

**POSTMODERNISM**  
**and the**  
**RESTORATION MOVEMENT**

**WORKSHOP PRESENTATION**  
**at the**  
**KEIZER CHURCH OF CHRIST**  
**SALEM, OREGON**

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## POSTMODERNISM AND THE RESTORATION MOVEMENT

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I appreciate the opportunity afforded by the Keizer church to address a subject of keen interest to me and I believe it to be of great importance to the church in our time. As church leaders in the roles of elder, minister, and bible teacher, some of the ideas which I will present may seem far removed from your daily concerns in your working directly with people. I beg your indulgence and request your patience in staying with some of the material which may, at first, seem abstract and theoretical. I will endeavor to make these ideas pertinent to your life.

My interest in the present topic stems from my now completed career in higher education. After finishing the doctorate degree at the University of California in Berkeley, I fulfilled my formal career in the University of California System as a professor and the California State University System as an academic dean. After more than thirty years in this setting, I became increasingly aware that the secular university is doing an excellent job in presenting to your sons and daughters the modern and postmodern worldview. It is increasingly important that we in the church be equally able to present our Christian heritage meaningfully to them in this postmodern epoch. Professor Mary Hesse of Cambridge (1981, p. 292) attributes "at least some of the causes of modern atheism and agnosticism" to the critique of faith arising from the Social and Natural Sciences.

So vast is the topic announced that I am reminded of an expression of an assistant of mine when I was serving as a University Dean attempting to coordinate the activities of the school of Behavioral and Social Sciences with its many disciplines and departments each with their own agenda. During a particularly distressful discussion of competing and conflicting interests, each department seemed determined to head off in its own direction. My assistant who had lived through the winters on the high plains of the southwest exclaimed, "this reminds me of herding jack rabbits on ice." I was so intrigued by this picture that I asked just how this was done. My assistant was a tall, lanky fellow with long arms. He proceeded to shift his feet from side to side and spread out his arms saying, "you've just got to get a wide surround". I feel that due to the complexity of the topic I have accepted for my assigned speech that I too will "have to try to make a wide surround". Perhaps in the period allotted, we can identify and make a preliminary definition of the issues involved in taking seriously the concept of the Restoration of New Testament Christianity in the late twentieth century, a period regarded by scholars today as the Postmodern Age of Western thought.

Can we take seriously postmodern thought and still take equally seriously the plea for the restoration of new testament Christianity? This is the *broad problem* shared with all who take the New Testament as normative for Christian life and thought. The *narrower problem* involves asking whether we, in the Churches of Christ, can still take seriously the program of restoration of new testament Christianity as proclaimed by Barton W. Stone, Thomas and Alexander Campbell in the United States in the nineteenth century.

By the expression "take seriously" it is meant that we should endeavor to empathically understand the concerns of both postmodern thought and the concepts of the restoration of new testament Christianity. As a member of the churches of Christ in the 1990's, I am one of the heirs of the Stone-Campbell legacy. It is my desire to know whether I can, with integrity, maintain the faith inherent in this legacy in the postmodern period of Western History. The present address occurs in the process of an intensive reading program over the past two or three years which has had the goal for me of getting reacquainted with modern theology. I turned my attention to the fields of psychology and higher education after completing a Master of Divinity degree in 1956. Admittedly, this represents *an initial attempt* to organize some of the issues and point the way for future exploration of the complex and extensive topics involved. Modern theological study overlaps many fields, such as history, linguistics, philosophy and literature to name only a few. Alas, *we will all remain novices* in most of the pertinent areas of investigation. Nevertheless, the issues are of utmost importance to each of us and our Christian faith cannot be left to the experts. Jesus did not come to seek out an elite group called scholars or even theologians. An elitist stance in regard to understanding the gospel suggests a new gnosticism may develop.

I am aware that the very notion of restoring the new testament church today would be considered by many contemporary scholars as an attempt to reverse the course of history. For example, in his book entitled "Jesus and Postmodernism", James Breech (1989, pp. 62-63) seems to state a reasonable definition of the *broad problem* of restoration, yet later reject its feasibility. He poses the restoration issue as follows:

If we consider for a moment the hermeneutical problem of how to bridge the gap between what Christian faith meant in the first century and what it might mean today, we see that several different solutions have been proposed.

The first is to move oneself backward in time and to become a first-century person, adopting, insofar as is possible today, the attitudes, ideas and beliefs of the earliest Christians; one travels back to the past over an ideological bridge. In this view, Jesus was the founder of Christianity, and our task is to become first-century Christians.

