CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE

by Robert C. Walton

CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE I
Humanities - Philosophy, Part One

This course involves looking at a series of academic disciplines and contrasting the ways in which they are handled from a humanist perspective with a biblical approach to the disciplines. This is not only of value for those in the academic world, but also is important for anyone who interacts with the media, the business world, or unbelieving family members. If we are to be able to give an answer for the hope that we have, we must recognize the underlying assumptions of the unbelieving world and be able to give biblical responses. The course is divided into three major sections, dealing with the Humanities, the Social Sciences, and the Natural Sciences. The first of the Humanities we will examine is Philosophy, which we will spread over four lessons.

Philosophy (literally "the love of wisdom") must be our starting point in this course, for it represents an attempt to deal with the fundamental questions of life. Our approach to the subject will involve looking briefly at some of these basic questions, examining some of the answers given, and then suggesting a biblical approach.

PHILOSOPHICAL METHOD

Philosophical arguments are always circular - where you start invariably determines where you will finish, i.e., the conclusions reached depend on the assumptions with which one begins. Therefore it is vitally important to make sure we start in the right place. Three approaches are possible:

HUMANISM

All non-Christian philosophy shares a common starting point - the self. Since the self is sinful, we should expect such philosophies, without exception, to come up with wrong (i.e., unbiblical) answers, and so they do. If one were to outline the humanistic approach to the big questions of life in the form of a geometrical proof (as Descartes tried to do), it would look something like this:

> GIVEN: Man
> PROVE: God, the Bible, and the world

In other words, man is the measure of all things, and the ultimate criterion by which all ultimate questions are resolved.

EVIDENTIALISM

Over the centuries, this has been the most common approach taken by Christians in response to the philosophies of the world. One of its greatest exponents, Thomas Aquinas, believed that it could be used to lead the unbeliever to "the vestibule of faith," while modern advocates like Josh McDowell have applied the approach productively on secular college campuses all over America. Essentially, the evidentialist tries to fight the humanist on his own turf by using the facts available

concerning man and the natural world to try to prove things like the existence of God and the veracity of the Scriptures. In the form of a geometrical proof, we would have:

> GIVEN: Man and the world
> PROVE: God and the Bible

Despite its successful application in specific cases, it fails because the perceptions of man and the world entertained by the natural man are perverted by sin, and thus lead him, not to the God of the Scriptures, but to a god of his own making. The heavens may declare the glory of God, but man rejects that glory because of the vain imaginings of his sinful mind, which is rebellion against God and His truth.

PRESUPPOSITIONALISM

A more recent approach to Christian apologetics, developed by Cornelius Van Til and popularized by Francis Schaeffer, seeks to avoid the problems inherent in evidentialism by challenging humanistic philosophy, not on the level of its conclusions, but on the level of its assumptions. The presuppositionalist argues that the world only makes sense - the big questions of life only have answers at all - if one begins with God as He has revealed Himself in His Word. Thus, the presuppositionalist argues that the problem with the humanist is not that he arrives at wrong answers, but that he bases his reasoning on false assumptions. A geometric proof would thus look something like this:

> GIVEN: God and the Bible
> PROVE: Man and the world

The presuppositionalist thus does not argue with the conclusions of the humanist, but points out that, on the basis of his assumptions concerning man and the world, the basic questions of life either have no answers, or else lead to answers that are completely contrary to human experience. Only if one begins with the God of the Bible can one find answers to the basic questions of life that are both coherent and correspond to life as we know it. It is important to recognize that this is also the approach taken in the Bible itself. Nowhere does the Bible attempt to prove God's existence. It assumes it (Genesis 1:1), recognizes that there can be no understanding without it (Proverbs 1:7), and calls anyone who would think about the world in any other way a fool (Psalm 14:1).

METAPHYSICS - THE ORIGIN OF BEING

The first question under metaphysics that we will consider is that of the origin of being. Where did everything come from? Francis Schaeffer notes that, when dealing with ultimate questions, there tend to be relatively few possible answers. In this case, there are only three. The first is original nothingness - this would involve the spontaneous generation of the universe, and has never seriously been considered by any reputable thinker until recently, when Stephen Hawking actually proposed it as the only logical alternative to divine creation, which he rejects out of hand. This is despite the fact that Francesco Redi disproved the possibility of spontaneous generation of life in the seventeenth century.

The second is original plurality - this postulates an original multiplicity of being, and most frequently occurs as some form of polytheism or dualism, such as the good and evil gods of Zoroastrianism, the yin and yang of Eastern philosophy, or the spirit and matter of the ancient Greeks. If maintained consistently, each original entity is limited by the other, thus ruling out any form of absolutes, whether in knowledge or morals. Thus one could not know anything with certainty or state with any conviction that any given behavior was right or wrong. As a consequence, this position has historically collapsed into some form of monism, usually when those who hold it postulate some unifying principle behind the apparent duality. In Eastern philosophy, yin and yang flow into one another and are part of the same circle, while Greek dualism collapses into monism because one element of the duality - matter - is either illusory or transitory. Modern dualism, such as the psychological dualism of mind and body, either denies the existence of the mind (as taught by Behaviorists) or postulates some unknown linkage between the two.

The third is some form of original unity - this is therefore the most common answer, though it must be subdivided into two subcategories. Some postulate an original impersonal unity - this is probably the most common approach in Western philosophy, and certainly characterizes the scientism of our modern age. Whether one starts with a Big Bang or some undifferentiated mass of hydrogen atoms, the major problem faced by any attempt to explain the origin of all being from an original impersonal unity is the great philosophical question of unity and diversity - the One and the Many. Without personality, intelligence, or purpose, it is impossible to explain how an original unity of being became the diversified variety of things we now experience. If everything was originally the same, how did things become different, apart from intelligent purpose? In addition, if everything in the universe originated from the impersonal, how does one explain human personality? Because of this problem, scientism is often reduced to explaining *away* personality - reducing it to nothing more than random molecular interactions. The non-living cannot produce the living, nor can the impersonal produce the personal. If one starts the way that modern science starts, the result must be a denial of the significance of life, of human personality, and, again, of morality, since what is, is right.

An original personal unity - God - answers all of these questions, however. An intelligent designer can explain diversity, a personal God provides the foundation for human personality, and a holy God provides the basis for morality. Ultimately, the biblical doctrine of the Trinity provides the only real answer to the problem of the One and the Many; since God Himself is diversity in the context of unity, it should be expected that He would create a universe with those same characteristics. Thus while the dualist starts with diversity and cannot explain unity and the monist starts with unity and cannot explain diversity, the Christian starts with the one God, eternally existent in three Persons, and is thus able to explain both the unity and diversity of the created universe (as well as the human race).

CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE II
Humanities - Philosophy, Part Two

Today we will consider the question of the existence of God, which philosophers often use as a point of attack to undermine Christianity.

METAPHYSICS - THE EXISTENCE OF GOD

Philosophers have long debated this topic, and we have already noted that evidentialist apologetics has often sought to bring unbelievers to faith in this way. We will begin by looking at some of the classic arguments for God's existence - the theistic proofs.

THE THEISTIC PROOFS

The first we will consider is the Ontological Argument. Devised by Anselm of Canterbury near the beginning of the twelfth century, the Ontological Argument pictures God as "that the greater than which cannot be thought." In simple terms, Anselm argues that God is the greatest Being the human mind can imagine. He then addresses the question of the existence of such a Being by asking, "Which is greater - a Greatest Possible Being who exists or One who does not exist?" The obvious answer is that the Being who exists is greater than the one who does not. Anselm then arrives at his Q.E.D. - since a Greatest Possible Being who exists is greater than the one who does not, the Greatest Possible Being who does not exist is not the Greatest Possible Being at all - therefore, God, "that the greater than which cannot be thought," must exist.

The next is the Cosmological Argument. In his *Summa Theologica*, Thomas Aquinas set forth what he called the Five Ways - five proofs for God's existence. The remainder of the examples we will examine come from the work of Aquinas. The first three of his Five Ways are different versions of the Cosmological Argument. He pictures God, respectively, as the Prime Mover, the First Cause, and the Origin of Being. In each case, the argument is the same. In the first, for instance, Aquinas notes that some things are in motion. We know that anything that is in motion cannot have arrived at such a state spontaneously, thus we conclude that it must have been put in motion by something else. That other thing, then, must also have been put in motion by something else, which in turn must have been put in motion by something else, etc. Aquinas then argues that the chain reaction he has described cannot go backward into infinity, since that would lead to the conclusion that there would be no Prime Mover; but if there were no First Mover, there would be no subsequent movers, and nothing would be in motion, which is clearly false. There must therefore be a Prime Mover, which all know as God. The second proof states that everything is caused by something else, going back to an original First Cause, while the third proof states that everything in existence owes its existence to something else, going back to an uncreated Creator, which is God.

The moral argument is the fourth proof devised by Aquinas, where he notes that every person accepts ideas concerning truth, beauty, and goodness, and all of these notions derive meaning only in comparison to that which is absolutely true, beautiful, and good. Without a perfect standard, such human conceptions would be meaningless. Therefore there must be a perfect standard of truth, beauty, and goodness, which we know as God.

The last is the Teleological Argument, otherwise known as the argument from design. Aquinas argues that the orderliness of the universe requires an intelligent designer to have created it. A better-known explication of this argument was set forth by Anglican clergyman William Paley in the late eighteenth century. Paley argued that, if someone were taking a walk and stumbled across a watch on the ground, he would immediately assume, because of the evident orderliness of the mechanism, that it had been built by an intelligent being rather than being the product of chance. This would be true even if the watch were broken, or in some way malfunctioning. Similarly, he argued, those who look at the glories of the created universe (he uses the human eye as an example) must assume that behind them lies an intelligent designer even if the world shows evidence of brokenness. Note also that this is similar to the argument from irreducible complexity used by modern advocates of Intelligent Design.

CRITIQUES OF THE THEISTIC PROOFS

Hopefully, your students were able to discern some of the weaknesses in these arguments, since they will surely be torn apart in college philosophy classes. They should be aware that the Theistic Proofs may legitimately be criticized, not only from a secular standpoint, but also from a Christian perspective. Note the following:

With the Ontological Argument, the major humanistic criticism is that Anselm treated existence as an attribute. This is questionable at best, since something that does not exist cannot really be said to have attributes at all. In all fairness to Anselm, however, it should be noted that his purpose in constructing the argument was not to convince unbelievers of God's existence, but to strengthen the faith of those who already believed.

As far as the Cosmological Argument is concerned, from a secular standpoint, it is usually criticized by attacking Aquinas' assertion that an infinite regress is not possible. Bertrand Russell, in his famous essay *Why I Am Not a Christian*, responds to Aquinas with the common-sense question, "If God caused everything, then what caused God?" From a Christian standpoint, one should note that the Cosmological Argument leads to Deism, since it pictures God as the First Cause who is not involved with what happens thereafter; it also makes God the cause of evil.

The secular response to the Moral Argument is simple, especially in our modern age. The answer is relativism - there is no final standard for truth, beauty, and goodness. Such concepts are entirely manmade and there is no final standard by which such things can or should be judged.

Regarding the Teleological Argument, like the Cosmological Argument, it leads to a deistic God who made the world and let it go. It also should be noted that it does not require an infinite God - simply one large enough to account for the world as we know it. From a secular standpoint, the major counter-argument here is the problem of evil. Given the condition of the world, with all its suffering and tragedy, God must be incompetent or some sort of monster; as Russell put it, "the devil must have created the world while God wasn't looking." In more scientific terms, the randomness of the basic building blocks of matter, as described in modern physics (quantum theory, the Uncertainty Principle), leads us to question whether the universe is orderly at all.

PRESUPPOSITIONAL RESPONSE

In a typical college philosophy class, the theistic proofs are presented, then demolished as noted above. The implication is that, since God cannot be proved, He must not exist. In other words, the burden of proof is placed on the heads of believers (if your students don't know what it is, explain the concept of *burden of proof* using the American legal system, where the burden of proof is placed on the prosecution, which must prove its case beyond a reasonable doubt, rather than on the defense, which must only introduce a reasonable doubt rather than proving innocence; you might also want to note that Roman law, and the Spanish Inquisition that utilized its principles, worked in the opposite manner). A presuppositionalist, however, would note the folly of such an arrangement. We have already seen that the humanist approach is incapable of answering the fundamental questions of human existence (we will see more of this in the next two lessons), while the Christian is able, on the basis of Scripture, to provide cogent answers to all of them. What kind of sense does it make, then, for the humanist to say, "Your understanding of reality explains everything, while mine explains nothing; we must therefore assume that mine is right unless you can prove that yours is correct"? What utter foolishness! No, the Christian must insist that the humanist, who on the basis of his fundamental assumptions is unable to explain diversity, life, personality, morality, or, as we will see, knowledge, must prove his position beyond a shadow of a doubt in order to earn the right to be taken seriously. And as any philosopher will tell you, such a thing is impossible; one cannot prove that God does not exist, since one of the most basic tenets of philosophical reasoning is the impossibility of proving a universal negative. A Christian has no need to be placed on the defensive in a secular philosophy classroom.

CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE III
Humanities - Philosophy, Part Three

Today we will deal with the problem of evil. This is perhaps the issue most frequently raised by critics of Christianity, and it poses serious problems for those who wish to witness to their unbelieving friends and family.

THE PROBLEM OF EVIL - NON-CHRISTIAN APPROACHES

This is a problem often raised in conjunction with God's existence, and is often phrased thusly: "The existence of evil in the world makes the omnipotent and loving God of Christianity absurd. If He is able to remedy the world's ills, but chooses not to do so, He is not loving; if He wants to do so but is unable, He is not omnipotent. Therefore the God of the Bible does not exist." Your students should note that the problem of evil consists of three ideas, all taught in Scripture - the reality of evil, the omnipotence of God, and the love of God. Non-Christian thought deals with the problem by denying one of its three components - pantheists (e.g., Hinduism) and dualists (Eastern mystics) deny the reality of evil; polytheists and deists deny the omnipotence of God (as do modern Openness of God theologians, a heresy spawned largely by seeking to grapple with the problem of evil); Muslims deny the love of God, asserting in no uncertain terms that Allah is the cause of all things good and evil.

THE PROBLEM OF EVIL - CHRISTIAN RESPONSE

The Christian can do none of these things, though Christians have often come up with "sanctified" versions of the preceding arguments, whether the notion that "horrible things happen because God uses them for good purposes, so they are really marks of His love for mankind," or "God has given man free will, so He can't do anything about the foolish choices man makes, or be blamed for their consequences" (yes, Arminianism tends to move in this direction), or "God's purpose in the world is to glorify Himself, and this requires the suffering of the wicked" (Calvinists are more often guilty of leaning this way). Instead, the Christian must recognize that the underlying question behind the problem of evil - why God allowed evil to enter the world at all, whether by creating Satan, allowing Satan to rebel against Him, or permitting the fall of man in the Garden of Eden - is one that Scripture does not answer. We must therefore be content to affirm what the Bible affirms without demanding to understand how it all fits together.

Scripture does, however, give practical guidance for dealing with instances of tragedy or suffering in our own lives. The passage in the Bible that most directly addresses the matter of the problem of evil is Luke 13:1-9, where Jesus is approached by people who are unable to comprehend incidents of natural disaster (the Tower of Siloam collapsing and killing a number of people) and human cruelty and injustice (the Galilean pilgrims massacred by order of Pilate outside the Temple). They took the typical Jewish view, also found in the book of Job - that prosperity is a sign of God's blessing and suffering is a mark of God's disfavor - and therefore concluded that those who had died were great sinners especially deserving of God's judgment. This, of course, let the questioners off the hook - they were still breathing, so they must be righteous people. People today, however, rather than seeking to justify themselves, instead tend to use incidents of natural disaster and human cruelty

to accuse and doubt God. Jesus' response, and the parable He tells to illustrate it, provide helpful answers to both ancient and modern doubters. We should note the following:

• We know that God is both omnipotent and loving from His revelation of Himself in Scripture. We don't arrive at this conclusion by looking at the world around us or evaluating our own experience.

• We should not expect to be able to explain the existence of evil. Scripture doesn't tell us why God allowed Satan's rebellion or why He created fallible human beings. But it indicates clearly that evil exists, and that man, not God, is responsible for it.

• Jesus illustrates a proper approach to the problem in Luke 13. Human cruelty and natural disasters should not be viewed as evidence that God does not exist, or that the victims are wicked while the survivors are righteous. While the Jews of Jesus' day tended to defend their own righteousness while assuming the wickedness of the dead, people today tend to defend their own righteousness while assuming the wickedness of God. Instead, Jesus makes it clear that all deserve God's judgment - the dead and the survivors alike. If God gave us all what we deserve, no one would be left standing. Thus Jesus pictures the comparative scarcity of incidents such as those described in the passage as evidence of God's mercy. By judging the few, God shows mercy to the many by urging them on to repentance (see II Peter 3:3-9). Thus the Jews of the first century and the unbelievers of the twenty-first century have in common their conviction of their own righteousness - a conviction that Jesus challenges in a way that enables us all to put the evil in the world in its proper context.

• The Bible's ultimate answer to the problem of evil is the Cross. When God sent His Son to die for the sins of His people, He demonstrated the reality of evil because of the cost required to deal with it, His omnipotence in that the death of Christ was the fulfillment of a plan devised in eternity past, and His love in being willing to pay the penalty for man's sin Himself. One cannot use the problem of evil to accuse or deny God when he fixes his eyes on the Cross.

CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE IV
Humanities - Philosophy, Part Four

This week, our final look at philosophy, we will deal with questions of epistemology and free will versus determinism.

EPISTEMOLOGY - THE PROBLEM OF KNOWLEDGE

In this area, perhaps more than any other, the bankruptcy of non-Christian thought becomes obvious. The question here is, "How can I know what is true and real?"

One non-Christian approach is Rationalism, which sees the mind as the source of all truth. The clearest example of this approach is Rene Descartes' famous dictum *Cogito ergo sum* - "I think, therefore I am." Descartes, believing that geometry was the key to comprehending reality, wanted to discover the proper "GIVEN" for understanding the meaning of life. He therefore resolved to doubt whatever he could doubt and concluded that he could doubt anything except his own existence, since, after all, there had to be someone doing the doubting! He thus made the human mind the "GIVEN" for his great geometrical proof. He then went on to use the Ontological Argument to prove the existence of God (note how it is based entirely on the workings of the human mind; Blaise Pascal suspected, however, that he included it only to avoid the tender mercies of the Inquisition). He failed, however, to solve the great medieval problem of the Universals and the Particulars - he was unable to connect the general concepts of the mind with the particular events of human experience. After all, how could he be sure that our experiences are not figments of our imaginations? He thus wound up dividing human knowledge into two categories - the famous Cartesian dualism - the realm of the mind and the realm of the senses, and never the twain could meet. The result was skepticism; man can never be sure that the general concepts formed in his mind had any definite relationship to the particulars of his sensory experience.

Another is Empiricism, which argues that the senses are the source of knowledge. John Locke took this approach in his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. He argued that the human mind at birth was a *tabula rasa* - a blank slate upon which our sensory experiences wrote, accumulating what we call knowledge. This approach, which fit perfectly with the inductive reasoning of the Scientific Method, also failed to solve the problem of the Universals and the Particulars, but for the opposite reason. Locke made knowledge impossible because generalizations made on the basis of sensory experience must always be tentative by their very nature. Who knows when our next experience will force us to reevaluate our conclusions about the nature of things? Certainly the history of science has demonstrated the tentative nature of conclusions based upon sensory evidence. Thus Locke, too, leaves us with skepticism, as David Hume so clearly pointed out in his critique of scientific thought. There can be no knowledge when man begins with himself in his effort to make sense of reality, whether he starts with his mind or his senses.

In the latter part of the eighteenth century, German philosopher Immanuel Kant, recognizing the failures of both Descartes and Locke, attempted to develop an understanding of human knowledge that combined the ideas of both. According to Kant, it was not the mind alone that was the fount of human knowledge, nor was it the senses alone. Instead, knowledge came from the action of the mind on the data brought to it by the senses. Kant argued that the world outside

ourselves is a mass of disorganized data the structure and relationships of which we can never know. This raw data enters our minds through our senses. Our minds, however, are not blank slates, but are more like mail slots in a post office - cubbyholes into which the data are placed, and thus given order, structure, and meaning. What we call knowledge, then, is the result of our minds acting upon and organizing the raw data brought to them by the senses. While this has a certain intuitive attractiveness to it, we must realize the consequences of Kant's approach. To begin with, it affirms the impossibility of what we call knowledge ever corresponding to what is really out there in the world outside of ourselves. Knowledge in any absolute sense thus becomes theoretically impossible - what the medieval philosophers sought cannot by definition occur. We should also note that Kant's epistemology had theological implications, since the theologians who followed him put God in the realm of raw data (thus unknowable) and the Bible in the realm of human knowledge (thus the result of man's mind acting upon and giving structure to some ineffable encounter with the divine). The end result is that God cannot be known, and the Bible cannot be described as the Word of God in any meaningful sense; it is merely the result of man's mind giving shape to an encounter with an unknowable deity. The diagram below may help to illustrate Kant's position.

DATA   MIND   KNOWLEDGE
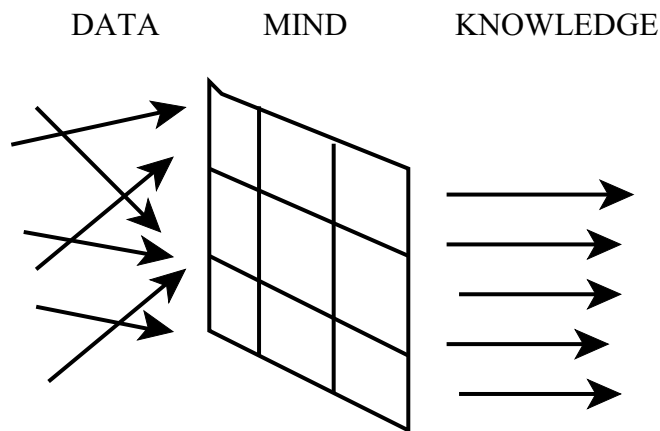
A new approach was developed by those who are known as Logical Positivists (their approach is also known as Linguistic Analysis). By the end of the nineteenth century, philosophers were in danger of working themselves right onto the unemployment line. They had given up on the possibility of explaining how we got here and concluded that knowledge was impossible. But if the questions with which philosophers had occupied themselves for over two millennia couldn't be answered, what was the justification for their existence? The conclusion arrived at by the Logical Positivists was that the task of philosophy was to analyze human communication. Since we are all just animals anyway, descended from lower forms of life by random chance, communication itself must be a chance phenomenon. We all realize that we can no longer speak of things as being true or false - Kant taught us this, after all - but we can still decide what is meaningful and what is meaningless communication. The Logical Positivists defined meaningful communication as that which was capable of falsification. An assertion had meaning if it was at least possible for something to count against it. Thus, the statement "This ball is red" is meaningful because spectral analysis of the light reflected by its surface could theoretically demonstrate that it was instead blue. Consequently, a statement has meaning only to the extent that it excludes certain information. On the basis of this kind of thinking, the Logical Positivists concluded that theological discourse and ethical statements were in fact meaningless. Believers who assert that God exists will continue to

say so even in the face of the most horrible experiences (the problem of evil surfaces again), so, because their assertion that God exists cannot be falsified - nothing imaginable would be permitted to count against it - it has no meaning. Similarly, ethical statements such as "Stealing is wrong" are reduced to assertions of personal preference - "Stealing - YECCH!" (e.g., A.J. Ayer and his Emotivist approach to ethics). Note carefully how such an approach restricts meaningful discourse to that which may be empirically verified. Instead of trying to argue that Christians are wrong, the skeptics have now turned to eliminating Christian thought from the realm of meaningful discourse by definition. It is also important to point out to students that this kind of thinking played a major foundational role in the development of the social sciences, particularly sociology, the founder of which, French thinker Auguste Comte, was also the father of Logical Postivism.

The bottom line here is that absolute knowledge can never be derived from man. Only God can be the source of truth. Our knowledge is accurate because it is *revealed*, derived from God, who unites the universals and particulars in His own omniscience. Thus we do not need to know everything in order to know anything, as empiricism would conclude. We reason because we are in God's image; our senses communicate accurate information about God's world. But because both are tainted by sin, neither is the final source of truth. Our reason and the knowledge that comes from our senses must both be checked against God's revelation of Himself in the Scriptures. Thus not only does biblical Christianity provide the only basis for human knowledge, but we must also recognize that an unbeliever professes knowledge (and acts as if he knows anything) only by being inconsistent with his own presuppositions.

