

POSTMODERNISM, OR "WHY THE PRODIGAL SON RAN AWAY"

LK 15:13 "Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living."¹⁴

MODERN AGE

LATE 19TH CENTURY AND EARLY 20TH CENTURY

CHARACTERISED BY:

DOMINANCE OF A JUDEO CHRISTIAN WORLD VIEW

DOMINANT FAITHS, WITH CHRISTIANITY HOLDING A STRONG ADVANTAGE

DOMINANT WORLD ORDERS - CAPITALISM AND MARXISM, WITH VARIOUS SHADES IN BETWEEN

DOMINANT GOVERNMENTAL SYSTEMS - DEMOCRACY OR SOCIALISM

MASSIVE ADVANCES IN SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

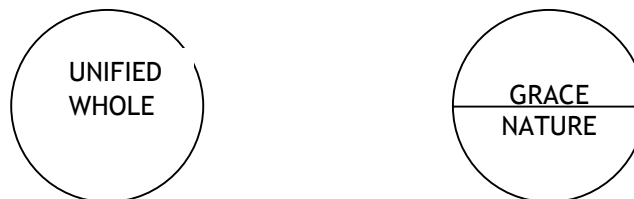
UNPRECEDENTED EMPHASIS ON FREEDOM

HIGHEST IDEALS EVER - EACH MAN/WOMAN IS FREE, HAS INALIENABLE RIGHTS

SEEDS OF DISCONTENT

THESE STARTED LONG BEFORE "MODERNITY"

FRANCIS SCHAEFFER - SUGGESTS THAT A "DUALISM" WAS SET UP FROM THE BEGINNING THAT SEPARATES THE REALM OF NATURE AND GRACE.



THIS REPLACED THE VIEW THAT THE UNIVERSE IS A SYSTEM COMPLETELY INTEGRATED, WITH NO DISTINCTIONS BETWEEN NATURE AND GRACE.

WE PLACE GOD AND HIS ACTIVITIES ON THE UPPER STORY AND MAN AND HIS ACTIVITIES ON THE LOWER STORY. WE HAVE SEPARATED THE TWO LIVES - JUST LIKE THE PRODIGAL SON.

IT IS IMPORTANT TO REALISE THAT SCHAEFFER STRESSES THE SEPARATION WILL RESULT IN IMBALANCE. IT IS AN ARTIFICIAL SEPARATION. IT IS UNNATURAL.

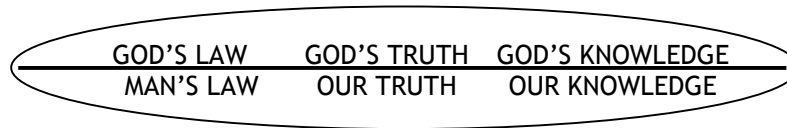
DOWN THROUGH THE AGES, THE SEPARATION OF THESE TWO CREATE FURTHER SEPARATIONS, ESTABLISHING A "LINE OF DESPAIR" WHILE WE CANNOT GO INTO THESE IN ANY GREAT DETAIL, IT IS IMPORTANT TO REALISE A COUPLE OF POINTS:

EARLY PHILOSOPHERS BELIEVED YOU COULD REACH AN UNDERSTANDING OF GRACE AND GOD'S REALM BY COLLECTING ENOUGH INFORMATION HERE ON EARTH. THIS IS REFERRED TO AS THE ARISTOTELIAN METHOD. FOCUS ENOUGH ON THE PARTICULARS (THINGS, ENTITIES) AND YOU WILL EVENTUALLY FORM AN IDEA OF A UNIVERSAL (GENERAL PRINCIPLE).

THIS DID NOT WORK. IT CANNOT WORK. THOMAS AQUINAS ALSO BELIEVED THIS, BUT IT HAS NEVER WORKED. THE CHRISTIAN VIEW IS THAT YOU START WITH REVEALED TRUTH, ACCEPT IT AS A GIVEN, AND THEN WORK FROM THERE.

