the Biblical usage of the term as well. The most common way "faith" is used by Christians is in discussing putting faith in Jesus, which means to believe *in* Him. And even that does not mean believing in Jesus without evidence, but rather trusting Him *because* of the evidence. As John wrote in John 20:31, "But these were written that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name." John had provided testimony in the hopes that people would put their faith in Jesus as a result of considering the evidence, not in opposition to or without evidence!

John also rebuts the idea that Christianity is illogical. When he wrote, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (Jn 1:1), he used the Greek word *logos* for "word," despite other words being available, because it had a significant meaning in Greek thought. Those familiar with the pre-Socratic philosopher Heraclitus of Ephesus would likely understand John's purpose in doing so.

¹³¹ J. Warner Wallace, *Cold-Case Christianity: A Homicide Detective Investigates the Claims of the Gospels*. Colorado Springs: David C Cook, 2013, 51.

¹³² John C. Lennox, *Gunning for God: Why the New Atheists Are Missing the Target*. (Oxford: Lion, 2011), 41.

For an explanation, Vladimir de Beer gives an account in an article discussing Heraclitus in *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review*:

Just as the cosmos has positive connotations of goodness and beauty, for Heraclitus the logos has rational connotations linking it with justice, law, and soul. The logos is therefore the cosmic principle that establishes rational order in the world. It could be stated that the cosmos displays rationality and intelligibility due to the active presence of the logos.¹³³

John was using this concept to point to Jesus. John 1:3 states, “All things were made through Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made.” This speaks to establishing rational order in the world. These Holy Spirit-inspired words point to the fact the world is ordered and rational because of its Creator. Christianity is not irrational; it is actually the most rational explanation when considering all the evidence.

Unfortunately, there are still people who will try very hard to dismiss these truths because they refuse to accept the fact morality comes from a source outside of humanity. For example, in his book *Faith vs. Fact: Why Science and Religion Are Incompatible*, Jerry Coyne laments the effects of religion on the world. Specifically, the Judeo-Christian worldview which asserts the Bible as the revelation of God and is held as the ultimate authority on morality. He expresses his frustration and states:

Catholicism is seen as one of the less extreme faiths, yet if it's beliefs didn't rest on Scripture, this is what would diminish: opposition to abortion, euthanasia, and stem cell research; opposition to divorce; belief in the sinfulness of homosexuality; cramping of the sex lives of consenting human adults; the second-class status of women (at least in the church). . . opposition to birth control and HPV vaccination; the incidence of AIDS; and the terrorizing of children with guilt and threats of eternal damnation.¹³⁴

¹³³ Vladimir de Beer, “The Cosmic Role of the Logos, As Conceived from Heraclitus until Eriugena.” *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 59 (1–4). 2014, 16.
<http://aaron.swbts.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&site=eds-live&db=lsdar&AN=ATLAI60K160502001085>.

¹³⁴ Jerry A. Coyne, *Faith Versus Fact: Why Science and Religion are Incompatible*. (New York: Penguin, 2015), 251.

One of the dangers of arguing with an emotional mindset and disregarding logic is coming to ridiculous conclusions. Imagine thinking that murdering babies (abortion), euthanasia, breaking up the family in divorce, and being promiscuous are preferable and should be promoted in society.

Christians believe that life is precious and should be preserved when possible. God hates divorce¹³⁵ for multiple reasons, but among them is the fact that it breaks families apart. Anyone who has been impacted by divorce can attest it has a huge impact on children, even when they are grown adults. If children are not involved, divorce is still the separation of two people who became one flesh.¹³⁶ Though there are some who believe promiscuity is empowering, this is not the way God designed humans to use sexuality. Finally, women are not second-class within the church. Men and women were created by God and one gender is not more important than the other. If one compares Scripture, particularly the Old Testament, to any other ancient document and observes how women are viewed, the treatment of women in Scripture is quite “progressive.”¹³⁷ The thought-process that goes in to making the arguments Coyne proclaims is what should be expected when society believes moral authority resides in one’s own emotions and nowhere else.

If truth is only based on human emotions and opinion, it then becomes deadlocked

¹³⁵ Malachi 2:16

¹³⁶ Scripture verses supporting the two becoming one flesh and God’s design for marriage: Ge 2:24, Mt 19:5, Mk 10:8, and Ep 5:31.