ETHICS - THE PROBLEM OF FREE WILL VERSUS DETERMINISM

We will take time to look only at one major issue among many in the realm of ethics - the problem of freedom versus determinism. The question is often phrased like this: "Is everything we do predetermined, so that we are puppets subject to the whims of fate, or is everything governed by chance, leaving the future entirely contingent upon man's free choice?" The biblical answer, of course, is "No!" The question itself betrays an unbiblical, antisupernatural bias. The following should be noted:

• Chance and determinism are the same - both ultimately deny human responsibility, and thus undermine the concept of morality.

• Volitional freedom must be distinguished from moral freedom. Man makes responsible decisions (volitional freedom) - this is part of what it means to be made in the image of God - but is bound by sin from birth, and thus incapable of choosing to please God (moral freedom). Consequently, all that man in his unregenerate state chooses freely is contrary to the law of God, and therefore sin.

• We may not begin with the assumption of determinism by any impersonal *process*, whether biological (Darwin), chemical (Watson and Crick), economic (Marx), or whatever. All things are determined by the sovereign God, and we must seek our starting point for ethical decision-making in His revealed Word.

- Like so many other deep theological issues, the relationship between divine sovereignty and human responsibility is ultimately beyond our understanding. The Bible does not tell us how it is possible for God to be sovereign and for man at the same time to be responsible, but it does tell us that both are true. Our task is not to put everything together logically in our own minds, but to obey what God tells us in His Word.

CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE V
Humanities - Religion

The study of religion on the college level often comes as quite a shock to the student from a Christian school. While religion courses at a sound Christian college differ little in approach from those at a good Christian high school, those on a secular campus, instead of building the faith of the student, are often built on humanistic assumptions of unbelief. Religion is often viewed as a special case of some other discipline and denied independent legitimacy. In our study, we will look at some of the ways in which religion is studied on the college campus in the context of other academic disciplines.

RELIGION AND HISTORY

Courses dealing with religion from an historical perspective often carry titles such as Comparative Religions. Unlike the Religions and Cults course I once taught to my high school students, where other religions were studied and critiqued from a biblical perspective, the basic assumption behind college Comparative Religions courses is that all religions are essentially the same. Though the beliefs and practices of different religions may vary widely, all are viewed as man's attempt to explain the unknown, control his environment, or give expression to his sense of the transcendent. Thus, for example, biblical accounts of the Creation and Flood may be compared with those from ancient Babylon (*Enuma Elish, The Epic of Gilgamesh*), religious practices of Israel may be compared with those of Egypt and the Canaanites, the theology of Paul and that of the Ancient Church may be compared with Greek philosophy, etc. Similarities undoubtedly exist in all of these areas. How should we respond to such similarities?

First of all, don't fall for the fallacious assumption that similarity implies causality. Though there are some details in common between the account of the Flood in Genesis 6-9 and the story in the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, and although Abraham came from Ur, one of the chief cities of the Old Babylonian Empire, we need not conclude that Moses was simply putting his own spin on an oral tradition handed down by his ancestors from the traditions of the Fertile Crescent. Note that such an interpretation at least implies that the event itself never occurred and that the only way such similarities could be explained was by the transmission of oral tradition. Instead, the Christian should recognize that, since the Flood was an actual historical event, accounts of it would survive in many cultures (as indeed they do, all over the world); the Babylonian account would have become corrupted by the polytheistic religion of the people, while what God revealed to Moses would have been an accurate narrative of the event. Along similar lines, one need not argue that the Israelites borrowed their laws and rituals from the Canaanites, nor that Paul got his theology from the Greeks (though some of the Ancient Church Fathers did!).

Don't assume that priority implies purity - the older account is not necessarily the more accurate. How often today do historians know more about events of the past than even eyewitnesses may have understood because of documentary evidence that was uncovered later, but was unknown to contemporaries? Besides, older accounts of historical events (like more recent ones) may have an agenda - advancing the reputation of a certain ruler, advancing certain religious practices, etc. An older account of an incident simply may not be assumed to be the more accurate just because of its age.

RELIGION AND PSYCHOLOGY

A course in Psychology of Religion can be a real jolt when students find out that just about every religion has its accounts of conversions, healings, and mystical visions. Are they all, then, the products of the human mind? Is there any way to differentiate between a Muslim conversion and a Christian one? How can we say that one experience is valid and the other is not? This is obviously a difficult question with which to deal. On the one hand, we know that Satan counterfeits the work of God in order to deceive the world, so we may justifiably believe that experiences that mimic the work of God may be fraudulent, just like the wonders performed by Pharaoh's magicians in Egypt in imitation of the miracles done by Moses. Yet what gives us the right to say that the experiences of Christians are qualitatively different - legitimate while others are not? [Note that such thinking is horribly offensive in our age of tolerance and diversity; your students have probably imbibed a considerable amount of such thinking, and it may take some time to work them through this issue.] First of all, we should recognize the limitations of experiential testimony. Experience tends to be completely convincing to the one who has the experience, but far less so to others. The blind man in John 9 knew that, while he had once been blind, now he could see, but the Pharisees remained skeptical. Thus experience is difficult to argue. Ultimately, the validity of Christian experience is confirmed by the internal witness of the Holy Spirit and is espoused by faith, while the falsehood of non-Christian religious experience is asserted on the authority of the Bible, which tells us that any supernatural manifestation that does not glorify the true God is of the devil (Deuteronomy 13:1-5).

RELIGION AND SOCIOLOGY

While Psychology of Religion courses focus on the inward aspects of religious experience, courses that treat religion as a sociological phenomenon (often carrying titles such as Phenomenology of Religion) focus on religion's outward trappings - ritual, ethical expectations, etc. It is often disturbing to analyze the close correlation that exists between religion and culture. How should we respond to the undeniable cultural influences that enter into worship, whether in Christianity or in other religions? Is such a connection good or bad, necessary or unnecessary? From a Christian perspective, how do we separate the eternal Word from its temporal cultural trappings, both in worship and in ethics? How do we avoid hopeless relativism on the one hand and cultural chauvinism on the other? The answer is to recognize that, while other religions may be the product of culture, Christianity, as the revelation of God to man, contains timeless truth that requires incarnation in the various cultures in which it is practiced. Cultural accommodation is both good and necessary, but may never compromise the essentials of the faith. As with the connection with psychology, error occurs when the uniqueness of Christianity is denied or when scholars engage in the sort of reductionist thinking that causes them to assert that Christian experience and practice may be *entirely* explained in psychological or sociological terms.

RELIGION AND PHILOSOPHY

Philosophy of Religion courses, like all of the other types examined so far, tend to be relative and eclectic. An effort is made to examine religious belief from different philosophical perspectives. But, as noted in the philosophy section, where you start determines where you finish. Any godless philosophy, since it begins with the assumption that religion is man's striving after God, is bound to conclude that religion develops from man's attempts to solve the basic questions of life and to see

the proper religious stance as that which corresponds to the philosophy under consideration (thus existentialists favor a religion of self-realization, which asserts meaning despite the meaninglessness of the universe - e.g., Christian atheism, the product of the Death of God movement). Religion thus becomes human wish-projection, and man creates God in his own image. Such an approach assumes from the beginning that there is no such thing as true transcendence.

BIBLE COURSES

Since many colleges in our country were originally founded by Christians for the purpose of Christian education, many still retain a residue of their heritage. But when Bible courses are taught in such schools, they bear little resemblance to courses taught in Christian high schools. Instead, students should expect such courses to be taught from a critical perspective that assumes that the Bible, though produced by a group of holy men, is a human book like any other. In fact, it has been typical of critics over the years to apply techniques of deconstruction to the text of Scripture that would never be applied to other ancient manuscripts. Note the following common approaches:

- Textual Criticism - Unwarranted textual emendations and speculative translations, such are found in the Revised Standard Version, will be presented as appropriate. The theologies of Jesus, Peter, and Paul are often contrasted, as are the messages of the prophets.

- Source Criticism - The Documentary Hypothesis (Wellhausen's assertion that the Pentateuch was compiled by an anonymous editor from at least four anonymous first-millennium BC source documents), the two-Isaiah theory (at least - some would argue for three or more different authors), and the Q speculation (a document containing the sayings of Jesus that was supposedly the foundation for the canonical Gospels) are all likely to be presented as fact.

- Historical Criticism - The author and date of Daniel, the historical books, and most of the New Testament will be treated as open questions. The authorship and historical accuracy of most of the books of the Bible will be openly denied, with particular attention being given to predictive prophecy (if future events were predicted accurately, obviously the book must have been written after those events occurred) and miracles, both of which are assumed to be impossible.

No matter how convincing the arguments may sound, you must remember that they are based on a denial of the inspiration of Scripture. The arguments in favor of the traditional view, which upholds the authenticity, reliability, and authority of the biblical text, are usually not even presented, but they are powerful. Do not allow a Bible course to undermine your students' faith in the Bible!

CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE VI
Humanities - Literature and Drama

The last topic under the Humanities that we will consider is that of literature and drama. In a world as saturated with media and entertainment as ours, we need to be able to evaluate literature not only on the basis of immoral content, but on the basis of its fundamental assumptions about life as well.

LITERATURE AND THE CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE

Because of the nature of art, literature that is openly didactic is rarely good literature (e.g., B.F. Skinner's *Walden Two*, valuable not for its literary quality, but for its picture of behavioral psychology and its utopian vision). This means that the presuppositions of the author, unlike in philosophy and religion, are not always readily discernible. Such discernment is important, however, to help us gain an awareness of the author's viewpoint. This is vital because of the power of good literature to change people's thinking by operating on the level of emotional impact. A good book draws us into the story, easily bypassing the critical faculties in the process. Consequently, it is especially important to discern the point of view of the author so we are not unwittingly influenced by the things we read. The Christian must always be a critical reader.

THE BIBLE IN LITERATURE

It is impossible to understand most significant Western literature apart from a working knowledge of Scripture. Western civilization has been deeply imprinted with Christianity for two millennia. As a result, even non-Christian authors dip into the well of literary devices drawn from the Bible. Writings as widely varied as Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*, Herman Melville's *Moby Dick*, John Milton's *Paradise Lost*, the poetry of John Donne, T.S. Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral*, and Ernest Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises* are full of biblical imagery. Thus the Christian who knows the Scriptures has a head start in understanding the great literature of the Western world and is far better equipped than his biblically illiterate contemporaries. One must be careful, however, to remember that the use of biblical imagery does not necessarily mean that an author is writing from a Christian worldview.

THE VALUE OF LITERATURE

The greatest value of literature is to give insight into the human experience. In this regard, much can be learned from non-Christian writers. Reading such works as Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* or Tom Stoppard's *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* can give us a better understanding of how modern man views the apparent absurdity of his own predicament - with a hopelessness that is hard for Christians to imagine. Christians can also gain insight into how the world views us. Such works as Sinclair Lewis' *Elmer Gantry*, Lawrence and Lee's *Inherit the Wind*, Arthur Miller's *The Crucible*, and John Osborne's *Luther* give very unflattering pictures of Christianity, but make it easier for Christians to understand the low regard in which we are held by the world around us. Reading good literature can also help a Christian's witness, since it enables him to understand how unbelievers think and to gain a window into their world that can be useful in preaching the Gospel.

CHRISTIAN LITERATURE

What is Christian literature, and what makes it Christian? The answer has little to do with subject matter or characterization. A Christian work need not deal with overtly religious subjects, nor need its characters be or become Christians. The key is *perspective* - a Christian work of literature is one that reflects a Christian worldview. Note that even non-Christian writers may on occasion do this, at least to some extent, when the culture in which they live is saturated with a Christian way of looking at and interpreting the world. A few examples from a variety of genres may serve to illustrate this point. Ask any students in your class who are familiar with these works to help you bring out the Christian themes found in them.

LEGEND AND FOLKLORE

Perhaps the best example here is the Arthurian legend, which originated in the Middle Ages and has been retold in many forms (*Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, Thomas Malory's *Morte d'Arthur*, Alfred Lord Tennyson's *Idylls of the King*, T.H. White's *The Once and Future King*, the Broadway musical *Camelot*, and Walt Disney's *The Sword in the Stone*, to name a few). The Christian imagery here is both beautiful and pervasive, from boyhood innocence ("Wart") through temptation and fall (the indiscretion that led to the birth of Mordred), humanistic achievement (the Round Table) and its ultimate collapse as a result of the fall (Mordred's rebellion), and a hope offered for future redemption (Arthur's promised return). *The Once and Future King* is a classic example of the power of myth to convey Christian truth. White clearly was not a Christian and was determined to frame the story as an anti-war parable. Despite that determination, however, the Christian imagery comes through powerfully, even though the author had another purpose in mind.

