

FOR THE LOVE OF
TRUTH
Christianity & Postmodernism
Michael Osborne

Before You Use This File—

A Note to Web Listeners

These notes correspond to a series of six lessons on Christianity and postmodernism given at Grace Baptist Church in East Flat Rock, North Carolina, in February and March of 2004. Before being put onto the BJU Press website with the corresponding six MP3 files, the notes were edited and revised somewhat. Any additional explanations or information are **highlighted in yellow** throughout. One item note highlighted throughout is the small discrepancy in page numbering. Occasionally, the speaker refers to the notes according to the pre-revision pagination.

Occasionally in the MP3 files, Pastor Dayton Walker is heard introducing or concluding the lesson.

FOR THE LOVE OF
TRUTH
Christianity & Postmodernism
Michael Osborne

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

i	Note to Web Listeners
ii	Table of Contents
1	Week 1: Worldviews and Philosophy <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ What is a worldview, and how does it relate to my philosophy and theology?➤ Why is thinking about worldviews important?➤ How does the Christian form a worldview?
5	Week 2: A History of Worldviews <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ How did our society arrive at its present worldview?➤ How do the different facets of a society evolve together around its worldview?
11	Week 3: The Nature of Postmodernism <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ What does the term <i>postmodernism</i> mean?➤ How does postmodernism relate to the worldviews that went before it?➤ What are the key tenets of postmodernism?➤ Should we welcome or repulse postmodernism?
14	Week 4: The Symptoms of Postmodernism <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ How are worldviews expressed in culture?➤ How does postmodernism express itself in culture?
18	Week 5: Forming a Christian Worldview <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ How do we form a logical Christian worldview that speaks to postmodernism?
24	Week 6: Engaging Postmodernism <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ What is apologetics?➤ Why should a Christian use <i>presuppositional</i> apologetics?➤ How do Christians begin to engage postmodernism?

FOR THE LOVE OF
TRUTH
Christianity & Postmodernism
Michael Osborne

Week 1: Worldviews and Philosophy

Terms and Definitions

aesthetics: the philosophy of what is good and beautiful

apologetics: a defense of the faith, or more broadly, bringing the faith to bear in the world.

epistemology: the theory of *knowledge*, that is, how we know, how we know what we know, and how we show what we know.

ethics: the philosophy of right and wrong behavior, choices, actions, and values for such decisions, that is, what we *ought to do*.

metaphysics: the philosophy of the ultimate *nature* of things

objective (adj.): that which has reality apart from an individual knower; that which can be known generally by many knowers.

ontology: the philosophy of *being*, that is, the philosophy about *what is*.

subjective: that which is known according to a subject, that is, that which is known according to an individual knower, “I”; opposite of *objective*.

theodicy: a defense of God’s goodness in light of the existence of evil

“Our theological seminaries hardly ever relate their _____ to their _____, and specifically to the current _____. Thus, men go from the theological seminaries not knowing how to relate to it. It is not that they do not know the _____, but my observation is that most men graduating from our theological seminaries do not know the _____.”

—Francis A. Schaeffer, *He Is There and He Is Not Silent*, 4.

Question 1: What is a worldview?

A worldview is a set of _____ to _____. These are so important that they affect the way we think, the way we make decisions, the values we hold, the things we like to do.

List the basic questions that a worldview must answer.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.

List examples of different worldviews.

What does Ecclesiastes 3:11 teach us about man and worldview thinking?

Give the reference that says that God is near us: _____.

(This space provided for additional notes on the terms in the term box, if you need space.)

Question 2: Why is thinking about worldviews important?

List reasons why we ought to think about worldviews in general and nonbiblical worldviews specifically. Include any appropriate Scripture passages.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.

Question 3: How does the Christian form a worldview?

I. Thoroughly apply the following passages of Scripture.

Colossians 1:14–17. “In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins: Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: For by him _____, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and _____.”

Colossians 2:2–3. “That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgement of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ; In whom are hid _____.”

Proverbs 1:7. “The fear of the LORD is _____: but fools despise wisdom and instruction.”

II. Begin thinking worldview-ishly.

Recognize that everything you see _____.

Relate everything you see to _____.

List examples, if you'd like to.

Note to Web Listeners: The examples brought during the original lesson were as follows.

Stover, Jo Ann. *If Everybody Did*. New York: David McKay Company, 1960.
Reprint. Greenville, SC: BJU Press, 1989.

Note: Bob Jones University Press republished this book. The Bible Integration Coordinators at the Press regularly use *If Everybody Did* to demonstrate that even children's books can be philosophically oriented. While Kant's Categorical Imperative is not a bad motivation for certain social behaviors, it is not sufficient in and of itself to impart true Christian ethics.

PRECALCULUS for Christian Schools. Greenville, SC: BJU Press, 2002. See pages 386–387, “Math and Scripture: Philosophies of Math.”

Canfield, Jack, and Mark Victor Hansen. *Chicken Soup for the Soul: 101 Stories to Open the Heart & Rekindle the Spirit*. Deerfield Beach, FL: Health Communications, Inc., 1993.

Read! Book recommendations for this week:

Osborne, Michael, and Thomas Parr. *What Is Truth? Teacher’s Edition*. Greenville, SC: BJU Press, 2003.