Breech presents the restoration option as part of a viewpoint which would consider it an impossibility for Post Modern man to go back to the first century for the pattern of church life and thought today. Of course, the Stone-Campbell movement was not an effort to lead us back to being first-century persons but Breech's notion about our adopting the attitudes, ideas and beliefs of the earliest Christians has relevance for examining the Restoration plea as stated in the Stone-Campbell movement.

Rather than looking at the extensive critique of the concept of the restoration of new testament Christianity which might be developed from outside the Stone-Campbell legacy, let us ask the question of the current heirs of restoration. Can we bridge the gap between the first and the late twentieth century and restore the new testament church as the pattern of our life today? We can turn to Larry D. Bouchard (Richesin and Bouchard, 1987, pp. 1-26) and from our Disciples of Christ brethren hear a *resounding no* to our question which we have posed. Bouchard reviews the work of the 1960's in the Disciples ranks which led to "restructure" of the Disciples of Christ by organizing this branch of the Stone-Campbell movement into a modern denomination. Bouchard states:

"This process of redefinition involved the more-or-less *complete rejection of the restoration principle* and the biblical literalism it fostered. The rejection was based on the fact that modern biblical and historical scholarship came to show that the basic propositional claims of the restoration are untenable."

By contrast, we can now turn to David Edwin Harrell, Jr., an established scholar in the Churches of Christ branch of the Stone-Campbell movement for a *determined yes* to the "search for restoration today". Harrell was asked to write an epilogue for Richard Hughes book on the American Quest for the Primitive Church (1988). Harrell concludes:

"I am a restorer--unbowed, undaunted, extremist, and eccentric--a period piece in a Disciples of Christ movement grown increasingly uncomfortable with the intellectual, social, and psychological pitfalls of restoring New Testament Christianity. The centerpiece of my intellectual universe is biblical primitivism, a search for the first pure truths and ordinances. I am seeking that illusive, pristine image of Christianity as it came from the mind of God. You say it is not there; it is an illusion. I have decided to seek it anyway. We live in a world of illusions. You say I will not find it because I carry on my back the baggage of my own past, of the culture in which I live, of the language with which I think. Self-consciously and with as much self-awareness as possible, I have decided to try. You say I shall fail and be disillusioned. So far, I have not. To be a restorer has always meant to be an explorer in search of Zion. .... I have never been alone. ... It has been a rigorous journey. ... The search has served me well, and

should you come to look for me, you will find me a bit further down the same road."

Admittedly, Harrell's testimony is in the form of a confessional statement, but it has added force because it is from an established, published scholar. At the same time, Bouchard from the Disciples Movement buttresses his claims with studious care. We cite these examples of a "no" and a "yes" to restoration as illustrating the polar opposite answers from thoughtful scholars which makes it plain that easy answers will not stand the test today.

There is much at stake in the answer to our question. If we are not able to convince ourselves of the viability of the restoration plea, we will make uncertain noises instead of clear, confident calls for the restoration of new testament Christianity. Rodney Stark (1989), a sociologist with many years of background in the study of religion in the United States, offers an explanation both for the *early vigor* and the *later decline* of certain once aggressive and growing religious groups in America by noting that, "It is hard to witness for a faith with *nothing special to offer* in the religious message."

The uncertainty presently being voiced by those within the ranks of the Churches of Christ, as well as the other heirs of the Restoration Movement, poses the threat of the loss of vitality and the very life of the group. With regard to one branch of the Restoration Movement, Ronald E. Osborn (1986), notes that the Disciples of Christ seem

"to have little sense of offering anything distinctive to the present generation. ....contemporary Disciples feel themselves at loose ends, unable to justify their separate existence but unable to abandon the movement and its people, and uncertain about their future."

I think that, for those of us in the Churches of Christ branch of the Restoration Movement, Osborn's doubts give added emphasis to our question, "Can we take seriously the Restoration Plea in the Post Modern Age?"

Our theme raises our first question. What is Postmodernism? In response, we call your attention to our first chart entitled, "Epochs of Western Thought".