FANTASY

J.R.R. Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* trilogy is the classic in which an entire genre in both Christian and secular literature finds its source, and it remains the best example of its kind. Tolkien was a devout Roman Catholic, and a Christian view of the world shows through clearly in his work, despite the fact that the trilogy never mentions God or religion of any kind. The great theme of the work is the battle of good against evil, and Christian imagery is everywhere. The sense of the supernatural pervades the story, from presentations of human frailty, the consequences of sin, divine guidance, and resurrection and hope for the future. Gandalf and Aragorn are clearly Christ-figures, the former through his death at the hands of the Balrog and later resurrection, and the latter as the king whose coming as the destroyer of evil had been promised long before. Gollum, among other characters, pictures the destructiveness and relentlessness of sin, and the journey of Frodo and his friends parallels in some ways that of great Christian classics such as *Pilgrim's Progress*.

SCIENCE FICTION

C.S. Lewis' space trilogy (*Out of the Silent Planet*, *Perelandra*, and *That Hideous Strength*) must be the prime example in this category. The three deal largely with the themes of sin and redemption, placing both into a universal context that forces us to look at them in a new way. The first shows sin as unique to the earth and suggests that the pagan mythologies of the Greeks and the Romans were the result of corrupted knowledge of an existing angelic hierarchy. The second book

reexamines the Fall of man, as the protagonist, Elwin Ransom, is called upon to prevent a similar event on the planet Venus. It also attempts to deal with questions of sin and temptation, and human sexuality and gender roles, all from a cosmic perspective. The third book of the trilogy deals with the ultimate outworkings of sin, combining imagery from the Arthurian legend and the Tower of Babel in a setting that addresses the nature of modern technocracy and the potential abuses and manipulating power of the social sciences.

CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

Though the short stories of nineteenth-century Scottish pastor George MacDonald are important here, we must return to Lewis and his *Chronicles of Narnia* for the best example in this genre. The seven Narnia tales stretch from Creation (*The Magician's Nephew*) to Consummation (*The Last Battle*), and include most of the major scriptural themes, such as Creation, Fall, redemption (*The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*), Christian warfare, resurrection, and future hope. Delightfully told, they have the capacity to enthrall children and fascinate adults at the same time.

DETECTIVE FICTION

While the best examples here are G.K. Chesterton's "Father Brown" short stories and Dorothy L. Sayers' mysteries featuring the indomitable Lord Peter Wimsey, some have argued that the genre of the classic murder mystery is in itself permeated with a Christian worldview. Even writers such as Arthur Conan Doyle and Agatha Christie, though not in any sense Christian, incorporate basic biblical themes such as individual guilt and responsibility (rather than societal guilt being used to excuse individual responsibility), the impossibility of concealing one's crime, the fact that sin inevitably leads to more sin, the truth that one will ultimately suffer the consequences of one's deeds, and the absolute nature of truth. "Be sure your sin will find you out" is an important conclusion of all classic murder mysteries - sin by its very nature is both self-revealing and self-perpetuating. It is also worth noting that modern mystery writers have deviated from the classic pattern precisely in the areas outlined above. Protagonists tend to be as unsavory as the criminals, and questions are raised about who the "good guys" really are. Such a non-Christian approach represents a poisonous deviation from a Christian view of the world.

The Sayers novels are set apart by their brilliant characterizations (as opposed to the emphasis on plot in such writers as Agatha Christie), particularly of the main protagonists, Peter Wimsey and Harriet Vane. The relationship between the two teaches much of what Christian love is all about despite the fact that the characters are clearly not intended to be Christians.

DRAMA

This is a difficult area, since there have been so few quality examples of Christian drama over the years. Christian dramatists have tended to be so didactic or so afraid of portraying evil that they produce poor, insipidly sentimental literature, or so afraid of displeasing the secular public that their works are indistinguishable from those of the world. Meanwhile, secular dramatists who address religious themes (Robert Bolt's *A Man for All Seasons*, George Bernard Shaw's *Saint Joan*, and Jean

Anouilh's *Becket* can be added to those listed in section 3 above) do so from a perspective that presents anything from a positive form of humanism to an overt hostility to Christianity.

What about Shakespeare? There is no evidence that he was a Christian, yet he lived in an era where a Christian view of the world was assumed, at least with regard to certain matters. A number of his plays deal with Christian themes. *Macbeth* is probably the most obvious, with its treatment of worldly ambition and the downfall of its protagonist as sin runs its course in his life. *Othello* does much the same thing with jealousy, while *The Tempest* portrays the value of forgiveness. Other plays are much more pagan in their treatment of the issues of life, with *King Lear* being the most notable example of this, though some have argued that the play, set in pre-Christian England, portrays in its tragedy the logical consequences of a non-Christian view of man and the world.

CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE VII
Social Sciences - History

The first of the social sciences to be discussed is history, certainly foundational in this category.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY OF HISTORY

The study of history is especially important to Christians because Christianity is a uniquely historical faith. Unlike a religion such as Buddhism, which, because it is primarily an ethical system, would be affected very little if it were determined that Siddhartha Gautama had never lived, Christianity is deeply rooted in historical events such as the incarnation, death and resurrection of Christ. If these things never occurred, as Paul says in I Corinthians 15, we are of all men most to be pitied. Furthermore, because Christians believe that God is at work in the historical process, much is to be learned from the study of history. In I Corinthians 10 Paul tells us that what happened to the Israelites in the wilderness happened for our learning. If this was true of the historical events narrated in the Bible, it is also true in some sense of the events of the history of the Church in the two thousand years that followed. Christians can expect to learn much of value from the successes and failures of the past.

OBJECTIVITY AND THE STUDY OF HISTORY

Despite the pretensions of many historians, it is important to realize that history can never be completely objective. The bias of the historian is bound to show up in his treatment of his subject. Because this is true, the student must always be aware of the worldview from which the writer or teacher of history is functioning. There are at least three important ways in which subjectivity enters the study and writing of history.

• Selectivity - The historian must determine which facts are important when deciding what to include and what to exclude from his narrative.

• Verifiability - The historian must evaluate his sources, deciding which to trust and which to exclude.

• Interpretation - The writing of history is never simply the listing of facts; those facts must be connected within an interpretive framework, addressing such issues as causality and evaluation. Whenever the historian does this, his own presuppositions come in to play.

We will now look at each of these in more detail.

SELECTIVITY

The selectivity of secular history normally chooses to omit such basic facts as Creation, Fall, the incarnation and resurrection of Christ, and other examples of God's direct intervention in human history. For a Christian, however, these facts are of crucial importance in interpreting everything else that has happened. History cannot be rightly understood apart from a consideration of these

things. This means that the secular study of history is not only incomplete, but also *distorted*. History cannot be secularized without distorting the truth.

The selectivity of Scripture is often surprising, however. Note the following examples:

- One of the most powerful kings of the Northern Kingdom of Israel was Omri; he won many great battles and brought great prosperity to Israel. From a secular point of view, he was probably the most important of the Northern Kingdom kings. In fact, more than a hundred years after his death, the chronicles of the kings of Assyria continued to refer to Israel as "the land of Omri." But in Scripture, he hardly rates a paragraph (I Kings 16:21-28), and everything said about him is bad.

- The situation with his son Ahab is comparable. The Bible has nothing good to say about this wicked king. In fact, the greatest feat of his life, his victory over Assyria at the battle of Qarqar, is completely ignored by Scripture; in its place chronologically is inserted the episode of Naboth's vineyard, which shows Ahab at his despicable worst. The selectivity of Scripture thus serves to underscore what is really important about a king; it is not his victories or his wealth, but his fidelity to God and the fairness with which he rules the people.

- In the New Testament, a good example involves Herod the Great, one of the most powerful rulers of the first century BC. Despite his political machinations and great building projects (including remodeling the Temple in Jerusalem), the Bible only tells us one thing about his rule - the slaughter of the innocents of Bethlehem (Matthew 2:16). Again, while not an incident that secular historians would be likely to consider important, nothing more clearly illustrates the true character of the man and his relationship to God.

VERIFIABILITY

What constitutes a reliable source? Anyone writing history is likely to have encountered in his research two books containing contradictory information about the same event. Whom should the researcher believe? Such things as the reputation of the historian, the quality of the remainder of the work, and the sources upon which the historian was depending are all factors in making such a decision. But our main focus here should be on how the Bible is treated as a source by the writers of history. Secular historians over the last few hundred years have tended almost reflexively to doubt the Bible's account of events unless that account receives corroboration from other sources; otherwise, the Bible's narrative is assumed to be unreliable. Historians who have done this have often wound up with egg on their faces, of course. For example, the originator of the Documentary Hypothesis, Julius Wellhausen, openly questioned the existence of the Hittites, mentioned so frequently in Scripture, because archaeologists had never uncovered any evidence of such a civilization. Less than twenty years after his death, however, the capital of the Hittite Empire was unearthed, and the school where Wellhausen spent the latter part of his career, Yale University, endowed a chair of Hittitology! From a Christian perspective, we must evaluate all other sources on the basis of Scripture rather than the other way around.

INTERPRETATION

There are many issues that could be raised in connection with the matter of historical interpretation, especially in our era of postmodernism when people are openly denying any meaning at all to history and insisting that it may appropriately be interpreted in any way that suits the interpreter, thus yielding monstrosities like Marxist history and feminist history, as well as "histories" focused around all sorts of racial and ethnic minorities. We will focus our attention, however, on two matters of interpretation that have often been debated by historians.

The first is the nature of the historical process. An oft-debated question in historical circles is whether men shape history or history shapes men. The question itself is illegitimate. One answer implies human autonomy, the other an irrational historical determinism. The fact of the matter is that God shapes both men and history - He is sovereign. Any view of the historical process that denies the sovereignty of God over history and leaves matters in the hands of man or some blind process of fate must be rejected.

Another is the shape of the historical process. Many views of how history works have been developed by historians over the years. A few examples might be helpful.

- Circular - Eastern philosophy, with its concept of reincarnation or transmigration of souls, denies any notion of progress or direction. One simply keeps going around the circle until one achieves Nirvana or union with the World Soul. One may thus learn from history in the sense of coming back in the next life as a higher form of being, but history itself is not going anywhere. Meaning and progress are only to be found outside of history, not within it.

- Optimistic - Nineteenth-century Social Darwinism professed an optimistic view of history based on the concept of the survival of the fittest. After all, if only the best survive and propagate themselves, the world is bound to get better and better. Such optimism was not only destroyed by the horrible world wars in the first half of the twentieth century, but is also undermined by Darwinism itself, which is based on the concept of chance rather than purpose in history. Note also that the Darwinian view undermines the possibility of learning from history. Since things are getting better all the time, the past is to be rejected as primitive and inferior rather than being studied as a source of worthwhile examples or inspiration.

- Random - Modern and postmodern historical theory, dominated by logical positivism and its descendants, such as existentialism, argues that history has no meaning except what we give it. History cannot repeat itself, nor does it have an inherent direction or purpose. As noted earlier, this leaves the study of history open to propagandizing of all sorts, while at the same time denying that any real truth can be derived from such studies.

- Biblical - According to Scripture, history is clearly teleological; it has an ultimate goal and direction, established by God Himself. He is working out His purposes through history - glorifying Himself, expanding His Kingdom, bringing His chosen ones to glory, judging the wicked. Furthermore, history is cyclical (rather than circular). It does repeat itself in important ways because human nature does not change, neither do the ways of God. He

never changes, and the experiences of past generations can thus be helpful to us; because history is not irrational, it is worth studying. God's promises also give history a cyclical quality. Note also how the concept of salvation fits into this - Christians enjoy the blessings of salvation now, but they will only be complete later. The church is to demonstrate substantial healing now as a foretaste of the complete restoration of all things in the future.

CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE VIII
Social Sciences - Psychology

Psychology is the study of the ψυχη (*psyche* - soul or mind) - essentially the study of man. It is therefore important to test any modern psychological theory against the biblical doctrine of man. As we will find with all the social sciences, one's view of human nature is critical to an evaluation of any approach to such a discipline. There are almost as many schools of psychology as there are psychologists, so we cannot hope to give generalizations that are valid for all secular approaches to the discipline. Instead, we will look at a few influential examples to give students an idea of the variety of approaches that exist among psychologists, and seek to evaluate each from the standpoint of Scripture.

BASIC APPROACHES

Many schools of psychology have developed over the years. We will look at three examples that indicate the diversity of approaches in the field. Under each, we will focus on their understandings of the nature of man and the ability of man to deal with his problems and conflicts. Then we will give a biblical response to each.

