

Part IV

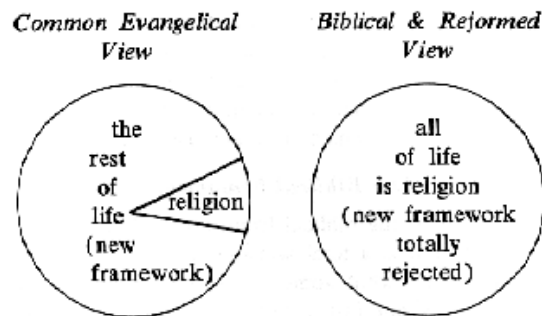
THE BIBLICAL ANSWER

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Biblical Christianity provides the only answer to man trapped in “new framework” thinking. It does this in two ways: (1) it provides a true framework of thinking (as over against the false one that prevails in our culture), and (2) it provides insight for Christians seeking to help those who are brought to the point of despair by this false framework in which they are trapped.

The Biblical Framework

What, then, is the biblical framework of thinking? The answer is that it is a total world and life view. It is not, in other words, what some evangelical Christians have imagined—it is not just a matter of knowing how



to be “saved” so that we can go to heaven when we die—nor is it realized when we add the religious aspects to the other dimensions of life. Because many Christians fail to see this, they tend to live as “spiritual schizophrenics.” They have, as it were, split personalities— doing their praying and believing for the life to come on a biblical basis, while they live the rest of their daily life along the lines of new framework thinking. What is needed is a consistently thought out and consistently applied world-and-life view, in which there are no compartments. This means that Christians must be willing to do some hard thinking! Yes, they must even be willing to study. It all begins with a solid foundation of biblical doctrine. The Christian must know and understand such things as the doctrines of creation, divine providence, the fall of man, and eschatology, for example, as well as the doctrine of salvation. To put it another way, all biblical doctrine is inter related. It forms a system. And we need to grasp more and more clearly its content and meaning.

It is not our intention here to review the system of doctrine taught in Scripture. We assume that those who use these lessons will also receive catechism instruction and know the basic biblical doctrines. Here we wish only to stress certain things about Bible doctrine. (1) Above all we would stress the fact that Bible doctrine is scientific. This is exactly what is denied by many today (even some who claim to be Christian). Science deals with the realm of *fact*, they say, while Christianity deals with the realm of *faith*. But this is incorrect. Webster defines science as “study concerned with observation and classification of *facts*” and deals especially with “the *physical* world.” This is exactly what makes Christianity unique among world religions: It *alone* deals with facts in the physical world (as well as things beyond it). While other religions are abstract and deal with myths, Christianity deals with history and concrete events. By this we mean authentic Christianity, of course. When teachers and preachers no longer teach a physical (bodily) resurrection of Jesus Christ— when they deny the literal (actual) occurrence of the miracles recorded in the Bible—when they cease to believe and teach the doctrine of creation *‘ex nihilo’* (and teach evolution instead)—then they are not really Christians no matter what they may be called. Such people teach only a pseudo-Christianity because they have abandoned the scientific and historical in favor of the mythical, joining the false religions. True biblical Christianity refuses to be excluded from the realm of fact and history. In fact, it insists that it alone can give a consistent interpretation of the whole of reality. (2) We would further stress the fact that Christian doctrine is revealed. Let us try to explain this in a simple way.

If the universe is so vast that we do not even know (as yet) how vast it is—and again, if there are things even within ourselves (the brain, for example) that we do not fully understand—then how can we make *any* statements about the whole universe with confidence that they are true statements (and will remain true forever)? The Christian can answer this question. A non-Christian cannot. The Christian knows there are certain things that are true, and other opposite things that are not true. God has revealed these things in history in the person and work of Jesus Christ, and in the infallible Scriptures. No one can deny that the Bible exists. That is why men still weary themselves to disprove it.” When the Holy Spirit opens the eyes of our understanding so that we can receive the teaching of Scripture, then we can know the final truth about reality. This does not mean that the Christian knows all there is to know. But it does mean that the Christian has certainty in what God reveals to him. This is what we call presuppositional thinking (pre = before, and suppositional = to suppose). It simply means that the Christian does all of his thinking about reality from a certain starting point. That starting point is acceptance of certain final truths revealed by God. (It should be pointed out that the non-Christian person also adopts a starting point “by faith.” The difference is that he makes something else—modern science, expert opinion, even his own mind—rather than God the ultimate reference point.)

Insight

It is the Christian’s awareness of the real situation which gives him insight into the thinking of the unbeliever. The Christian knows that God did create the world, and that man is image and not original or ultimate. He therefore realizes the flaw in all system building other than that which is Christian. To illustrate, the non-Christian is often very critical of the consistent Christian because of his openly admitted presuppositions. Against this the non-Christian will claim that he takes a neutral position—he assumes nothing, he insists—and then deals with the raw facts, however they come, reaching whatever conclusion is warranted by these facts. What he does not realize (and what the Christian *does* realize) is that *this position too is full of presuppositions*. What are some of the things that the non-Christian position assumes? (1) One of the amazing things it assumes is that man—without any help from God—can successfully interpret reality. There is, in other words, the unspoken assumption that man has God like powers. But this is not all. (2) It also assumes that the universe is full of raw facts (that is, facts which could mean most anything). To assume this is one and the same with assuming that the Bible cannot possibly be true, because it says there are no uninterpreted (raw) facts. All facts, according to the Bible, have been constituted what they are by God, and given a certain meaning by Him as a part of His system. (3) It follows from this that the unbeliever, in order to think on this basis, must assume that the true God cannot exist. Anything less than this would be an act of self-condemnation, and this is the one thing that sinful man is not prepared (of himself) to do.