## EPOCHS OF WESTERN THOUGHT

PRECRITICAL	MODERN	POSTMODERN
=====		
=====		
PRIOR TO 1650	1650 to 1950	1950 to Present
-----		
Pre-Scientific Scripture Literal Sense  Self-Interpre- ting	Rationality Certainty Clean Slate  Disenchantment  Desacralized Historicality Relativism	Total Relativity Ideology No Privileged Position for Truth Claims  Strong-Weak Program Natural Science vs Human Studies
Word of God & Text Identified		
=====		
=====		

Scholars speak of a pre-critical, modern and postmodern era in categorizing Western thought. For clarity and in the interest of simplicity, we adopt the time periods suggested by Stephen Toulmin (1990). Toulmin notes the ambiguity of all such attempts at setting dates on historical periods but suggests that the modern age can be dated roughly from 1650 to 1950. The precritical age encompasses the time of recorded history down to 1650 and the postmodern age is dated from 1950 to the present. The dating of the eras is not critical for our purposes but the significant world views of each age are central.

During the *Precritical Epoch*, before 1650, we are speaking of the prescientific age of Western thought. In this period, the Word of God was generally viewed as identified with the biblical text and the text was read for its literal sense in a "history-like" manner (Frei, 1974).

The *Modern Period* from 1650 to 1950 is characterized by the dominance of the Scientific Method which became the pervasive methodology for the natural and social sciences. The agenda of the Modern Period is *the reigning attitude* in the curriculum of the contemporary secular university.

I am most familiar with the social and behavioral sciences in my own career and have witnessed first hand the intent of these disciplines to imitate the methodology of the natural sciences with physics and mathematics as the model of precision desired. We will see that this pervasive viewpoint has begun to break down but we need to note what the intellectual agenda was in this epoch.

Our chart indicates that in the Modern Period the search for rationality was foremost. It has been the clear intent of modernity to rationalize (i.e., analyze, synthesize, predict & control) every facet of life. Along with this complete "*rationalization*" of life goes the "*disenchantment*" which results from the removal of the "mystery" from the processes of nature. As an illustration, in the psychological study of human development, university students investigate thoroughly human conception and birth. This once enchanted (translation equals mysterious) area of life is now fully rationalized (i.e., the physical, chemical processes are detailed for the processes involved in conception, development and birth). Students consider the genetic factors and potential genetic abnormalities involved in conception, then follow the process of human conception as the ovum is fertilized by the sperm cell. The pattern of development is explicated all the way through the period of the embryo and the fetus in the womb. Students are able to see how various factors in the uterine environment including drug usage affect the different organs of the developing child. As a summary of their lectures and reading, a film will typically be presented which demonstrates the processes of development in the womb by the amazing feats of microphotography. The various technologies available enable students to see the life processes unfold in place and in process in living color. Until recently these phenomena had never been witnessed in real time in living beings. It is interesting to note the reactions of the modern student to this rationalization of the life process. The mystery is removed, the enchantment is gone, since the physical, chemical processes can be understood.

One potential side effect of this disenchantment is the "*desacralization*" of life. Scholars may well argue that this is not a necessary effect but it is a potential result. Berger (1967) and Eliade (1961, 1969) point to the shift from the Pre Modern to the Modern era in the way we understand ourselves. In the Pre Critical period, we did tend to see our life as lived in the mystery and in the presence of God. Procreation was not just a physical-chemical process but a co-creation with God. In the enchanted period it was easier for man to plant the seed and bow his head in prayer that God would guide the mystery of development. The loss of the sense of the sacred creates new, unforeseen problems for our modern technological world. It is evident that the state of our scientific knowledge has outstripped the ethical systems guiding our professions at the end of the Modern era and the beginning of the Post Modern world, as we struggle with the meaning and value of life in the womb and at life's ending witnessed by the issues of abortion, use of fetal tissue, and life-support systems for terminally ill, young or old.

The Philosopher Wilhelm Dilthey (1962) taught the modern world that we are children of our own time. In layman's terms, we do not think as our grandparents did nor will our grandchildren think as we do. Each historical period must be judged by the horizon of its understanding, and *truth is relative to an epoch*. Truth becomes a process of developing understanding from generation to generation. Truth is not absolute, only probabilistic. Yet, the "relativising agenda" was not thoroughgoing. The sciences (both natural and social) wanted a privileged position. Science wished to reserve a "privileged status" for its truth claims. The modern

age did envision beginning with a clean slate, namely to wipe clean the history of superstition and start afresh (Toulmin, 1990, p.177-178). There was a tendency in the Modern Period to believe that the scientific method did stand apart from the contingencies of culture and history. The sciences with their powerful methodologies were presumed to be objective and yielding "transhistorical truth". This led to an interesting problem.