¹³⁷ Paul Copan, *Is God a Moral Monster?: Making Sense of the Old Testament God* (Grand Rapids, Baker Books, 2011), 101-109.

in subjectivism. All truth being relative means absolute, objective truth is impossible and the discussion of right or wrong for all people becomes nonsense. Of course, if someone claims that there is no absolute truth, that is claiming an absolute truth, so he undermines his own assertion and is left with a self-defeating argument. But aside from the blatant irrationality of the claim, the biggest issue is the impact this concept could have on society. If all truth is relative, no one can make a definitive judgement about morality. There can be no certain standard to compare differing ideologies or know what is good and what is evil; everyone would simply be stating his or her opinion. If this thought process is accepted, it brings about a chaotic situation. In their book, *I Don't Have Enough Faith to be An Atheist*, Norman Geisler and Frank Turek point this out:

Ideas have consequences. Good ideas have good consequences, and bad ideas have bad consequences. Indeed, many students realize the implications of these bad postmodern ideas and behave accordingly. If we teach students that there is no right and wrong, why are we surprised when a couple of students gun down their classmates or a teenage mother leaves her baby in a trash can? Why should they act 'right' when we teach them that there is no such thing as "right"?¹³⁸

Despite all the problems with the postmodern mentality, one positive is the fact it pushes against the established scientism that pervades Western culture. This scientism, as J. P. Moreland discusses in his book *Scientism and Secularism*, still saturates the United States. This has caused some major shifts in thinking, including the idea that the purpose of life is to seek immediate satisfaction for any desire. Moreland also points out the change in ethics:

The third shift is in ethics, and it goes from positive *duty and virtue* to do-no-harm *minimalism* . . . Given scientism, moral knowledge is impossible. And the loss of moral knowledge has meant the shift from a view in which duty and virtue are central to the moral life, to a minimalist ethical perspective. If virtue and duty are

¹³⁸ Norman L. Geisler, and Frank Turek, *I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2007), 40.

of central concern to the moral life, then there must be moral knowledge available to know what duties and virtues are correct and how one can become a righteous, virtuous person.¹³⁹

Even though postmodernists are right to push against the erroneous idea that science can provide all answers to life's questions, they only do so because Scientism has been labeled as a "universal good." They still reject the idea of a universal, moral objectivity. Many postmodernists seem to operate within a naturalist ideology. If naturalism is true, that would nullify the idea of a moral arbiter outside the natural realm. So, is there any reason to believe that the naturalists get it wrong? C.S. Lewis thought so:

The answer depends on the Metaphysic one holds. If all that exists is Nature, the great mindless interlocking event, if our own deepest convictions are merely the by-products of an irrational process, then clearly there is not the slightest ground for supposing that our sense of fitness and our consequent faith in uniformity tell us anything about a reality external to ourselves. . . . If Naturalism is true we have no reason to trust our conviction that Nature is uniform.¹⁴⁰

In the face of scientific advances in the research of DNA and the discovery of the inner workings of the human cell, which demonstrate the likelihood that life was designed by an intelligent being,¹⁴¹ and the challenges to naturalism that thinkers like C. S. Lewis assert, there are those who are still committed to a naturalist explanation for the world. Famous atheist Richard Dawkins has taken Charles Darwin's theory to increased popularity. He insists that human beings came about through evolution in an unguided

¹³⁹ J. P. Moreland, *Scientism and Secularism: Learning to Respond to a Dangerous Ideology*, (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018), 35.

¹⁴⁰ C. S. Lewis, "Miracles" *The Complete C.S. Lewis Signature Classics*, 8th ed (New York: HarperOne, 2007), 395.

¹⁴¹ For further information on these advances the reader is encouraged to read Douglas Axe, *Undeniable: How Biology Confirms Our Intuition That Life Is Designed*. New York: HarperCollins, 2017; Michael J. Behe, *Darwin Devolves: The New Science About DNA That Challenges Evolution*. New York: HarperCollins, 2019; and Stephen C. Meyer, *Signature in the Cell: DNA and the Evidence for Intelligent Design*. New York: HarperOne, 2010.