PSYCHOANALYSIS (e.g., Sigmund Freud)

With regard to the makeup of the human psyche, Freud believed that human nature was made up of three basic components - the id, the ego, and the superego. The id consisted of the basic unconscious animalistic drives inherited from our bestial past. Because these focus on self-preservation, they involve sex and violence. The superego, on the other hand, is not inborn, but rather imposed from without by society, particularly one's parents. It is what is sometimes called the conscience. Finally, the ego is the conscious mind, what most people would refer to as the self. According to Freud's understanding, the unconscious drives of the id struggle to assert themselves, while the societally-imposed superego struggles to control and suppress them. The poor ego, consequently, is the innocent bystander that winds up being mangled in the struggle between these two powerful forces not of our own making. Freud thus viewed man as a combination of good and evil forces, but denied that he was responsible for his own behavior, since the two troublemakers, the id and the superego, were respectively inborn (but unconscious) and imposed by others. People with psychological problems therefore needed the help of a professional to get to the source of their problems. Since the real problem was the overly-restrictive superego, it was necessary for the therapist to take the patient back into his early life to detect the source of the problem. Was he improperly potty-trained? Did he lack affection as a child? Were his parents overly restrictive? Once the cause was discovered, those troublesome restrictions needed to be removed by weakening the superego (shifting the blame onto others) so that the powerful forces of the id could be released in socially acceptable ways, thus relieving the pressures on the poor mangled ego.

Because the Freudian scheme admits no responsibility on the part of man for his problems, it also ascribes to him no real ability to deal with those problems. He must depend on the professional therapist, who alone is skilled enough to help one eliminate his false feelings of guilt and maladjustments caused by what one's parents in particular and society in general have done. This often takes years of therapy, of course, involving frequent sessions at obscenely high prices.

Freud's approach is contrary to Scripture in many respects. To begin with, the Bible pictures human nature as totally corrupt as the result of the Fall (Romans 3:10-21). It also teaches that man is responsible for his own behavior. The unconscious cited by Freud is not an inheritance from our evolutionary past, but a sinful nature for which we are accountable before God. The conscience, as well, though undoubtedly shaped by parents and society to some extent, is a matter of personal responsibility, since we are to check it against the standards of Scripture rather than following it without question. Furthermore, when Freud advocates weakening the superego, the Bible describes the same procedure in much more negative terms, like "hardening the heart" or "searing the conscience with a hot iron." It is true that man is unable to solve his problems on his own, but he needs the Spirit, not the shrink, to do so. Scripture pictures man as totally unable in himself, but totally able in the power of God, to deal with the challenges of life.

NON-DIRECTIVE THERAPY (e.g., Carl Rogers)

Rogers, an American therapist from Minnesota, tended to focus on man's mind and see problems as basically involving a lack of self-understanding. Man, he believed, has within himself all he needs in order to deal with what life brings. The task of the therapist, therefore, is to serve as a mirror in which the patient is able to see his true self, to reflect and recast the patient's statements, never providing outside input (thus "non-directive" therapy), until the patient gains insight into his own problems and is able to see how they should be dealt with.

A person thus has all the resources he needs to solve his own problems within himself. He is in need of no one to tell him what to do or how to think and act. Needless to say, Rogers' approach fits very well into the modern climate of self-fulfillment and self-actualization.

From a biblical standpoint, Rogers' view of human nature has much in common with that of the fourth-century heretic Pelagius, who believed that man was essentially good, but did evil because he followed bad examples. Scripture, of course, tells us differently, picturing man as inherently evil, sinning because he is in rebellion against a holy God. Man is therefore totally unable on his own to solve his own problems. Biblical guidance is always *directive* - man needs to be told what to do, and the standard for proper thinking and behavior is the Word of God.

BEHAVIORISM (e.g., B.F. Skinner)

Behaviorism has its roots in the pioneering work of Russian scientist Ivan Pavlov, who did the famous stimulus-response experiment with dogs, demonstrating that they could be made to salivate at the sound of a bell. When such conditioned responses become the framework for interpreting all behavior, both human and animal, one arrives at Behaviorism. The best-known modern advocate of the theory is the late Harvard psychologist B.F. Skinner.

Behaviorism depends very heavily on evolutionary theory, but in a different way than did Freud. For the Behaviorist, man is no more than an animal, the sum of his behaviors. The existence of the soul is denied, along with any notion of free will (cf. Skinner's *Beyond Freedom and Dignity*). Behavior is determined by forces within and without, and may be modified (through stimulus-response conditioning) by altering those forces. For instance, at one point a follower of Skinner was given a contract by the state of Massachusetts for the treatment of sex offenders in the prison system.

Volunteers were subjected to electro-shock therapy in order to change their responses to stimuli previously eliciting sexual desires (pictures of naked children, for instance). Since man is the product of his environment, the only way to deal effectively with his problems is to manipulate that environment, both internally and externally. The specter of Big Brother rears its ugly head.

As far as the ability of man is concerned, Behaviorists believe that man has absolutely none - he has no freedom, yet paradoxically the Behaviorist advocates that society *choose* the path of control over that of freedom and permissiveness.

From a biblical standpoint, man, made in the image of God, is more than an animal. He has an eternal soul, and is more than the sum total of his observable behavior. He is responsible for what he does; he cannot blame it on environmental factors. Furthermore, man is not bound by his environment, but is able to transcend it by the grace of God.

NOUTHETIC COUNSELING (e.g., Jay Adams)

What about a biblical approach to counseling? The example we will consider comes from one of the pioneers in the field, Jay Adams. For years, Christians in the field of counseling simply "baptized" whatever secular approach happened to be popular at the time, adding a few Bible verses to what the secular therapists were doing. While this remains a danger, the pioneering work of Jay Adams in the sixties and seventies laid the groundwork for a truly biblical approach to psychology and counseling. He insisted that the Bible had to be the foundation for any Christian psychology, and his book *Competent to Counsel* claimed that any pastor who knew the Word of God and could apply it to people's lives was better qualified to deal with people's problems than the most experienced of secular psychologists. While some of Adams' ideas and practices were extreme, his work laid the foundation for a uniquely Christian approach to psychological counseling.

With regard to the nature of man, Adams emphasized three basic biblical teachings. First of all, man is a creature of God, and thus accountable to Him, and is not an autonomous being accountable only to himself. Secondly, man is made in the image of God, and is therefore a responsible being. Thirdly, man is fallen in sin - guilty before God, yet having the hope of restoration in Christ. The root of all psychological problems is sin, not one's upbringing or one's instincts, one's knowledge or one's environment. Consequently, the solution to all problems is found in Christ, and the Word of God is the principle tool of the counselor (according to Adams, this was true even when dealing with unbelievers, since there could be no real solutions to their problems - only temporary "band-aids" - apart from submission of their lives to Christ).

Man is therefore unable on his own, but fully able in Christ, to solve any and all problems. In this regard, Adams was very skeptical of the way in which the term *mental illness* was used by professional therapists. He insisted that referring to what was really sin as some form of sickness would eliminate the idea of a person's responsibility for his own actions, and thus eliminate any hope of change. Instead, he believed that the term *mental illness* should be reserved only for those conditions where the cause of the problems was verifiably physiological (admittedly, in the last thirty years, much more has been learned about the role of the physiology of the brain in certain types of mental and emotional problems such as bipolar disorders, for example, so this is a more complex issue than Adams would initially have admitted).

GROUP PSYCHOLOGY

In the sixties, the practice of group psychology grew popular in connection with the freedom of self-expression advocated by the free-spirited "hippies" and others. It took on various forms and various names - encounter groups, sensitivity training, etc. It has survived to the present in a variety of forms (including the popular twelve-step programs), and, as we will see, it is little more than Rogerian therapy applied to groups rather than individuals. What does it involve? The practices listed below are not universal, but all are common in many such settings.

• Absence of moral judgments - anything anyone says is to be accepted without question.
• Emphasis on the expression of emotions - "let it all hang out."
• Release of aggressions and frustrations - hitting or kicking inanimate objects, "primal scream therapy," etc.
• Total openness and honesty with other members of the group, even if such honesty might be hurtful.
• Non-verbal techniques.

Because it is closely related to Rogerian therapy, it shares some of the same flaws. Note the following:

• Moral relativism will never lead to the solving of problems. It may remove guilt feelings, but never guilt.
• Emphasis on the irrational bypasses divine revelation as a source of healing.
• Hostility is not to be handled by "blow-up" or "clam-up" approaches, but emotions are to be channeled against the *problem*.
• Honesty and openness require the context of a relationship; Scripture tells us to speak the truth *in love*.
• Non-verbal techniques often worsen the problem by pandering to man's lower nature.

PSYCHOLOGY AND THE STATE

The manipulative powers of psychology - particularly with regard to stimulus-response conditioning - have long been a temptation to those in positions of power, whether that power is political or economic. Note the following:

• Propaganda - This involves control over the flow of information. It is not just a matter of presenting a slanted view of things, but of restricting access to contrary ideas. Thus it is no surprise that governments wishing to utilize the power of propaganda must eliminate the freedom of the press. When coups occur in third-world countries, it is no surprise that, after taking over the government buildings, the next things the rebels seize are the TV and radio stations. Propaganda, as a form of behavioral psychology, involves controlling the environment by restricting the flow of ideas. It thus has the power to brainwash, as George Orwell illustrated in his classic *1984*.

• Advertising - It is not just politicians who seek to manipulate the minds, and thus the behavior, of people by controlling the information they receive. Businessmen do the same

thing through the medium of advertising. Techniques include creating "needs," appealing to subliminal drives and desires (this moves a bit into the Freudian camp), and creating peer pressure. Like good behaviorists, advertisers work hard to associate through conditioning things that have no inherent relationship to one another. In the same way that Pavlov's dogs salivated when they heard a bell because they had come to associate the bell with food, so advertisers seek to get people to buy their products by associating them with human desires with which they have no inherent connection - sex, power, sex, popularity, sex, independence, sex, acceptance, sex, well, you get the idea. . . .

PSYCHOLOGY AND THE CHURCH

Sadly, in the same way that Christians tended for many years to adopt the counseling methods of secular psychologists and baptize them with a few Bible verses, so the church has too often adopted the practices of the world because they are perceived to "work." But Christians are not pragmatists, and the work of God cannot be accomplished using the methods of the world. God's work must be done in God's way. Note the following examples of psychological techniques borrowed from the world by the church:

• Inducements - The extensive bus ministries that built up enormous Sunday Schools in the churches of men like Jerry Falwell and Jack Hyles were notorious for offering inducements to get children to get on the buses and come to church. Such publicity stunts and handouts are little more than applied Skinnerian conditioning. We need to beware of giving the impression that the Gospel lacks power in and of itself to draw people to Christ. [A good illustration is the Philadelphia 76ers basketball team of 1973 - the worst team in the history of the NBA. That year, the general manager brought in every crazy halftime show he could think of just to get people to come to the games. The implication, of course, was that without the inducements unrelated to basketball, no one would conceivably want to come, since the product on the court was not worth watching.] This does not mean, of course, that there is no legitimate place for rewards to encourage such things as learning Bible verses, but the rewards should be related to the goals to be achieved.

• Emotionalism - In our preaching, we must be careful not to obscure the Word of God by manipulating the emotions of our listeners. A preacher's basic job is neither to entertain nor to stir, but rather to present the Word of God clearly. The power of preaching comes from the Word, not from rhetorical techniques. The problem, of course, is that when someone responds to emotional manipulation, he is responding to the preacher rather than to God. When we try to do the work of the Spirit, false conversions, and their accompanying false assurance, result far too often.

• Invitations - When Charles Finney devised the New Measures for evangelism in the early part of the nineteenth century, the keystone of his technique was the altar call. These have all too frequently become times of psychological manipulation, involving the use of anything from peer pressure to cognitive-consistency methods (raise hands/stand/come forward progression, so that once someone is started, he feels pressure to follow through on what he has begun; does such a technique imply that had the person been asked to come forward immediately, he probably wouldn't have been saved?!?). The basic thing to remember here

is that God saves, not people. Our responsibility is to be faithful, not to get results. The results will be genuine only if God is the one who produces them.

CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE IX
Social Sciences - Sociology

The term was coined and the discipline founded by Frenchman Auguste Comte around 1830. Sociology deals with human interaction, either as individuals or in groups. Thus while psychology tends to focus on individual behavior, sociology tends to focus on group behavior. Sociology, not surprisingly, shares many of the anthropological presuppositions of psychology and is subject to many of the same abuses. Again, the biblical view of human nature will play a central role in our evaluation of the discipline.

STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

In studying group behavior, sociologists make extensive use of statistical sampling. While statistics may give the impression of mathematical objectivity, there are several key areas where the presuppositions of the analyst determine what the statistics communicate.

SELECTING THE SAMPLE

The results of a survey are often slanted because of the people who are asked the questions. Think, for example, of someone taking a survey in the middle of the local shopping mall. The results would be biased because the statistics are based on (1) people who frequent malls and (2) people who are willing to waste a few minutes answering stupid questions from a stranger. Thus the sample is by no means random.

STRUCTURING THE SURVEY

The wording of the questions often has a lot to do with the answers that are received. For instance, did you ever wonder how, in relation to the abortion controversy, both sides could claim that two-thirds of the American people support them? The wording of the questions that are asked could make a big difference here. If a pro-abortion pollster asks, "Do you believe that women should have the freedom to make the most intimate decisions about their lives without government interference?" he is likely to get a fairly strong positive response. On the other hand, if a pro-life pollster asks, "Do you believe that women should have the right to kill their own children?" the result is likely to be strongly negative. The wording of the question thus matters a great deal.

INTERPRETING THE DATA

Statistics are incredibly flexible and can be made to say just about anything, as any politically-conscious person realizes. Thus the interpretation of the data is another area where presuppositions play an important role. The following example, based on a 1958 study by Redlich and Hollingshead in New Haven, CT, of "Social Class and Mental Illness," may serve to illustrate these three points:

CLASS	CASES PER 100,000 POPULATION	NEUROSIS	PSYCHOSIS
Upper	556	65%	35%
Middle	538	54%	46%
Working	642	37%	63%
Lower	1659	10%	90%

The survey above was intended to correlate socioeconomic standing and psychiatric treatment. What may be observed concerning the structure of the sample? Obviously, it was restricted to people in one city during one year who actually went to psychiatrists, so that no conclusions could be drawn about the general mental health of certain socioeconomic groups. Furthermore, the sample was restricted to psychiatrists who were willing to divulge the necessary patient information. Did all do so? If not, what were the characteristics of those who did? Of those who didn't?

As far as the structure of the survey is concerned, it assumes both the "mental illness" model of psychological problems and a somewhat arbitrary division of people into socioeconomic groups. For example, in this case class divisions were made on the basis of education and the neighborhood in which the person lived (somewhat surprisingly, income was not a factor). But do these things always reflect a person's attitudes? In fact, do these things - education, residence, and even income, correspond? Some well-educated people have low incomes because of the kind of work they choose to do, but that would hardly make them "lower class" or even "working class" in terms of their attitudes toward life.

As far as interpretation is concerned, a number of conclusions might be drawn from the data. The most likely, in terms of the intent of the surveyor, is that psychiatrists tend much more readily to diagnose lower-class people as out of touch with reality ("psychosis"), while treating wealthier people as if their problems are relatively minor and can be cured with further sessions ("neurosis"). One might also conclude, however, that more poor people than rich people are crazy. Another possible interpretation relates to the cases per 100,000 population. Do more upper-class people than middle-class people go to psychiatrists because it is viewed as a status symbol among the rich ("I went to my therapist yesterday, and he told me the most amazing things about myself. . . ."), but as a source of embarrassment among those in the middle class? Can the large number of lower-class cases be related to the fact that their visits to the shrink would be paid for by government programs, while working-class people and middle-class people would have to pay their own way? Obviously, these statistics can be made to say many things, depending upon the point of view of the person interpreting them.

CULTURAL RELATIVISM

This is perhaps the most dangerous issue to be faced in the study of sociology. How do we distinguish between standards of behavior that are absolute and those that are culturally determined? Most sociologists tend toward total relativism, arguing that *all* standards are culture-based. In a broader sense, it is fairly typical for practitioners of any discipline to look at everything through the framework of their specialty, so sociologists are not alone in this. A few examples might help illustrate this point.

- Pioneer sociologist William Graham Sumner classified behavioral standards according to four categories - folkways (unconscious behavior patterns that people are brought up to do without even thinking about them), mores (consciously-formulated norms and taboos), laws (mechanisms for enforcing a culture's mores), and institutions (permanent structures that correlate and incorporate all of the above). Sumner concludes that all of these are based on the particular culture in which they are practiced, so that none of them can be evaluated as right or wrong, only as functional or dysfunctional - tending to strengthen or weaken the society.

- Prominent cultural anthropologist Margaret Mead once did a study that clearly illustrates the principle of cultural relativism. In a study of the relationship between gender and temperament among three primitive tribal groups in the South Pacific, Mead found that in one, both men and women were sensitive and passive; in another, both were aggressive and hostile; while in the third, women were aggressive and men were passive. She concluded from this that gender roles were culturally determined rather than innate (her results were questioned by later sociologists who argued that her sampling techniques were unscientific - anecdotal rather than comprehensive; their criticisms were backed up by some of the islanders who had actually participated in the study, who admitted that they had lied to the young social scientist, telling her wild stories of sexual escapades because they thought she wanted to hear them). How could these data be interpreted differently? From a Christian standpoint, we could note that one of the results of the Fall is the disruption of gender roles (Genesis 3:16); it should come as little surprise that one of the consequences of paganism is a rejection of God's order with regard to relationships between the sexes.

INSTITUTIONS

One of the most difficult problems Christians face is in the area of institutions and their interrelationships. We must realize that Sumner was wrong - institutions did not arise by chance, but were ordained by God. The order in which God established the three basic institutions of society is highly significant.

THE FAMILY

This is the basic building block of society and the first institution established by God (Genesis 2:24). From the beginning, the family carried out all major functions of society - the father offered sacrifice for his family and ruled the clan as its king. It was only later that the other major functions of society were separated from the family structure. We should also note that the family, as established by God, was nuclear in form - one man, one woman, and their children - and was established for the purposes of companionship, procreation, and typology - to illustrate the relationship between God and His people and Christ and the Church. Christians can never succumb to the modern thinking, spurred on by the relativism of sociologists, that other family structures - plural marriage, group living, children out of wedlock, same-sex unions - have the same standing in God's eyes as the family structure that He has established.

THE CHURCH

The external religious institution was first separated from the family with the establishment of Israel's priesthood in Exodus 28:1-3. While the form varies under the Old and New Covenants, the purpose is to extend the mediatorial function of the father. In the New Testament era, the church exists for worship (ministry directed toward God), edification (toward fellow believers), and witness (toward the unbelieving world).

THE STATE

The state was the last of the institutions established by God; He set it up when he brought the Israelite monarchy into existence in I Samuel 10:1. Here, for the first time, religious and governmental functions were distinct, though by no means separate in the modern sense of the word. The state was established as a monarchy to mirror God's sovereignty, and has as its main purposes enforcing the law of God.

Thus we find that all the major institutions of society have been ordained by God. The order in which they were established tells us something about their priority in terms of importance. We should also note that, since the major institutions of society were established by God, all are accountable to Him for what they do. We can never view society's basic building blocks as purely relative, subject to change according to human whim.

THE APPLICATION OF SOCIOLOGY - SOCIAL WORK

Is there a distinctly Christian approach to social work? At least two factors must be considered:

MOTIVATION

A Christian who enters the field of social work will be motivated, not by utopian idealism, but by God's love. In Scripture, love for others clearly involves caring for their physical and emotional needs. We show love to others as the Spirit works through us. The Christian will also be realistic, recognizing that human problems have their ultimate source in sin, so that meeting physical and emotional needs can never provide final solutions.

CONTENT

Christian social work can never be divorced from the message of the Gospel. Because of this, the Christian should give serious consideration to the implications of working for a secular social-service agency (such as the government), most of which prohibit the sharing of religious values with the people who are being helped. We must realize that no real help can be given apart from the Gospel of Jesus Christ. How can a Christian justify getting involved in a situation where he is prohibited from sharing the only kind of help that will really address a person's basic needs? While some argue that a little help is better than none at all, what is its ultimate value?

CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE X
Social Sciences - Economics

Scripture provides principles that enable us to evaluate effectively both individual economic practices and broad principles and systems.

ECONOMIC PRINCIPLES

The Bible gives us certain basic economic principles that should govern our thought in this area.

STEWARDSHIP

Everything belongs to God by right of Creation; He has given man responsibility over it, to exercise dominion as His stewards. For example, the concept of tithing in the Old Testament was not intended to convey the idea that "10% is God's, but 90% is mine," but rather was *representative* - the firstfruits were given to the Lord as a symbol that *all* belonged to Him (e.g., the presentation of the firstborn in Exodus 13:12-13; even as a man redeemed his firstborn son, God had redeemed all of Israel; see also the redistribution of land in the Year of Jubilee).

PERSONAL PROPERTY

The Bible never condemns the concept of private property; much of its legislation presupposed this right. In Genesis 1:28, man is given dominion over the earth; In Exodus 20:15, the prohibition of stealing implies the legitimacy of private ownership; in Joshua 13:7, God supervised the division of land among the Israelites. Scripture never condemns the rich because they are rich, but only when they use their wealth to oppress the poor or depend on it rather than on God (e.g., Matthew 19:24, where riches are seen as a spiritual liability).

SUPPORT FOR THE POOR

The law of God places responsibility for the care of the poor on the family (I Timothy 5:8), the church (I Timothy 5:9-16; James 1:27), and the state (Ruth 2:2 - gleaning privileges), although all of this aid was generally channeled through individuals. The prophets, especially Amos, condemned those who trod the poor underfoot. Scripture indicates a special concern on the part of God for those who are poor. On the other hand, the poor also have the responsibility to seek to support themselves - those who will not work should not eat (II Thessalonians 3:10).

ECONOMIC SYSTEMS

The biblical principles outlined above should be the criteria by which we evaluate various man-made economic systems.

CAPITALISM

In its pure form, it recognizes the right of private property to the exclusion of responsibility for others (e.g., nineteenth-century American "robber barons"). The idea of *laissez faire* presumes the innate nobility of man and assumes that everything will work out all right if people are left to pursue their personal interests. It thus fails to acknowledge the depravity of man as well as man's responsibility as God's steward of his wealth.

COMMUNISM

In its pure form, it recognizes the responsibility for others to the exclusion of the right of personal property. There is really no difference between "everything belongs to everybody" and "nothing belongs to anybody." It gives the group priority over the individual, thus denying the dignity of man, lowering him to the place of a cog in a machine rather than seeing him as an individual made in the image of God.

The Marxist form of communism has several additional liabilities. First of all, it is avowedly atheistic. Marx considered religion to be the "opiate of the masses," a conspiracy of the ruling class to keep the proletariat under their thumbs by encouraging them to pay attention to the next world rather than this one. It is also deterministic; all human behavior is determined by certain immutable economic principles. Finally, it has never really been established. The ideal of a classless society where the state withers away exists only in the dogma of the Marxists. The great "communist" powers have never gotten beyond totalitarian socialism.

But what about biblical "communism" (Acts 2:44-45; 4:34-37)? The New Testament Church practices differed considerably from what passes as communism today. What the early Christians practiced was voluntary, not mandatory; Christians who did participate were not required to contribute all they had, but only what they desired; the goals were spiritual rather than economic; it recognized the validity of private ownership (Acts 5:4); and it was temporary and localized, never exported to other churches or proclaimed as expected practice.

SOCIALISM

As practiced today, socialism combines the liabilities of capitalism and communism with the assets of neither. Control of assets by the state is by no means superior to control by individuals (what makes anyone think that, while individuals are sinful, groups are not?), and the sort of dependence fostered in socialist countries emasculates the poor rather than helping and empowering them. Some have suggested that the Old Testament economic system, with its institutionalized care for the poor, is an example of socialism in its ideal form, but, while it did display balance among the biblical principles enunciated at the beginning of the unit, it involved nothing of the state control that is part and parcel of the socialist system.

ECONOMIC PROBLEMS

Various economic problems need to be considered from a Christian point of view.

INSURANCE

Should a Christian purchase insurance, or does this show a lack of faith in God? We must realize that faith does not rule out common sense or intelligent planning. Too many verses in the book of Proverbs encourage diligence and wise planning rather than the foolishness of the man who lives only for the present.

WELFARE

Should the state involve itself in welfare programs? Several things should be noted:

- The primary responsibility for welfare rests on the family, then on the church. The participation of the state is an indication that the family and the church aren't fulfilling their responsibilities in this area. It is worth noting that the recent governmental move to support and encourage faith-based charities, though putting the cart before the horse in the sense of the government exercising primary oversight, is at least a move in the direction of biblical teaching on the subject.