Ramey, Coart, and Bryan Smith. *What Is Truth?* Greenville, SC: BJU Press, 2003.

Schaeffer, Francis A. *The God Who Is There*. 2nd ed. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1982.

Schaeffer, Francis A. *He Is There and He Is Not Silent*. Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1972.

©2004 Michael Osborne. Limited permission is granted to reproduce these notes without alteration and without charge.

FOR THE LOVE OF
TRUTH
Christianity & Postmodernism
Michael Osborne

Week 2: A History of Worldviews

Terms and Definitions

“*Cogito, ergo sum*”: Descartes’s foundational statement for philosophy, meaning “I think; therefore I am”; that is, because I am aware of my own thoughts and doubting, I can be sure of my own existence.

Darwin, Charles: writer of *Origin of Species* (1859); he provided a modern basis for evolutionary thought.

Dialectic: Hegel’s philosophy of change through thesis, antithesis, and synthesis: that is, the constant resolution of opposites.

Enlightenment: a movement begun in Europe that inaugurated the ideals of modernism

“line of despair”: the Christian apologist Francis Schaeffer’s term for the line dividing optimistic hopes for objective certainty and the pessimistic setting aside of those hopes

skepticism: philosophical doubt and uncertainty

tabula rasa: John Locke’s “blank slate”; that is, we are born with a blank mind ready to be filled up with knowledge from experience alone.

“[Eve] also gave a definite answer to the question *How do we know?* She said we know independently of God. She said that God’s authority was to be tested by herself. Thus she came to take the place of ultimate authority. She was no doubt going to test God’s authority by *experience* and *reflection* upon experience. Yet it would be *she*, herself, who should be the final authority.”

—Cornelius Van Til, *Defense of the Faith* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1976), 34.

Thesis: When man abandons God, things begin to _____.

Proverbs 1:7. “The fear of the LORD is

_____ : but fools despise wisdom and instruction.”

Judges 21:25. “In those days there was no king in Israel: _____.”

Question 1: How did our culture arrive at a postmodern worldview?

We will be studying key men and concepts that brought Western philosophy from a _____ worldview, through a _____ worldview, to a _____ worldview. We will focus on _____.

I. Premodern Worldview

- The premodern outlook, part of what secular historians like to call the “Dark Ages,” took for granted that God existed and could provide a good interpretation for all things.
- They believed that God had spoken.
- They believed that the Church was a reliable authority.
- It is true that “Christendom,” as institutionalized in the Roman Catholic Church, abused its authority. To this day, Roman Catholics and Protestants have fundamental disagreements regarding religious authority: Protestants believe in *sola Scriptura* (the Scriptures alone); Roman Catholics mingle the authority of Scriptures with the authority of the institutionalized church.
- Whatever the flaws of tradition and superstition in the premodern epistemology, premoderns did have a confidence about the knowability of truth.

Note to Web Listeners:
This picture is keyed to
What Is Truth? page 232,
the picture labeled
“Premodern.”

Transition: Reformation, Renaissance, and Enlightenment

Describe the effects of the Reformation, Renaissance, and Enlightenment.

_____ is the bogeyman of all of modernist philosophy.

II. Modern Worldview

A. René Descartes

- The founder of philosophical _____.

Describe how Descartes's "I think; therefore I am" was such a worldview shift from the premodern.

Note to Web Listeners:
This picture is keyed to *What Is Truth?* page 232, the picture labeled "Descartes."

B. John Locke

- The founder of philosophical _____.

What did John Locke mean by a *tabula rasa*?

Where do we see John Locke's methods turning up today?

Note to Web Listeners:
This picture is keyed to *What Is Truth?* page 232, the picture labeled "Locke."

Note to Web Listeners: The homework that the speaker refers to is the worksheet on page 230 in the teacher's edition of *What Is Truth?* (Suggested answers are on page 231.)

C. David Hume

- David Hume was _____ about what John Locke had to say. Explain some of Hume's problems with Locke's philosophy.

D. Immanuel Kant

- Kant provided a synthesis of rationalism and empiricism. He said that everyone is born with certain categories of thought that help them to sort out all the sense data once it starts coming in.

Write the title of Kant's most well-known work:

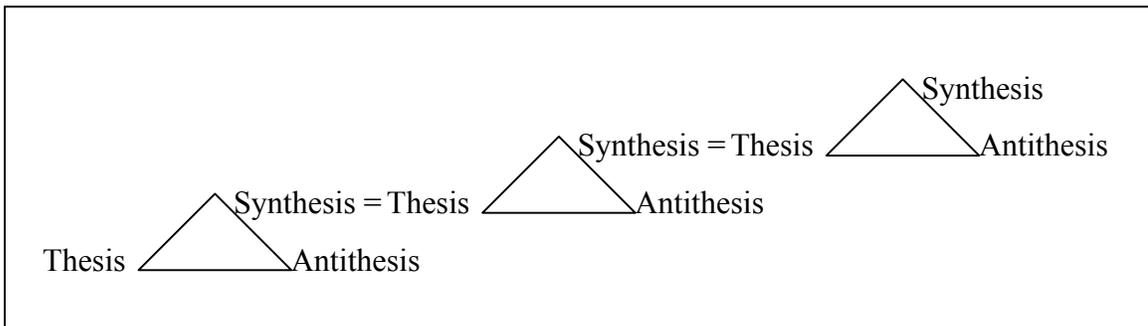
Kant's Severance of Epistemology from Metaphysics

_____ : that which is beyond the reach of our senses

_____ : that which can be sensed

E. Georg W. F. Hegel

Hegel dealt mostly with the phenomenal. His _____ provided an entirely new way to look at truth, as well as an entirely new way to look at history.