process. He states, “Natural selection is the blind watchmaker, blind because it does not see ahead, does not plan consequences, has no purpose in view. Yet the living results of natural selection overwhelmingly impress us with the appearance of design as if by a master watchmaker, impress us with the illusion of design and planning.”¹⁴² But if the human brain was developed by a series of natural, unguided, mindless processes, how could people actually trust the cognitive capabilities it produces? In his book *Can Science Explain Everything?* John Lennox recounts asking this question of atheist colleagues. Lennox regularly challenges other scientists by asking if they would trust their computer if they knew it was the product of an unguided, mindless process. They certainly would not! It would not be sensible to infer something could function properly if it was “accidentally” produced. This led Lennox to conclude: “Naturalism, and therefore atheism, undermines the foundation of the very rationality that is needed to construct or understand or believe in any kind of argument whatsoever, let alone a scientific one. Atheism is beginning to sound like a great self-contradictory delusion.”¹⁴³ If there was no intelligent design behind human beings, there is no reason to accept any belief that a human might come up with even naturalism or postmodernism. Further, if there was an intelligent design behind mankind, it follows that the Designer should have the final say on universal truth claims.

Despite the incessant claims of a world clamoring to be rid of a Higher Being to whom they must submit, all man-made explanations of the world fall short. Hopefully,

¹⁴² Richard Dawkins, *The Blind Watchmaker: Why the Evidence of Evolution Reveals a Universe Without Design* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2015), 29.

¹⁴³ John C. Lennox, *Can Science Explain Everything?* (Oxford: The Good Book, 2019), 49.

mankind will realize their attempts at explaining away the Creator of the universe appear to be futile and will accept the logic of the Word. If they do, they may lose the sense of superiority that pervades this culture, but they also might find the eternal salvation graciously offered by the loving Creator who allows their very existence.

For all of the philosophies from before the Enlightenment through postmodernism there is one constant: Mankind has failed to find a philosophy that can withstand the test of time. What postmodernists get correct is the fact no one human can know absolute truth from him or herself. Though, that does not mean that absolute truth does not exist, but rather it must come from an omnipotent source outside of humanity. Christians believe they have access to the objective truth through the revealed word of God. But in order to understand this truth, humans must rely on Scripture and not allow their subjective feelings to be the ultimate authority over doctrine. This where the emergent movement appears to have gone awry. As D. A. Carson notes, there seems to be “an emphasis on feelings and affections over against linear thought and rationality; on experience over against truth; on inclusion over against exclusion; on participation over against individualism and the heroic loner.”¹⁴⁴ This emphasis on one’s emotions can lead to a rejection of truth found in Scripture, or even the existence of truth altogether. However, recognizing objective truth is the only way to have a coherent worldview.

Conclusion

From the information above one should be able to determine the importance of

¹⁴⁴ D. A. Carson, *Becoming Conversant with the Emerging Church: Understanding a Movement and Its Implications* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), 29.

the proper use of logic and emotion. Since God gave humanity both emotions and a mind capable of reasoning, it is likely He wants both to be used for His glory. Like most gifts from the Lord, each has its purpose and must be used accordingly. When either one is removed from the other, the results are detrimental; but when they are used in harmony the results are beneficial. As John Frame recognized,

It is true, of course, that people sometimes “follow their feelings,” rather than thinking responsibly. But it is also the case that people sometimes follow rationalistic schemes that run contrary to what they know in their “guts” (feelings) to be true. God gives us multiple faculties to serve as a sort of internal system of checks and balances. Sometimes reason saves us from emotional craziness, but emotions can also check the extravagant pretenses of reason.¹⁴⁵

Though, this is only helpful if one is sincerely searching for objective truth rather than “happiness” or “comfort”. As C. S. Lewis recognized, “If you look for truth, you may find comfort in the end: if you look for comfort you will not get either comfort or truth—only soft soap and wishful thinking to begin with and, in the end, despair.”¹⁴⁶ While the truth may not be easy to accept at times, rebelling against the truth will only lead to more problems.

When trying to discover truth, humans should approach the task with humility. While intelligent people may take pride in their knowledge, they should remember the fact that they are finite beings. Humans would do well to recognize the fact they do not, and cannot, know everything. McCumber points this out in *Time and Philosophy* while discussing the limitations confronting continental philosophers:

Since for continental philosophers everything is in time, their own thought must

¹⁴⁵ John M. Frame, *The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 1987), 336.