AN EXAMPLE: WHEN WE EXAMINE NATURE AND LOOK FOR TRENDS AND CATEGORIES, WE MUST START WITH THE PRESUPPOSITION THAT GOD HAS CREATED, AND THAT MAN HAS IN FACT BEEN CREATED SEPARATE TO

THE ANIMALS. IF YOU THROW THAT PRESUPPOSITION OUT, THEN YOU CAN GO ANYWHERE - AND WE'VE DEVELOPED EVOLUTION.



THE DEVELOPMENT OF "AUTONOMY" OR "FREEDOM" FROM THE "UPPER STORY" IS BEST EPITOMISED IN IMMANUEL KANT'S WORDS - "AUDE SAPERE" THIS MEANS "DARE TO KNOW"

HIS BELIEF WAS THAT YOU CAN KNOW FOR YOURSELF THROUGH A PROCESS OF RATIONALISATION - YOU DON'T NEED TO BE TOLD.

ALTHOUGH THE WORLD WOULD EXPERIENCE THE BENEFITS OF MUCH SPREADING OF GOD'S TRUTH, THE SEEDS ARE SOWN AND THE STAGE IS SET FOR THE POSTMODERN AGE.

POSTMODERNISM

ACCORDING TO SCHAEFFER'S PROPOSITION, ANY AUTONOMY GIVEN TO THE BOTTOM STORY WILL EVENTUALLY RESULT IN IT "SWALLOWING" THE UPPER STORY. FURTHERMORE, IT HAS TO CREATE ITS OWN UPPER STORY TO REPLACE IT. POSTMODERNISM CANNOT DEFINE ITSELF POSITIVELY. IT REJECTS WHAT LITTLE WAS LEFT OF THE "UPPER STORY" IN MODERN TIMES, AND SEES ITSELF AS "ANTI"

POSTMODERNISM has been referred to by some as a "return to paganism" - the emphasis on (worship of) the created thing rather than the creator. It is more easily defined in terms of what it isn't, rather than what it is, because it is a reaction to the MODERN age.

POSTMODERNISM is anti TELOS, or END POINT. As such, it rejects belief in history's culmination in a day/moment of accomplishment by God. Thus, belief in the second coming and judgment day are considered taboo. Things will carry on carrying on, just as they always did.

POSTMODERNISM is anti UTOPIA - or DESIRED STATE. It scorns the belief that there will be a state where the problems we now experience will disappear and we will live in a far better world. It is not difficult to see that this flies in the face of biblical predictions of a new heavens and a new earth.

POSTMODERNISM is anti TOTALISATION. This means that it resists any globally accepted belief system, such as Christianity. It encourages diversity of beliefs and worldviews.

IT IS IMPORTANT TO REALISE THAT NO ONE HAS ADVOCATED IT OR PLANNED IT. IT IS A NATURAL OUTWORKING OF THE PREVIOUS AGE - THE SEEDS OF DISCONTENT.

- * IT HAS BEEN CALLED A RETURN TO PAGANISM, REJECTING ALL "GRAND NARRATIVES" SUCH AS CHRISTIANITY.
- * THERE IS EXTREME DIVERSITY - EACH MAN TO HIMSELF.
- * IT HAS EMPHASISED AN ACCEPTANCE OF DIVERSITY AT THE EXPENSE OF UNITY.
- * IT HAS REJECTED THE NOTION THAT THERE IS AN END POINT TO LIFE AND THE COSMOS.
- * IT HAS TAKEN PERSONAL FREEDOM TO THE ULTIMATE LIMITS.
- * IT HAS ENCOURAGED AN EXTREME RELATIVISM, WHERE MEANING IS DEFINED BY CONTEXT.
- * IT HAS SUGGESTED THAT MEANING IS DERIVED WITHIN A CONTEXT, AND NOT FROM THE OUTSIDE.