The *Post Modern era* is characterized by the *challenge to the "privileged status"* for truth claims by science. The Post Modern scholars called a "halt" with respect to the dream that the sciences stood apart from the inheritance of assumptions and beliefs through culture and history. They challenged the claim of both the natural and social sciences that "certainty" and ahistoricity could be attained in human thought as it is assumed to occur in the discipline of mathematics. Post Modern thought is characterized by the concept of "*total relativity*" including scientific thought. Furthermore, *all human thought is characterized as "Ideological"*, a concept which we shall define shortly. Steven Seidman (1992, pp. 64-65) states the "*doubt*" of a "*privileged status*" with respect to the human studies (Social Science and the Humanities) to the effect that humans are constituted by their particular sociohistorical circumstances and their concepts are embedded in these contexts.

"As this doubt becomes firmer and more pervasive, the very project of science is questioned. ... Once the veil of epistemic privilege is torn away, science appears to be enmeshed in networks of social practices and power relations. The postmodern unmasking of science as a practical, moral force aims to bring public accountability to a powerful social element that at present is almost unaccountable by virtue of the ideology that accompanies it and its disciplinary autonomy".

The Social Sciences and the Human Studies in the modern secular university are more and more being recognized as guided by a ruling ideology. The field of study called "hermeneutics" is now considered applicable to these disciplines. It is recognized that "interpretation" enters into the conceptual frameworks of the social sciences and the human studies in a particularly potent fashion. It is difficult not to concede that in these areas the "data" do not speak for themselves. Our point of view (theory, ideology) is present in these investigations from beginning to end.

One factor of major importance for the pursuit of our investigation of the impact of Postmodern thought on the Restoration Movement is the "*leveling of the playing field*" resulting from the Postmodern claim that all human thought is "Ideological". Religion had been placed under this formerly "pejorative" label of "Ideology". Now, our truth claims cannot be rejected simply on the basis that religion is ideological. All conceptual frameworks whether from religion or science can be brought to the conference table and each can present the assumptions which undergird its truth claims. This is pertinent to our Restoration Plea. In the context



just outlined, it is a competing ideological system among other ideological systems which purport to offer a worldview.

The *Strong Program* in Postmodernism wishes to label both the natural sciences and the human studies (social sciences and humanities) in the "Ideological" category. The *Weak Program* in Postmodernism restricts the charge of relativity more closely to the Social Sciences and the Humanities. We are not concerned with the natural sciences in this investigation. Reflecting my own intellectual heritage from the University of California, at Berkeley, I feel a strong tug to hold on to the logical positivist, operational language tradition and sympathize with the attempt to keep a "privileged status" for the natural sciences. However, the challenge to such a "privileged status" with regard to truth claims is there as well.

Harry Rubin, distinguished professor of cell biology and cancer research at Berkeley, was recently interviewed by one of the editors of the California Alumni Bulletin. Rubin (1991), who has won most of the prizes in his field in a long career, now finds himself at odds with the direction of research. He points to the "political correctness" that now holds sway over the notion that all biological phenomena are going to be explained at the molecular level and ultimately at the level of DNA or what he labels the "imperial DNA model" which he considers to be good chemistry but bad biology. The rejection of this paradigm has caused him to be placed in a very uncomfortable position. The interviewer is amazed and states that he thought science was beyond such influences as fads and fashions and was objective, interested only in truth. Rubin answers:

Well, science in a way is the most deceptive of all things because it has that mythology built around it--that it's truly objective, interested only in truth. The fact is that science is carried out by people, and scientists have the same mental makeup as everybody else.

Scientific objectivity does have some merit. It does require experimental verification of ideas or theories. But do you provide a full test? Are you asking all the questions? The answer is that nobody can consider all the evidence, everybody has to be selective.

But you have to be careful not to be selective in terms of what's going to give you recognition or get you a good job. These factors may be unconscious, but they operate in all human beings. And to some extent it's probably more extreme in scientists; probably a lot of us are drawn to science because we're looking for simplifications, we're looking for firm ground.

Interviewer: "Is this true in your case?"

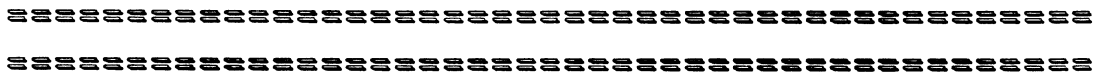
Rubin: "I really don't know. But I do know that science is dangerous when it becomes a sort of substitute for religion when it becomes the church. In essence, that's the position

it has taken today.  
And when you start questioning the basic preconceptions  
of your era, you become a dangerous person.