There is, in other words, in all human thinking a kind of circle. In order for man—the creature (made to be image, not original)—to think at all, he must think in this way. He must (in effect) assume the very “truth” he sets out to “prove.” It is for this reason that we sometimes read in modern “scientific” writings that the scientists are disappointed! For example, scientists recently expressed deep disappointment because they did not find life on Mars. They are disappointed because, according to their evolutionist assumptions, they ought to have found what they did not find. Clearly they are working with the facts after making the assumptions. So it is not just the Christian who (in a certain sense) begins at the end. The Christian life begins with the opening of the eyes of the mind and heart so that something of God’s system of truth as a whole may be grasped. This does not mean that the newborn Christian understands it all fully from the start. But it does mean that he grasps something of the final truth of God’s perfect system right from the start.

Perhaps we can illustrate the point we wish to make. The writer became a Christian in a church that was very weak in teaching the system of doctrine that is in Scripture. He then went on to study at a theological seminary where some of the professors taught false doctrine. It was not easy to withstand the effects of this teaching. Yet time and again the writer could see that these doctrines could not possibly be right if Jesus is what the Bible says He is, and the Bible is what He says it is! One of these professors taught us that the only solution to the problem of religious uncertainty is to get all the churches back together in one united fellowship. Only when this happens, he said, can we learn from one another until we finally come to the collective wisdom which will give us “the truth.” When he was asked about the Bible, he said that

God never intended people to think of it as final and in fallible truth. Even though we were ignorant of many things—and up against a man who was clever and very well educated—we could still see that this man was talking as if he himself was infallible. He was, in effect, making the infallible pronouncement that the Bible is not infallible. So he made the assumption that he could pronounce words of ultimate wisdom. But we (the writer, and some of the other students) made the assumption that Jesus Christ was right about the Bible, and the Bible was right about Jesus. We therefore rejected what this professor said. It became clear, in other words (and this is our “main point”) that we both had to begin with “faith” in something or someone.

In our dealings with unbelievers we need to make good use of this insight. One of the greatest weaknesses in the “witnessing” of some Christians has been the tendency to leave “framework” questions alone, while simply talking about the Jesus of personal experience. (Re-read the quotation of Francis Schaeffer in the previous lesson). What is needed today, as never before, is the kind of witnessing that challenges the assumptions. We must develop skills that will enable us to enter in, as it were, to the “new-framework” situation of the unbeliever. In doing this we can then show those who are trapped within it the consequences of their own presuppositions. We can show them what these logically lead to. We quote once more from Francis Schaeffer:

We should not first try to move a man away from what he should deduce from his position but towards it, in the direction...in which his presuppositions would take him.... [We should] push him towards the logic of his position in the area of his own real interests. If he is interested in science, we will push him to the logical conclusion of his position in science. If it is art, then gently and yet firmly we push him from the point of tension to the end of his presuppositions. [Then, having done this,] we confront men with reality; we remove their protection and their escapes; we allow the avalanches [of reality as it is, and as we know it to be] to fall.

Modern man often feels helpless, hopeless, and alone. He feels himself to be trapped in a meaningless void. But the trouble is that he does not feel that he is exceedingly sinful. He does not admit that he has rebelled against God because he has closed his eyes to the truth which faces him at every point in the real world. In the real world the heavens daily declare the glory of God to man and the firmament (the world environment in which man lives) shows His handiwork. The “new framework,” when all is said and done, is nothing more than a man made shelter which sinful man has made to insulate himself from the true God. Man does not want to face the fact that there is such a God and that he is under the wrath and curse of that God in a measure in this life and without measure in the world to come. This is not new in principle. Man has always been in rebellion since Adam sinned in Eden, and has constantly sought ways of proving to himself that God is not there and that there will be no day of judgment. The difference is that today apostate man has gone further—has developed more fully a world and life view that excludes God. It is our task in witnessing to expose this fact, and then to witness the truth of the Christian religion. It is our hope that these studies have contributed in small way to this end.

Questions:

1. Why does Christianity alone provide the answer to modern man’s predicament?
2. Why has evangelical Christianity often failed in its witness to modern man?
3. What is the difference between the weaker, and the stronger, more consistent, Christian position?
4. What do we mean by saying the Christian position is “scientific”?
5. Why is it true that pseudo-Christianity is not really scientific even though it may boast that it goes along with “modern science”?
6. What do we mean when we say that Christianity is “presuppositional”?
7. Is non Christian thinking also presuppositional?
8. Why is it that the Christian has insight into the non-Christian way of thinking, while the non-Christian does not have insight into the Christian way?
9. What are some of the things that non-Christian thinking assumes?
10. Why is it that man must reason in a circle?
11. Why are modern scientists “disappointed”?
12. Is it the facts that bring people to faith, or is it faith that brings them to see the facts the way they do?
13. In the writer’s illustration what was the important discovery?

14. How should we make use of our insight in dealing with unbelievers?
15. In what sense is there “nothing new” in the new framework thinking? In what sense is there something new?

Projects:

1. Report to the class on your own experience in witnessing either (a) with or (b) without insight into the new framework.
2. Find an article on science and be prepared to show in class that it is based on presuppositions about the universe.