Hegel's dialectical thinking is seen in the philosophy of Karl _____ (communism) and closely resembles Charles _____'s theory of evolution and natural selection.

F. Søren Kierkegaard

- The "gloomy Dane"
- Kierkegaard was the first to slip below what Francis Schaeffer calls _____.
- He said that one needs a "_____" in order to understand what is in the noumenal. He was pessimistic about what could be known rationally at all, and eventually said that we would need to make a leap to the irrational in order to know anything.

G. Friedrich Nietzsche

With Nietzsche, famous for saying "God is dead," the long descent is over. Nietzsche denied the possibility of any knowledge at all and declared all knowledge to be a sham of words, words, words.

With Nietzsche, the pessimism of the phenomenal looms large and takes over.

We just cannot know anything!

II. Postmodern Worldview

Postmodernism is a result of and a reaction to the ideas that you saw in this discussion. We will show specifically where postmodernism comes in during next week's lecture.

Note to Web Listeners:
This picture is keyed to
What Is Truth? page 233,
the picture labeled
"Nietzsche."

Question 2: How do facets of culture evolve together?

Some of this we will cover during the fourth week of discussion. For now, consider the following:

I. Western philosophy has been a series of attempts to “draw the circle.” (Schaeffer’s illustration)

II. We must not see Western philosophy as a series of discrete stages; there is a lot of overlap and continued conflict.

Some tenets of modernism still hold today. Read chapters five and six in *What is Truth?* to see how the scientific method, educational theories, and sharp (and debatable) distinctions between religion and reason are seen in today’s society.

III. Philosophy ripples through the other areas of culture.

Read! Book recommendations for this week:

Postman, Neil. *Technopoly: The Surrender of Culture to Technology*. New York: Vintage Books, 1992.

Schaeffer, Francis A. *Escape from Reason*. London: Inter-Varsity Fellowship, 1968.

Sproul, R. C. *The Consequences of Ideas: Understanding the Concepts that Shaped Our World*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2000.

©2004 Michael Osborne. Limited permission is granted to reproduce these notes without alteration and without charge.

FOR THE LOVE OF
TRUTH
Christianity & Postmodernism
Michael Osborne

Week 3: The Nature of Postmodernism

Terms and Definitions

community: postmodernism emphasizes the communal nature of knowledge; this means that individuals' communities shape the way they look at things, making objective knowledge impossible; embracing all communities helps us to understand the whole of reality as best we can.

marginalization: postmodernism claims that those who try to represent truth do so by excluding ("pushing to the margins") those things they do not like.

metanarrative: literally, "beyond narrative"; a story or a model to represent the whole of reality, to tie up all the individual stories in the world; metanarratives address ultimate questions.

relativism: the rejection of an absolute, objective standard.

"You see, the problem with postmodernism is that it is too much like modernism. Modernism started by pushing God to the side and placing reason at the center, as the foundation for knowledge. In time modernism couldn't find any place for God. Thus, it endeavored to live all of life without God. Postmodernism came along and said, 'Hey, if modernism is right about God, then it must be wrong about reason and knowledge.' Hence, it concluded that we must become willing to live without truth. My contention, however, is that postmodernism isn't radical enough. It needs to realize that modernism was *not* right about God. *We cannot live without truth, and we cannot have truth without God.*"

—Bryan Smith, through the Christian character Jack in *What Is Truth?* (118, emphasis his)

Thesis: Postmodernism is a result of and a reaction against modernism.

Scripture: See also the epistemology exercise at the end of Week 2's handouts (after page 9). What do the verses below teach about human thought and God?

Note to Web Listeners: The homework that the notes refer to is the worksheet on page 230 in the teacher's edition of *What Is Truth?* (Suggested answers are on page 231.)

- ✓ Romans 1:18–32
- ✓ Matthew 22:36–40
- ✓ Romans 12:1–2; Ephesians 4:22–24; Colossians 3:10

Question 1: What does the term *postmodern* mean?

Does *postmodern* mean “after now,” or what?

Question 2: How, specifically, does postmodernism relate to what went before it? What is maintained and what is set aside?

In some ways, postmodernism is the _____ of modernism.

In short, modernism _____.

In other ways, postmodernism is a _____ against modernism.

Modernism’s overconfidence about objective certainty created what the postmodernists interpret to be a _____.

Modernism	Both	Postmodernism

Question 3: What are the key tenets of postmodernism?

List the key tenets of postmodernism (adapted from Millard Erickson, *Postmodernizing the Faith* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998], 17–19).

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.

List some of postmodernism's consequences.