- Welfare is to go only to those unable to support themselves (I Timothy 5:9-16; II Thessalonians 3:10-12). Occasionally our present system tends to encourage laziness by making it easier for people to get handouts than to seek to support themselves.

DEFICIT SPENDING

The economic theories of John Maynard Keynes have been praised and criticized ever since the New Deal incorporated them into American life on a large scale. Can the spending of money that doesn't exist, meanwhile compiling a huge national debt, ever be justified according to biblical principles (cf. Romans 13:8)?

CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE XI
Social Sciences - Political Science

What does Scripture tell us about politics? This is an important discussion, especially with so many Christians in our era seeking political influence.

FORM OF GOVERNMENT

Is there any one political system given support in Scripture? Since God set up a monarchy in Israel, should we conclude that the Bible advocates monarchy, or merely tolerates it?

MONARCHY

The following should be noted:

- Israel's monarchy was theocratic - responsible to God. All other monarchies in the ancient world were ordained by God even if not specifically established by Him, thus ultimately accountable to God whether they recognized it or not.

- Israel's monarchy was constitutional, in the sense that the king was not an absolute ruler, but was subject to the law - God's law. To a large extent in the ancient world, this was not true of other monarchs. Absolute rule by the king survived as late as the seventeenth century in Europe.

- Israel's monarchy was typical - not in the sense of being commonplace, but in the sense of typifying the rule of God over His people. The king was intended to prefigure the Messiah, who would establish God's kingdom.

TOTALITARIANISM

- Totalitarianism is not constitutional (except in cases where the dictator writes the constitution to benefit himself). For all practical purposes, he is not subject to the rule of law, since he can change it at will.

- Totalitarianism fails to recognize the dignity of man as made in the image of God.

- Absolute structure leads to absolute anarchy in that when laws are arbitrary, *anything* can be made law at the whim of the dictator.

DEMOCRACY

- Democracy is constitutional; leaders are subject to the law. But to what is the law subject? The willingness of the courts in modern America to shape laws according to what they see as the changing needs of society indicates the extent to which our laws are rooted in little more than the will of the government.

- Democracy often fails to recognize the depravity of fallen man - does the Bible give us any reason to believe that the majority is always right? Admittedly, the system of checks and balances incorporated into the government of the United States was intended to minimize this problem by not allowing any group of people to become too powerful.

- Absolute freedom leads to absolute structure. When the laws have no transcendent basis, but are administered according to man's ideas of freedom, the resulting chaos really eliminates a large amount of freedom (e.g., the freedom to be protected from evil by the state or the enforced opinions of the powerful and vocal). The Bible says that the state is intended to reward the good and punish the evil, but when these things are determined by human standards, freedom and structure work against one another - structure limits freedom and freedom implies the absence of structure. It is only when the state bases its rule on God's law that structure enhances rather than limiting man's freedom to be what God intended him to be.

THE SOURCE OF AUTHORITY

Structure limits freedom only when those two ideas are understood humanistically. If God is our authority, structure and freedom cease to contradict one another. All human governments fail in this area of the source of authority.

WEALTH

Plutocracy existed in a variety of forms a few centuries ago, when only the wealthy had a say in the government. In our country, it sometimes seems to exist informally when only the rich can afford to run for elective office. We need to remember, though, that the Bible tells us that the rich have a great tendency to ignore God and worship their riches instead. Are these the kind of people who are suited to rule?

POWER

Dictators and revolutionaries of all sorts have asserted over the years that might makes right. But just because someone is strong enough to seize and keep the reins of government, does that give him the right to rule? Scripture tells us that the meek will inherit the earth, and pictures the powerful as raising their heads in futility against the sovereign God of the universe.

INTELLECT

Plato advocated rule by philosopher-kings, arguing that only the philosophers could see the world as it really is, and thus provide worthwhile guidance to the general population. But didn't Paul say that the wisdom of this world is foolishness to God?

SOCIAL STATUS

For many centuries, aristocracies ruled the nations of the world. It is also true that the aristocracies of Europe became weak and effete through too many generations of intermarriage (a

classic example is Charles II of Spain). And how does an accident of birth qualify a person to rule over others, unless, as in Old Testament Israel, that rule is exercised under the authority of God?

CONSENT OF THE GOVERNED

Certainly this has advantages over the other systems, but, as already noted in connection with the discussion of democracy, there is nothing in Scripture that should lead us to believe that man is capable of governing himself wisely, nor that the majority is always right. Ultimately, we must realize that the final source of all governmental authority is God.

THE NATURE OF LAW

Three sources have traditionally been cited as the basis for laws established by government.

BIBLICAL LAW

As an expression of the nature and will of God, it is perfect, yet it was designed to be applied in a specific historical context. Thus we should not expect that the Pentateuch can simply be transferred to modern society. The Decalogue, as God's unchanging moral law, however, may legitimately serve as the basis for any moral code. The problem with attempts to build theocracies, however, is that spiritual values cannot be enforced on unbelievers - only outward behavior, otherwise all that results is hypocrisy and bitterness.

NATURAL LAW

During the Enlightenment, political theorists argued that there was a law built into the nature of things, common to all and discoverable by human reason. Is there such a thing? In the early chapters of Romans, Paul argues that the truth of God is revealed in Creation, but that man, far from discerning it by reason, rejects it in his prideful rebellion against God. In chapter two, Paul notes that, while God has given man a conscience, that conscience either "accuses or excuses" - people may feel guilty when they do wrong, but more often tend to rationalize their behavior.

POSITIVE LAW

Modern legal codes tend to be *posited* by lawmakers rather than based on any fixed standard. As such, they are relative, subject to change when circumstances are altered. Though this may be true, such laws are binding on the conscience of the Christian as long as they do not require a Christian to violate the law of God.

PARTICIPATION IN POLITICS

There are several important questions a Christian should ask himself about participation in the political process, particularly with regard to seeking political office.

- Is the political world so full of corruption that a Christian can't participate without compromising? Some Christians over the years have argued that this is the case (e.g., the

Anabaptists and their descendants, such as the Amish), and have sought to avoid all involvement with government. Yet the biblical example of people such as Daniel and Joseph indicate that this cannot be our stance.

- Is a Christian legislator responsible to vote according to the wishes of his constituency or according to his conscience? Certainly it is true that a Christian can never vote for something he believes to be morally wrong just because his constituents favor it. On the other hand, he must represent those who elected him. The obvious solution is to make it clear during the election process where he stands on major issues, and then vote as he promised he would, assuming that his election was a mandate for the views he expressed to the voters.

- If it were possible, should we attempt to bring the Constitution of the United States into conformity with the Old Testament law? As noted before, to think in these terms would be to ignore the historical and cultural context in which the Old Testament law was given. Yet the basic principles of morality outlined in the Ten Commandments are applicable to all people at all times and all places, and any society would benefit from practicing them.

CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE XII
Social Sciences - Education

In a world with increasing numbers of educational options, parents must think carefully about the choices they make for their children.

RESPONSIBILITY FOR EDUCATION

Deuteronomy 6:1-9 indicates that the primary responsibility for teaching the law of God to children rests with the parents. Since the law of God is a reflection of God's character, all true knowledge could be so classified. Thus, it is not beyond reason to state that the responsibility for all education rests with parents. What are some of the implications of this?

PARENTS AND TEACHERS

The passage just cited may give final responsibility to parents, but it need not be read in such a way as to mandate home schooling. Parents may, after all, delegate their authority, even though they are still ultimately responsible for the education their children receive. We should note, to begin with, that parents *are* the primary teachers of their children - what young children learn at home lays the foundation for all that follows. Even when children go off to school, parents are still responsible for what they learn. This means that they must be aware of what the school is teaching and must participate in the child's learning, both at home and through involvement with the school. It also means that teachers in any school function *in loco parentis*, so that they have a high degree of accountability to support what the parents are seeking to accomplish in the lives of their children, and should keep parents informed of what is going on at school.

PARENTS AND ADMINISTRATION

From a scriptural point of view, should a Christian school be run by a church, by an independent board, or by the parents? I'm not sure that a definitive conclusion can be drawn on this subject, but it is certainly true that church-run schools create many conflicts with regard to the authority structures of the two organizations.

PARENTS AND SECULAR SCHOOLS

Parents are responsible for everything their children learn, whether they teach it to them or not. Teachers teach with delegated authority. Thus, if your children are in a secular school, you should know what they are learning and help them see things from God's perspective. This puts an extra burden on parents, who then must counter humanistic education that their children receive under the authority of the government. Since secular education is in no sense neutral, but often blatantly anti-Christian, can a Christian parent in good conscience send his children to a secular school? Is it wrong for a Christian to attend a secular school? What is the value of secular education for the Christian? Are there any things to be gained from a secular education that are unavailable in Christian education? To a large extent, the answer to these questions depends on the circumstances of the parents (Is there a good Christian school in the area? Can the parents afford the tuition?) and the maturity of the student. Some students are able to stand up for what they

believe in a humanistic environment and have a positive impact on the lives of others in the process, while others are dragged down into the worldliness with which they are surrounded (note that this is also true in Christian schools, where not all of the students are Christians, by any stretch of the imagination). The bottom line is that a godly foundation must be laid, whether at home or in school, so that the student is able to view his world from the perspective of God's Word and make choices accordingly. The best way to do this will vary from child to child.

PARENTS AND CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS

The problem here arises when parents turn their children over to Christian schools, churches, or Sunday Schools, expecting those institutions to assume full responsibility for the education of the children. Parents who neglect their responsibilities at home generally create problems that Christian schools are unable to solve. How can a school teacher be expected to teach a student respect and decent behavior if the student hasn't first learned these things at home?

CONTENT OF EDUCATION

What should be the content of a good education? What are the respective values of specialization and a broad, liberal-arts education? Need a course be "useful" to be valuable? Who should decide the content of a school's curriculum - the professional educators, the parents, or should the students have a say in these things? Should school concentrate on teaching facts or values, information or learning skills? Can there be any communication of facts without the communication of values, either implicitly or explicitly? Can learning skills be taught without first communicating content? Should the values of a teacher be communicated freely, or kept concealed behind a screen of pretended objectivity? Surely the latter is impossible; honesty requires that a teacher be up-front about his perspective on the material.

METHOD OF EDUCATION

How should the tension between structure and freedom in an academic setting be resolved? In what ways does this depend on one's view of the nature of man? Certainly one who believes in the inherent goodness of man will favor freedom over structure, because he has the confidence that the self-directed student will accomplish what is for his own good. On the other hand, one who recognizes the sinfulness of fallen humanity will realize that what a student wants and what is good for him are not usually the same thing. Discipline and structure are therefore essential to the learning environment. The Christian who acts upon a biblical view of human nature will tend to favor a teacher-centered classroom rather than a student-centered one, since education involves to a large extent making students into what they would not become if left to their own devices.

CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE XIII
Natural Sciences - Biology

Our last two lessons will deal with the realm of the natural sciences, touching on topics in biology and physics. We will begin with a few thoughts about science in general.

THE NATURE AND LIMITATIONS OF SCIENCE

The task of science is to relate observed data. Note certain things about this definition:

•	Science begins with data. This means it is ill-equipped to deal with ultimate questions, including the matter of origins, since the origin of things is neither observable nor able to be replicated (extrapolation such as used by the advocates of the Big Bang theory is hazardous at best, and involves a uniformitarian assumption that is in itself unprovable). Science is thus a tool of philosophy and theology, and can never replace them. Science does not conflict with the Bible, since the former involves the description of God's world and the latter is God's revealed Word; conflict only occurs when secular humanistic philosophy places scientific conclusions in the place of ultimate realities.

•	Data must be observable. This immediately limits science to the things susceptible to sense perception. Note that this requires the assumption that sense perception is generally reliable. The basis for such an assumption must be supplied by philosophy - Scripture does so quite adequately - but science itself cannot deal with such a question.

•	Observed data must be related. Such relationships are often mathematical in nature. This assumes causality and continuity; again, philosophy provides the "whys" - science cannot go beyond assuming these things.

•	We must conclude, therefore, that only Christianity provides an adequate philosophical base for the practice of science. It answers the question of origins, gives a basis for the accuracy of sense perceptions - the fact that man was made in the image of God to rule the world God made, rather than evolving by chance, and provides a basis for causality and continuity - the faithfulness of God as the sustainer of His created universe. Historically, this conclusion holds up - modern science as we know it developed within the context of a Christian world view.