¹⁴⁶ C. S. Lewis. “Mere Christianity” *The Complete C.S. Lewis Signature Classics*, 8th ed (New York: HarperOne, 2007), 36.

be temporal as well; even their own “foundations” are not exempt from critical challenge. Philosophy’s traditional escape route from miseries and dangers of human affairs—its ancient pretention to deal with a domain where nothing changes, and truth is eternal and necessary—is thus barred to them. As they have done since 1807, continental philosophers live and think today entirely in the shadowy rigors of Plato’s cave.¹⁴⁷

Throughout all of human history one can observe the attempts of mankind to rebel against their Creator. And from before the beginning of human history this Creator had a plan to offer them salvation. When one takes the time to ponder the intricacies of the Creator-creation relationship and the horridness with which men have responded to God, one should be in awe of the mercy and grace extended to the masses.

While contemplating the image of humanity rejecting the authority of God, one might imagine a child kicking and screaming trying to get away from a parent who is holding him or her back from danger. They can complain, plan, and scheme all they want; but, in the end, the Father knows best.

Postmodernism is likely not the end of human rebellion. Indeed, Abdu Murray, in his book *Saving Truth*, already sees the issue afoot in what he calls the post-truth culture:

Where postmodernism failed because it was inherently incoherent, the post-truth mindset may succeed because it is not. It faces the problem of truth head-on. Unlike postmodernism, the post-truth mindset acknowledges objective truth, but subordinates it to preferences. That’s dangerous, as logic and evidence don’t have the same influence over the post-truth mindset that they had over a postmodern.¹⁴⁸

This sounds like a dire situation. So, what can be done? Well, one can take a lesson from the great slave trade abolitionist, William Wilberforce, who discussed the importance of studying Scripture, “It will challenge us to reject a superficial understanding of Christianity and impress on us that it is imperative not to simply be

¹⁴⁷ McCumber, *Time and Philosophy*, 393.

¹⁴⁸ Murray, *Saving Truth*, 14.

religious or moral, but also to master the Bible intellectually, integrate its principles into our lives morally, and put into action what we have learned practically.”¹⁴⁹

Cultures will always have some influence on Christians, but this is why Paul wrote in Romans 12:2, “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.” The struggle between following the Lord or the world is not new, and it would behoove all Christians to recognize this fact. This is especially important if one wants to minister to the upcoming generation. As the Barna Group notes:

Gen Z disciple-making must also actively engage a two-way dynamic: faith in light of culture; culture in light of faith. How we follow Christ is inevitably shaped by the culture in which we find ourselves. But it is at least equally true that the surrounding culture is transformed as *we* are transformed in Christ. How can mentors equip Gen Z not just with information *about* faith but also with critical thinking and experiences that deepen faith? Parents and educators, especially, are positioned to *proactively* guide growing teens to think well about living for Christ in a post-Christian culture.¹⁵⁰

Christians are supposed to be on mission with the Lord to expand His Kingdom and should not be afraid of the philosophies of man, “For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ,”¹⁵¹ nor should they be, “tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about

¹⁴⁹ William Wilberforce, *Real Christianity*, Ed. Bob Beltz (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 2006), 23.

¹⁵⁰ Barna Group, *Gen Z: The Culture, Beliefs, and Motivations Shaping the Next Generation* (Ventura, CA: Barna Group & Impact 360 Institute, 2018), 107.

¹⁵¹ 2 Corinthians 10:4-5

by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes”¹⁵²

because the Lord is with them to guide them. If they are humble and submit to Him, they will be given what they are to say at each particular moment in time.¹⁵³

No matter what the future holds, no matter the philosophies of man; Scripture will be relevant even if humans refuse to recognize its authority. Jesus, after cursing the fig tree and telling the disciples the Kingdom of God was near, concluded the lesson with this statement: “Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.”¹⁵⁴

Ultimately, the only acceptable response for humans, the only proper way to utilize the gifts given by the Lord is to “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul and with all your mind, and with all your strength.”¹⁵⁵ This is done by submitting your heart (emotions) and mind (logic) to the Lordship of Christ. Then approach every issue with humility and a reverence for God and His Word. May the Holy Spirit guide each individual into all truth!¹⁵⁶

¹⁵² Ephesians 4:14b

¹⁵³ Luke 12:11-12

¹⁵⁴ Matthew 24:35, Mark 13:31, Luke 21:33

¹⁵⁵ Luke 10:27

¹⁵⁶ John 16:13

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