1. _____ over _____
2. _____ above all else
3. Language is _____, not _____.
4. An attempt to avoid _____ of other groups
5. The _____ of everything

What bursts postmodernism's bubble?

Question 4: Should we welcome or repulse postmodernism?

What I would like to do for you now is to create a healthy tension and suspense. Is postmodernism right or wrong? Is postmodernism right in its critique of modernism? In many ways, yes. Postmodernism has yelled, "The emperor has no clothes!" Christians agree that this "emperor"—the notion of objective certainty built on naturalism—is impossible. It doesn't work. It's a bluff. As the student text of *What Is Truth?* makes clear in Chapter 6, modernism comes down to saying that "we follow reason because it's the reasonable thing to do."

But should we throw out objective certainty? What rescues objective certainty? Return to the quotation from *What Is Truth?* that began page 10 in these notes. Meditate on the *radical* statement that this is in the world's eyes. Instead of letting modernism's repeated failures show the insufficiency of a naturalistic foundation, postmodernism has kept the foundation and embraced the failure.

Christianity can resolve this tension between modernism and postmodernism. Perhaps you've heard the "reason and faith" discussion before. How does faith relate to reason? How does the Bible relate to "evidence"? That's a question for Week 5. ☺

"Reason itself . . . learns of its proper function from Scripture." —Cornelius Van Til

Read! Book recommendations for this week:

Veith, Gene Edward, Jr. *Postmodern Times: A Christian Guide to Contemporary Thought and Culture*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1994.

Zacharias, Ravi K. *Can Man Live Without God?* Dallas: Word Publishing, 1994.

©2004 Michael Osborne. Limited permission is granted to reproduce these notes without alteration and without charge.

**FOR THE LOVE OF
TRUTH**
Christianity & Postmodernism
Michael Osborne

Week 4: The Symptoms of Postmodernism

Terms and Definitions

deconstruction: the demonstration of the reflexive nature of language and the assertion of meaninglessness in a text

pop culture: “popular culture” is neither high culture nor folk culture; it appeals to the masses and particular market niches (custom-made), is market-driven, is turned in on itself (art imitates art, rather than art imitating nature), and is ever-changing.

revisionist history: in the context of postmodernism, revisionist history recasts historical narrative to downplay great individuals and to bring “oppressed” groups to the foreground.

“What is today matter of academic speculation begins tomorrow to move armies and pull down empires.”

—J. Gresham Machen, “Christianity and Culture” in *Christianity, Education, and the State* (Jefferson, MD: The Trinity Foundation, 1987), 52.

Luke 6:43–45. “For a good tree bringeth not forth corrupt fruit; neither doth a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. For every tree is known by his own fruit. For of thorns men do not gather figs, nor of a bramble bush gather they grapes. A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil: for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh.”

I Thessalonians 5:21. “Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.”

Proverbs 23:23. “Buy the truth, and sell it not; also wisdom, and instruction, and understanding.”

Thesis: Christians must learn _____.

Question 1: How are worldviews expressed in culture?

Question 2: How does postmodernism express itself in culture?

Below are several headings under which you may take notes. We may or may not cover all of them, as time permits.

Note to Web Listeners: These notes originally included several examples that the speaker did not have time to cover. Some of the examples left uncovered were cut out of this edition of the notes; they may be found on pages 200–203 in the teacher’s edition of *What Is Truth?* Others are not discussed in the sound file but have been inserted into the notes, highlighted in yellow.

◆ “Pop” Culture

- ✓ What *is* pop culture?

- ✓ What’s all this about aesthetics and metaphysics?

◆ Television

- ✓ *Star Trek* and *Star Trek: The Next Generation*

- ✓ *Seinfeld*

- ✓ The six o’clock evening news

◆ Broadway

- ✓ *Into the Woods*

◆ Film

- ✓ *The Third Man* (1949, not rated) is a critically acclaimed British film set in post–World War II Vienna. There are very few objectionable elements in this film. The plot is unfolded from the perspective of a man named Holly Martins, an American writer of cheap cowboy thrillers in which good guys wear white and bad guys wear black. He comes to Vienna at the request of Harry Lime, a boyhood friend. On arriving in Vienna, Martins discovers that Lime is apparently dead, perhaps due to foul play. He sets about on his own crusade for the truth at the bottom of it all, discovering just how fragmented post-war Vienna is. Politically, the city is divided among four powers (America, Great Britain, Russia, France) in an attempt at cooperation, but this situation produces red tape and political maneuvering. The good and the bad are relativized to pragmatic considerations. Martins eventually finds that Lime was

never dead after all (his death was faked); in fact, Lime is an amoral, self-seeking racketeer who has indirectly caused death and suffering for many children. Martins, struggling with his desire to be loyal to his friend Lime, his desire not to hurt Lime's despairing girlfriend Anna, and his desire to do the right thing, eventually opts to do the right thing (if it can be called "right"), cooperating with the police to trap Lime. However, after an edge-of-the-seat climactic chase through the sewer system during which Martins shoots and kills the wounded and cornered Lime, Martins finds himself in the doghouse rather than riding off into the sunset. He is no better off—perhaps in a worse state—than Lime. The film's setting is perfect to show fragmentation and disarray; bombed-out buildings stand side-by-side with magnificent old-style architecture. An unnerving zither ditty—often considered to be one of the film's chief features—plays throughout the movie, providing the only background music, whether a scene is tense, humorous, or sad. The music laughs with a devil-may-care atmosphere. The movie is filled with incongruities: odd camera angles, misleading shadows, jarringly unexpected events (an apparent kidnapping turning out to be merely Martins being rushed off to speak to a literary society about topics he knows nothing about; a child providing leadership to a mob of adults), and even people calling each other by the wrong names. Characters repeatedly remark about the difficulty of discerning right from wrong, and death permeates their speech. *The Third Man* stars Joseph Cotten and Orson Welles. It is a masterful piece of cinematography, and it makes an excellent movie to teach people to discern worldviews in film. Read some online reviews of the film or view it yourself.