ORGANIC MACROEVOLUTION

The big question in the realm of biology, of course, is the theory of evolution, which has become such an overarching concept, not only in biology, but in much of modern life, that it must be addressed. We should note two things at the beginning. The first is that Darwin began developing his theory with life already in existence. He did not speculate about its origins, only about its development. Later evolutionists extended his theory backward beyond the beginning of life on the planet. Secondly, Christians have no quarrel with the general concept of change and adaptation on the microevolutionary level. Such changes are readily observable, and their documentation is what spurred Darwin to develop his theory in the first place. Where the theory of

evolution runs counter to Scripture is when Darwin extrapolated his findings into the realm of change from one species to another - macroevolution.

BASIC ASSUMPTIONS

- Chance - The fundamental presupposition of evolutionary theory is that of a chance universe. Evolution is not telic - it allows no room for design or a Designer - but operates purely on the basis of time plus chance. Yet evolutionists fail to realize that such an assumption goes against the steady upward "progress" usually anticipated by advocates of the theory. In fact, some modern evolutionists have recognized this problem and have concluded that man might not after all be the pinnacle of evolution, but could be a minor branch doomed to eventual extinction, after which the cockroaches will rule the earth!

- Man - Evolution makes no ultimate distinction between human and non-human. An implicit denial of the biblical doctrine of man is thus an essential component of evolutionary theory. From these basic assumptions, we should be able to see that "theistic evolution" is an oxymoron - a contradiction in terms.

SUPPORTING ARGUMENTS

These represent arguments used by Darwin himself in developing his theory.

- Natural Selection - This is the well-known concept of the survival of the fittest. Darwin maintained that those organisms best suited to their environments survived, while those that did not adapt died out. Minor differences gave some individuals slight advantages in the struggle for survival, and these advantages were thus passed on to offspring. Over millions of years, these small changes became big changes, and new species appeared.

- Mutations - How did these small changes come about? Darwin knew nothing of genetics, so he proposed that the minute changes that fueled evolutionary development came from mutations. Unfortunately for the theory, mutations are almost invariably neutral or harmful in terms of their survival benefits (we call them "birth defects" in humans), and never introduce previously unknown characteristics, just variations on (or the absence of) normal ones - a person might be born with six fingers, but never with wings!

- Comparative Anatomy - This continues to be a major source of supporting evidence for the theory today. Similarities in structure are claimed to be evidence for similarity of origin. Of course, naturalistic evolutionists do not consider that the "common origin" of which they speak is the mind of the same intelligent designer. Furthermore, anatomical similarities lead to wildly different conclusions depending upon what evidence one considers. Skeletal structure may lead to one arrangement of evolutionary descent, while blood serum tests might lead to a very different one. Consistency has not been the hallmark of evolutionists' attempts to work out the details of their theory.

- Embryology - "Ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny" - the idea that each individual organism, during its gestational period, goes through the entire evolutionary process through which its

species has developed. For instance, the human embryo, as it develops, starts as a one-celled organism, becomes multi-cellular, later looks something like a tadpole (with gill slits even!), and finally begins to develop mammalian characteristics. As scientists have gained more knowledge about embryology, however, they have come to realize that the correspondence simply doesn't work on anything but the most surface of levels (as just outlined), and thus the argument is no longer commonly used to support the theory.

- Fossil Record - Darwin believed that fossils eventually would prove his theory beyond question, but lamented that in his own time the fossil evidence was so scanty. More than a century later, however, with huge amounts of fossil evidence available, proof is still lacking. The curator of the fossil collection in the British Museum - the museum holds over a million specimens - was once asked how many of the fossils were certifiable missing links between known species. He responded that there was not one fossil of that type. To a large extent, the arguments tend to be circular. Rock strata are dated according to the fossils they contain, then the fossils are dated according to the strata in which they are found. Besides, the neatly-ordered stratigraphy pictured in biology books is highly deceptive because it involves a composite - no such series of strata is found in any single location; in fact, in many locations, the order of the strata contradicts what the theory of evolution would anticipate - sometimes, the more complex organisms are found on the lower levels. The actual record favors creationism and catastrophism, since more and more evidence is appearing to support the idea that organisms appeared all at once (e.g., the Cambrian explosion) and disappeared all at once (an asteroid killing the dinosaurs?).

NEGATIVE ARGUMENTS

- The Simple Cell - Lehigh University professor Michael Behe wrote a book called *Darwin's Black Box* in which he argued that the structure and operations of the cell render the entire theory of evolution scientifically impossible. Darwin, if you recall, started with life already in existence. He believed that the cell was a relatively simple organism. Nothing could be farther from the truth. Behe argues that the cell is so irreducibly complex that, with its hundreds of independent functions, the cell could not survive if even one of those were not operational. In other words, the cell could not possibly come into existence through gradual evolution.

- Spontaneous Generation - Over a century ago, Louis Pasteur proved the impossibility of the spontaneous generation of life, extending the work done two centuries earlier by Francesco Redi. Their experiments are among the classics in the field of biology. Yet the theory of evolution contradicts this fundamental axiom of the discipline, requiring life to generate spontaneously on the earth.

- Interdependence - Even granted that a cell could be formed spontaneously, what would it eat? Organic life requires organic life in order to survive. On a larger scale, plants and animals require each other for survival - plants use carbon dioxide and give off oxygen, while animals use oxygen and give off carbon dioxide. Yet the theory of evolution posits the existence of plant life for many millennia before animal life appeared. How could this be? Only if evolutionists depart from their uniformitarian assumption and argue that the composition of

the earth's atmosphere was significantly different millions of years ago is this able to be explained.

• Lack of Direct Evidence - Macroevolution has simply never been observed. The missing links number in the thousands. Evolutionists, of course, argue that we have had insufficient time to observe changes of such magnitude, but, as already noted, the fossil evidence also lacks concrete evidence to support the theory.

IMPLICATIONS OF EVOLUTION

As a chance philosophy denying the uniqueness of man, the theory of evolution carries with it many dire implications.

• It denies human freedom and responsibility. If evolution is true, Skinner is right about freedom and responsibility being myths.

• It renders absolute ethics impossible. All that counts is survival, and whatever helps an organism survive is by definition good.

• It ultimately renders the practice of science impossible. Science depends on regularity and predictability, but evolution postulates chance as the driving force for the progress of life on earth. Obviously, chance is not predictable, so scientists wind up cutting their own throats here.

• It gives no hope for progress - everything is determined by an impersonal process. So while evolutionists anticipate constant change, they have no basis to expect things to get better.

LIFE IN THE LABORATORY

Scientists have for many years been seeking to produce something living from something non-living. Is such a thing possible? To what extent is this a semantic problem? What differentiates life from non-life? The obvious assumption behind all such efforts is that life is something definable in materialistic terms. We know, however, that life cannot be defined in terms of certain combinations of chemicals, but is non-material in nature, being the gift of God to His creatures (cf. Job 12:9-10).

CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE XIV
Natural Sciences - Physics

Of all the natural sciences, physics is the one most closely associated with mathematics, and thus seemingly very "objective," not really susceptible to any given perspective. This is not the case, however, as a brief overview of the history of physics will demonstrate.

HISTORY

The early history of physics is filled with surprises, accidents, and hit-or-miss experimentation (e.g., Archimedes and his bathtub, Galileo and the [possibly apocryphal] experiment on the Leaning Tower of Pisa, Isaac Newton and the [probably apocryphal] apple, etc.). Things never really got moving until the time of Isaac Newton. He put physics on a firm mathematical basis with his three laws of motion and the law of universal gravitation. Newton, who wrote almost as many theological works as scientific and mathematical ones, did his work from the perspective of finding out more about God's Creation - certainly an appropriate way for Christians to look at physics. But those who followed Newton saw in his mathematical foundation of motion an indication that the universe was simply a machine and that God was unnecessary except as the Maker of the machine (Deism); this has been the prevailing view in physics ever since.

But at the beginning of the twentieth century, the "Newtonian world machine" view of the universe began to collapse - inconsistencies were discovered for very high speeds (near the speed of light), small sizes (sub-atomic particles), and short times. The revolution reached a climax with Einstein's theory of relativity, which formulated a mathematical structure to explain the warping of space and time near the outer parameters of velocity and mass and united concepts of mass and energy ($E=mc^2$), showing them to be integrally related to one another. His work was followed shortly thereafter by the work of Max Planck in quantum physics. Physics thus took on a stance of statistical probability and tentative formulation rather than mathematical precision (e.g., wave and particle models of light, Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle).

Thus physics, unless God is at the center, falls to either one extreme or the other - pure determinism or pure chance. Let us now move on to look at a couple of areas in physics that relate to our view of man, especially in terms of the theory of evolution.

THE SECOND LAW OF THERMODYNAMICS

The second law of thermodynamics is a law of heat transfer that has application to many areas of life. Stated as follows: "A natural process that starts in one equilibrium state and ends in another will go in the direction that causes the entropy of the system plus the environment to increase" (entropy is, in one expression, a measure of the heat lost in a given reaction). Note the following:

- Energy has many forms (heat, electrical, mechanical, light, etc.), which may be converted to one another, with one exception - heat. When energy is converted from one form to another, some heat is always given off. The conversion of heat energy to work always involves the expenditure of more energy and the production of more heat (e.g., energy loss through

friction). Because of this, energy production systems can never be totally efficient, and there can never be a perpetual motion machine. Furthermore, the universal applicability of this law has led scientists to conclude that the universe will eventually experience a "heat death," where all useful forms of energy will eventually be converted to heat.

- Heat is in some sense the most disorderly form of energy, therefore the second law of thermodynamics implies that things tend to move from order to disorder rather than the other way around. Things decay, rust, or rot; they don't spontaneously appear from a disordered mass. A car left in a field for thirty years will turn into a pile of rust, but a pile of rust left in a field for thirty years will not turn into a car. Another example - if people walk into a room and seat themselves, they are much more likely to do so in a disorderly configuration than an orderly one. What are the chances of people spontaneously seating themselves in alphabetical order by last name, in chronological order by birth date, by height, or in any other orderly fashion?

- This implies that things tend to move from complexity to simplicity rather than the other way around, since complexity is more orderly than simplicity.

- In applying this to evolution, note that Darwin's theory requires a massive, long-term violation of the second law of thermodynamics (it should come as no surprise that Lord Kelvin, a devout Christian who formulated the second law, argued from the beginning that Darwin's theory was scientifically impossible), since it requires extended movement from simplicity to complexity, from disorder to order, from a high-probability state to a low-probability one.

Evolutionists respond with two arguments. First, they argue that biological processes, because of the presence of life, are an exception to the second law of thermodynamics. This begs the question, however, since evolutionists generally tend to deny distinctions between human and non-human, and even between life and non-life. Furthermore, such an exception simply doesn't hold up experimentally - we know that our own bodies go through an inexorable process of decay that corresponds to the second law.

Secondly, evolutionists argue that the earth is not a closed system - that the extra energy needed to sustain long-term increases in complexity is explained by the energy that comes from the sun. This argument is a bit stronger than the first one, but still doesn't quite hold up. Energy is needed, but that energy must be structured and channeled. Beating on the wall is an expenditure of energy, but it won't air-condition your house. Random energy randomly applied will not thwart the inexorable decay predicted by the second law of thermodynamics - it requires the purposeful application of the right kind of energy at the right times and in the right places for an increase in complexity to occur.

RADIOACTIVE DATING

Radiocarbon dating is based on the uniform rate of decay of radioactive substances. Carbon 14, which has two extra neutrons, making it unstable, decays with a half-life of 5658 years. Since organisms cease to take in organic matter (i.e., carbon) when they die, scientists calculate the age of

a piece of organic matter by measuring the amount of carbon 14 it contains. In order to do this, the assumption must be made that the percentage of carbon 14 in the earth's atmosphere has remained essentially constant (contrary to the evolutionists' argument that the makeup of the earth's atmosphere has changed drastically to explain the rise of animal life after eons during which plant life was dominant). However, the fact of the Flood brings into serious question this uniformitarian assumption. In fact, the evidence indicates that the intensity of cosmic radiation, which produces carbon 14 in the atmosphere, increased dramatically after the Flood. Experiments have shown that exposure to significantly increased levels of radiation causes life expectancy to drop off according to a decay function that leaves a final level of about 10% of the original. Interestingly enough, a graph of the ages of the patriarchs from Adam to Abraham, taken from the biblical genealogies, shows much the same pattern, with the rapid decline corresponding with the Flood. Thus the evidence would indicate a significant increase in the radioactive content of the atmosphere following the Flood. This would undermine the uniformitarian assumptions of the evolutionists and would render useless any application of carbon dating much beyond five or six thousand years. It is also worth noting that, if what is said here is true, we would expect carbon dating tests to yield estimates much older than things really are for objects prior to the Flood.