EXAMINE THE FOLLOWING EFFECTS:

SCIENCE - BECAUSE IT IS REMOVED FROM THE "UPPER STORY" AND IS NOT UNIFIED WITH GOD'S TRUTH, IT HAS DEVELOPED AN AUTONOMY OF ITS OWN. IT IS NOT GOVERNED BY GOD'S PRINCIPLES. THIS HAS ENORMOUS ETHICAL AND MORAL CONSEQUENCES. CONSIDER CLONING, STEM CELLS FROM THE FETUS, GENETIC MANIPULATION.

CONSIDER EVOLUTION - WHERE MAN (WHO IS SUPPOSED TO BE FREE) IS AN ANIMAL WITHOUT CHOICE. HE IS DRIVEN BY INSTINCT.

THIS IS THE IRONY - INSTEAD OF CREATING FREEDOM, IT HAS CREATED BONDAGE. THIS IS BECAUSE IT HAS TRIED TO REPLACE THE "UPPER STORY"

STRANGELY ENOUGH - IT HAS REPLACED THE UPPER STORY WITH AN AUTHORITY OF ITS OWN.

ART - NO LONGER IS ART A REFLECTION OF GOD'S CREATION, OR EVEN A CELEBRATION OF MAN'S UNIQUENESS. IT EXPLORES MEANINGLESSNESS AND CHAOS. THIS IS WHY A PILE OF BRICKS IN A GALLERY CAN BE CONSIDERED A WORK OF ART - SIMPLY BECAUSE ALL PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS AS DEFINING ITS QUALITY HAVE BEEN THROWN OUT. Read Schaeffer.

PHILOSOPHY - NO LONGER DO WE HAVE A UNITARY PHILOSOPHY THAT CONSIDERS THE ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS OF THE AGE, BUT RATHER POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY, MORAL PHILOSOPHY AND EPISTEMOLOGY, AMONGST OTHERS.

PSYCHOLOGY - FREUD'S THEORIES HAVE MADE US VICTIMS OF OUR OWN SUBCONCIOUS, AND IS DETERMINISTIC. PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY IS, STRANGELY, OUT OF THE QUESTION.

DETERMINISM IS VERY STRONG IN MODERN PSYCHOLOGY - DESPITE ITS INSISTENCE ON FREEDOM

POLITICS - AN EXTREME DIVERSITY OF SYSTEMS, WITH AN INCREASE IN BARBARISM AND NO RULE OF LAW.

DEMOCRACY IS VIEWED AS THE LONG TERM GOAL FOR EVERYONE - BUT UNATTAINABLE, BECAUSE ITS IDEALS ARE TOO HIGH.

LAW - WE NO LONGER HAVE COMMON DECENCY, SINCE DECENCY CANNOT BE DEFINED FROM A CENTRAL SOURCE. WE NOW HAVE TO DEFINE EVERY NOOK AND CRANNY WITH A LAW SO AS TO COVER EVERY EVENTUALITY. THERE ARE BIZARRE ACCOUNTS OF CHILDREN TAKING THEIR GOVERNMENT TO COURT OVER THEIR INABILITY TO READ OR WRITE.

NOW MIGHT IS RIGHT - TRUTH IS SACRIFICED AT THE ALTAR - YOUR LAWYER IS WEAKER THAN MY LAWYER. FREEDOM IS ONCE AGAIN GONE.

OUR RESPONSE

In many ways, we are now in the same world as Paul was - with a jungle we have to penetrate again. We have to shed the seed of the gospel/

In some ways, the fields are white unto harvest - because I believe these positions are inherently weak - they cannot operate in God's world and will crumble. We come with something stronger.

We should preach the message of repentance, but come in love. People are lost and are in need.

¹⁴ After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. ¹⁵ So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. ¹⁶ He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything.

LK 15:17 "When he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired men have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! ¹⁸ I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired men.'²⁰ So he got up and went to his father.

"But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.

We should strive to re-establish the Christian World view, wherever it may take its root. We should be involved in every area, establishing the world view to God's glory.