✓ *Jurassic Park*

◆ Literature

✓ OK. What are deconstruction and reader response criticism?

◆ Bible Study & Religion

✓ What does this mean to *you*?

✓ Dialog

"We haven't rid ourselves of God because we haven't rid ourselves of grammar."—Nietzsche

◆ Society

✓ Homosexuality. In addition to the information in *What Is Truth?* consider that gender identity has been divorced from physical sexual characteristics. Gender roles, both in and out of sexual relationships, are now seen as societal constructs, not grounded in metaphysical reality.

✓ Greeting cards

✓ Fashion

◆ Technology

✓ The Internet has facilitated the fragmentation of information. It is very easy for Internet users to use stray snaps and snippets without any unifying metanarrative. See “Beyond Content Issues,” an essay in the forthcoming BJU Press book *The Dark Side of the Internet* (2005).

“I believe people are as they think. The choices we make in the next decade will mold irrevocably the direction of our culture...and the lives of our children.”

—Francis A. Schaeffer

Read! Book recommendations for this week:

Groothuis, Douglas. *The Soul in Cyberspace*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1997.

Hibbs, Thomas H. *Shows About Nothing: Nihilism in Popular Culture from The Exorcist to Seinfeld*. Dallas: Spence Publishing Company, 1999.

Horton, Ronald A., ed. *Christian Education: Its Mandate and Mission*. Greenville, SC: BJU Press, 1992.

Myers, Kenneth A. *All God’s Children and Blue Suede Shoes: Christians and Popular Culture*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1989.

Postman, Neil. *Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business*. New York: Viking Penguin, 1985.

Schaeffer, Francis A. *How Should We Then Live? The Rise and Decline of Western Thought and Culture*. Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1976.

See also the film version of *How Should We Then Live?* produced by Gospel Communications International, Inc. It is a well-done three-video series of twelve episodes based on Schaeffer’s book. Schaeffer himself in a very engaging and personal manner takes viewers through the history of Western culture and speaks with stunning compassion to the problems of the day.

©2004 Michael Osborne. Limited permission is granted to reproduce these notes without alteration and without charge.

FOR THE LOVE OF
TRUTH
Christianity & Postmodernism

Michael Osborne

Week 5: Postmodernism and the Christian Worldview
Part I: Forming a Christian Worldview

Terms and Definitions

biblical theology: tracing a question through the Bible to find out what the Bible says is true of a subject (Be careful! Neo-orthodox theologians have hijacked this term to refer to tracing the evolution of religion, rather than tracing the progression of revelation.)

creation-fall-redemption: one framework of a biblical metanarrative

exegesis: the process of explaining a text of Scripture, from a Greek word meaning “to draw out” (in this case, drawing out the meaning of the text).

hermeneutics: the science, method, and theory behind interpreting a text.

philosophy: the pursuit of and investigation of knowledge about reality, knowledge itself, ethics, and principles for all of life.

revelation: what God makes known about Himself and His ways

systematic theology: ordered deduction from and presentation of biblical theology, but just as governed by the Bible as biblical theology.

truth: that which corresponds to ultimate reality, specifically, that which corresponds to the mind of God.

“The Bible is thought of as authoritative on everything of which it speaks. **Moreover, it speaks of everything.** We do not mean that it speaks of football games, of atoms, etc., directly, but we do mean that it speaks of everything either directly or by implication. It not only tells us of the Christ and his work, but also tells us who God is and where the universe has come from....It gives us a philosophy of history as well as history. Moreover, the information on these subjects is woven into an inextricable whole.”—Cornelius Van Til, *Christian Apologetics* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1976), 19–20.

Romans 11:33–36. “O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor? Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? *For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen.*”

Thesis: The Bible presents the only _____; Christians must work to find it.

Question: How do we form a logical Christian worldview that speaks to postmodernism?

I. Learn to find the _____ of Scripture, then its _____.

What is the first step in studying Scripture?

What is the science of interpreting Scripture called? List some examples of interpretational systems.

Describe the difference between “biblical” theology and “systematic” theology. Is “systematic” theology “*unbiblical*” or something?

What is one example of a doctrine in Scripture that is necessarily systematic?

How are philosophy and theology similar?

Demonstrate (1) how the doctrine of the Trinity speaks to philosophical questions, and (2) how the doctrine of God’s *aseity* (self-sufficiency) speaks to philosophical questions.

Meditate! We won’t cover these questions here, but here are some other questions for thought. How much can we learn by understanding that man is made in the image of God? What does that mean? How much does it imply—for the elderly, for the handicapped? What can we conclude when we learn that Jesus Christ, the second Person of the Trinity, added to Himself a human nature? How does that speak to the problem of the relationship between the unchanging and the changing? How much can we learn from the doctrine of creation *ex nihilo* (out of nothing)? Are the laws of physics immutable? If the church is “the fulness of [Christ] that filleth all in all,” how should the church relate to the world? What does the doctrine of original sin imply for childhood education? Truly, there is more than enough work to be done in thinking Christianly about everything.

Why are creeds and confessions so important?

II. Learn to formulate a biblical metanarrative.

Name one possible framework for a biblical metanarrative. (Recall that a metanarrative is an account that ties together all reality and answers the basic questions that a worldview answers.)

What kind of biblical facts and events ought to be included in a biblical metanarrative? Take notes as you listen. You will probably want to use this data for the homework assignment on the next page.

III. Show how the Christian worldview answers ultimate questions.

Your mission, if you choose to accept it, is to use the data in the above metanarrative, your own knowledge of the Bible, and any other reference tools you have, to fill in answers in the table below. You should try to write one or two full sentences per answer, but it never hurts to be more detailed. Of course, use Scripture wherever possible. For instance, instead of answering “sin” for question #5, you may want to elaborate: what is sin? By what do we measure sin? What are the consequences of sin, and how far-reaching are they (e.g., does sin warp the way men know things)? Use your own paper if necessary.

Christian Worldview Chart	
Question	Answer
1. What is the Ultimate?	
2. Where did I come from?	
3. Where am I going?	
4. Why am I here?	
5. What is man’s greatest ill?	
6. What is the remedy to that ill?	
7. What is man’s greatest good?	
8. How can I know any of this?	

IV. Begin reading extensively. Use discernment in all you view.

It is imperative that Christians understand the world around them. The more Christians understand the world around them, the better their confidence when applying the Bible. One cannot apply the Bible without a context in which to apply it. The better a Christian knows the context for application, the more explicitly obedient he can be to God's law.

It is also imperative that Christians exercise discernment. Doing things for pure "amusement" is dangerous, for it implies that we have shifted our brains into park. Nothing "out there" is neutral, so we need to discern the good from the bad, the better from the merely acceptable.

"Prudence is love making a right distinction between what helps it towards God and what might hinder it." — Augustine

Read! Book (and other resource) recommendations for this week:

Cairns, Alan. *Dictionary of Theological Terms*. Greenville, SC: Ambassador Emerald International, 2002.

Christianity Today Magazine. *Christianity Today* is a monthly Christian periodical. Subscription information can be found at http://kedesh.christianitytoday.com/magsubs/index.taf?_function=start&cc=t_bump [Please note that *Christianity Today* takes a broadly tolerant view towards all stripes of belief in Christendom; you'll find many valuable articles in *Christianity Today*, but—as with anything—you'll need to use a lot of discernment when reading it.]

Elwell, Walter A. *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*. 2nd ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2001.

Erickson, Millard J. *Christian Theology*. 2nd ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1998.

Groothuis, Douglas. *Truth Decay: Defending Christianity Against the Challenges of Postmodernism*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000.

Grudem, Wayne. *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*. Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994.

Johnson, Phil, ed. "Creeds, Confessions, and Catechisms." Online at *The Hall of Church History* at <http://www.gty.org/~phil/creeds.htm>.

Ramey, Coart. *Why the Bible Matters: What the Bible Is, What the Bible Does, How the Bible Changes Lives*. (Student text and teacher's edition.) Greenville, SC: BJU Press, 1999.

Ryrie, Charles C. *Basic Theology*. Colorado Springs: Chariot Victor Publishing, 1986.

Smith, Bryan. *The Way of the Word: What the Bible Says, How It Applies to You, How You Can Obey*. (Student text and teacher's edition.) Greenville, SC: BJU Press, 2000.

Smith, Bryan, and Coart Ramey. *God and His Ways: A Guide to Understanding Essential Biblical Themes*. (Student text and teacher's edition.) Greenville, SC: Bob Jones University Press, 2001.

World Magazine. *World* is a weekly Christian news magazine. Their main website is <http://www.worldmag.com/world/home.asp>. From here you can navigate to subscription information.

©2004 Michael Osborne. Limited permission is granted to reproduce these notes without alteration and without charge.

FOR THE LOVE OF
TRUTH
Christianity & Postmodernism

Michael Osborne

Week 6: Postmodernism and the Christian Worldview
Part II: Engaging Postmodernism

Terms and Definitions

apologetics: a defense of a system of belief, or a criticism of an opposing system of belief, or the application of truth to error.

classical apologetics: this approach first uses rational arguments for the existence of God, then historical data to support the Bible and Jesus Christ (two-step approach).

evidentialist apologetics: this approach takes arguments and historical data as a one-step approach to arguing for Christianity.

intensive evangelism: capitalizing on the maxim that all truth is God's truth, intensive evangelism will highlight and use the antitheses between the Christian and non-Christian worldviews at any point as a first step in evangelizing.

presupposition: a first-and-foremost belief that governs all other beliefs, often held without self-criticism, but with great commitment, even if the one holding it is not aware that he does hold it.

presuppositional apologetics: this approach first deconstructs the non-Christian presuppositions as untenable, then presents Christianity as the only certain rescue from philosophical and ethical nihilism.

Schaeffer, Francis (1912–84): Evangelical theologian who popularized a loosely presuppositionalist methodology for Christian laymen and who used it with compassion with lost people in his troubled times

theodicy: the defense of the character of God in light of the problem of evil

transcendental argument for the existence of God (TAG): the argument that God exists because of the impossibility of the contrary—namely, that any arguments trying to refute God's existence would have to presuppose a God-designed objective rationality in order to do so.

Van Til, Cornelius (1895–1987): Evangelical theologian who first formulated presuppositional apologetics as we know it today

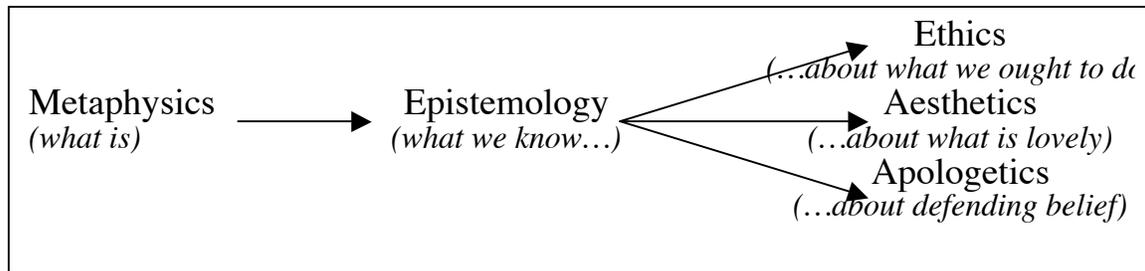
“Understanding is the reward of faith. Therefore do not seek to understand in order to believe, but **believe** that thou mayest **understand**.”— Augustine

John 7:17. “If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.”

Thesis: The Christian must learn how to use _____ to turn every facet of his life into an _____.

Question 1: What is apologetics?

Reviewing what has been said in previous lessons, we must note that our epistemology (what we know) is based on our metaphysics (what is). In turn, our ethics (what we believe we ought to do), our aesthetics (what we believe is good and beautiful), and our apologetics (how we defend what we know) should be based on our epistemology.



Fill in the blanks: All _____ is _____.

What does this mean for apologetics?

Question 2: Why should a Christian use presuppositional apologetics?

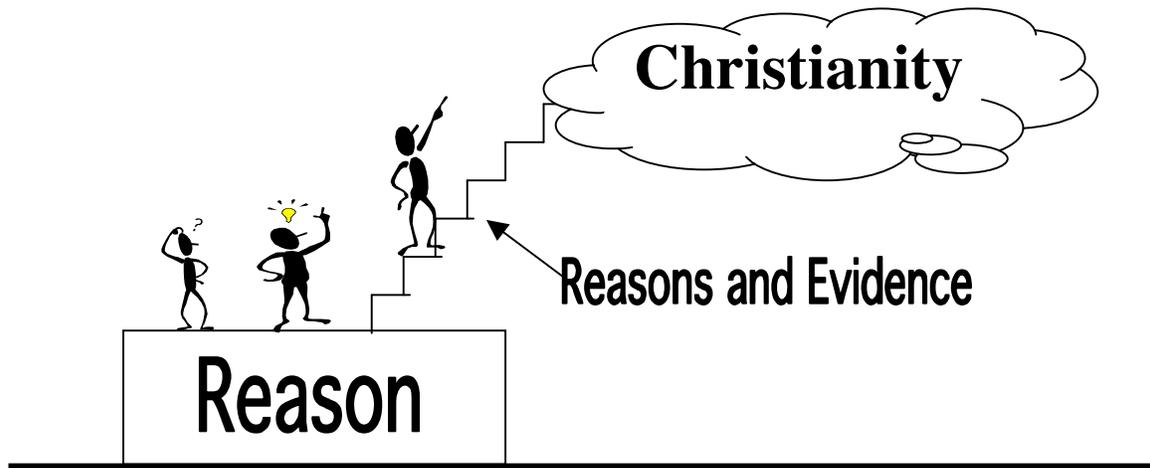
Huh? Presuppositionalism?

I. What is a presupposition?

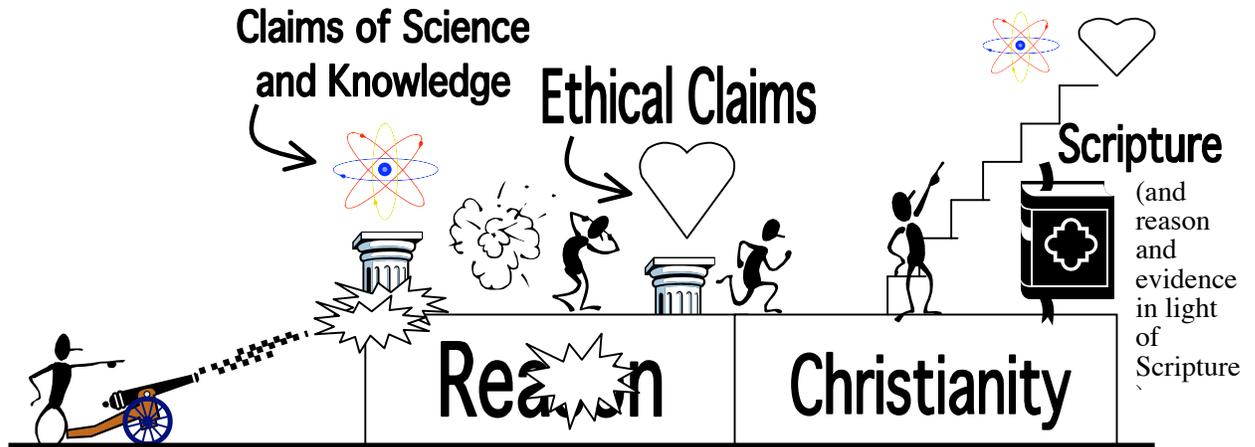
II. What is presuppositionalism?

Presuppositionalism is a method of apologetics that deals first with the non-Christian’s presuppositions. Whereas classical and evidentialist apologetics start on the unbeliever’s criteria and try to work their way to Christianity, presuppositionalism challenges the very criteria of the unbeliever. (See the illustrations on the next page.)

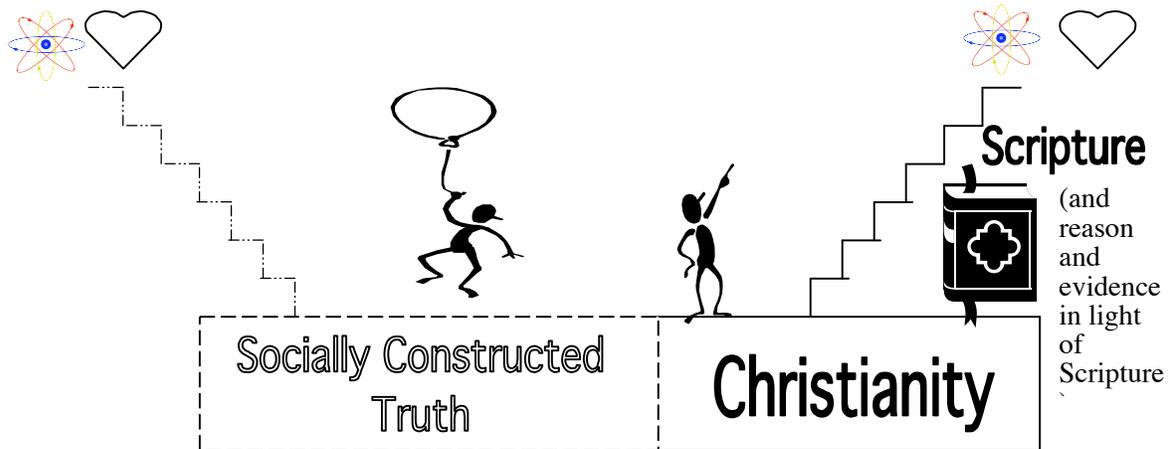
**“Block House”
Methodology — Classical
Apologetics and
Evidentialism**



**Presuppositionalism
(with modernism)**



**Presuppositionalism
(with postmodernism)**



III. What are the distinctives of presuppositionalism?

Take notes on the following points; include any Scripture passages mentioned. The following is a presentation of distinctives, not a systematic persuasion to adopt this method.

1. Presuppositionalism recognizes the _____ of every worldview.
2. Presuppositionalism grounds its epistemology in _____.
3. Presuppositionalism banks on the _____ of general revelation.
4. Presuppositionalism exposes the _____ of sin.
5. Presuppositionalism denies the possibility of _____ in thought or action.
6. Presuppositionalism insists on defending Christian theism as a _____ and as a _____.

Question 3: How do Christians begin to engage postmodernism?

Note to Web Listeners: Remember that whatever method of apologetics we use, however biblical it may be, we ultimately rely on the Holy Spirit's illuminating and regenerating power when we clash with unbelievers.

“When someone once told G. K. Chesterton that his views were out of line with the twentieth century, he replied that the twentieth century was out of line with reality.” – William Edgar

Read! Book (and other resource) recommendations for this week:

Bahnsen, Greg, and Gordon Stein. *The Great Debate: Does God Exist?* Audiocassette. Available from Covenant Media Foundation at <http://www.cmfnow.com/>. Also at the BJU bookstore.

Edgar, William. *The Face of Truth: Lifting the Veil*. Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 2001.

Frame, John. *Apologetics to the Glory of God: An Introduction*. Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, 1994.

Machen, J. Gresham. *Christianity and Liberalism*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002.

Van Til, Cornelius. *Christian Apologetics*. 2nd ed. Ed. William Edgar. Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, 2003.

Internet Sites

Apologetics Index. <http://www.apologeticsindex.org/>

Center for Reformed Theology and Apologetics (CRTA). <http://www.reformed.org/>

Christian Apologetics and Research Ministry (CARM). <http://www.carm.org/>

©2004 Michael Osborne. Limited permission is granted to reproduce these notes without alteration and without charge.