Rubin has highlighted for us the "subjective" element in scientific study. What is important for our purposes is the status of the Human Studies as "ideological". Rubin's comments on the tendencies of the natural sciences to be caught in the same web simply buttresses our position with regard to the human studies in which religion resides. Our next task is to define what we mean by ideology.

We have chosen a *definition of ideology* which is in keeping with the postmodern notion that all human thought is ideological. Ideology is being redeemed from its "pejorative" meaning much in the fashion that Hans Georg Gadamer, a noted student of hermeneutics, has attempted to redeem the concept "prejudice". Gadamer (1975) argues that without a "pre-understanding (read "prejudice" or prejudgment) we would be unable to grasp a new idea. Similarly, it can be argued that *without a "theoretical framework"*, we would be *unable to interpret* what we encounter. We have charted our viewpoint of what constitutes an "ideology" as follows:

# IDEOLOGY REALITY



## ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT REALITY BELIEFS ABOUT REALITY

### VALUES

### ACTIONS



1. Physics: Steven Weinberg and Particle Theory (Nobel In 1979)
2. Medicine: Semmelweiss (1830); Leuwenhoek (1692); Bacteria & theory of infection.
3. Physiology: Johannes Muller (Vitalism); Carl Ludwig, Du bois Reymond, Herman von Helmholtz, Ernst Brucke (1842 Pact)



In our chosen usage of the concept of "ideology" it includes both unconscious (unaware) and conscious (fully aware) elements. Many of our beliefs about reality are not critically thought out and accepted but rather reflect our conditioning within our particular culture. We will use ideology as analogous to "theory" in the non-professional sense. Each of us has a "theory" about how things are. This theory or set of spectacles through which we view life sets limits on what we notice, see and understand. Gadamer speaks of a "horizon" which limits and enables our seeing what lies before us. Events in the world do not speak to us their meaning. *Meaning is interactive* in that we interpret what we see through our spectacles. This is what we mean by the terms "Assumptions About Reality" and "Beliefs About Reality" in our chart labeled "ideology".

Let's consider an example from the natural sciences illustrating how that we see through our spectacles (theory or beliefs about reality) and that these spectacles blind us to some things before our eyes and enable us to see, in the sense of "understand" or "interpret" other things before our eyes. For instance, in 1979 Steven Weinberg was awarded the Nobel Prize for his major discovery in Particle Theory. Weinberg was able to formulate a basis for uniting the first and second of the four great forces believed by Physicists to underlie the nature of our universe. His momentous achievement consisted, in part, in his interpreting data which other scientists in his field had been looking at for many years. In other words, they had seen the same evidence in the form of particle traces for a long time but did not recognize what they meant. They did not have a theoretical framework or set of assumptions and beliefs about the reality they were observing in order for them to make sense out of what they were seeing. They had considered the particle traces to be random error. Later, Weinberg correctly interpreted the data. Truly our theories or spectacles not only enable us *to see*, as in the case of Weinberg, but also *blind us from seeing*, as in the case of his scientific peers. Admittedly, scientific theory is a concept more limited in scope than "ideology" but the fact that both terms refer to our assumptions and beliefs about reality that determine our understanding of that same reality is a useful analogy for our purposes.

Another example from the field of medicine illustrates the "ideological" nature of human thought. The field of medicine contains the story of the conquest of child bed fever by the physician Semmelweiss in the 1830's, a time paralleling our American Restoration Movement. Child bed fever had been the dread killer of countless women and sometimes their infants. Semmelweiss battled valiantly against the scientific practice of his time which rejected the notion that disease was being communicated from the doctor's hands to his patient. There was no theory that microscopic particles could cause the death of human beings. Semmelweiss brought about the practice of "chlorine washing" of the physicians hands and reduced child bed fever to a minor problem in obstetrics. His valiant fight to establish this practice was opposed vigorously due to the lack of a theory of infection from bacteria. Leuwenhoek introduced the microscope to science in 1692. Living

bacteria had been observed for over a century in Semmelweiss time when he contended for antiseptic washings by asserting that the doctor's hands were the hands of death in the hospital delivery room. The reason for the opposition was not fully overcome until 1869 when Lister formulated the theory of infection which linked microscopic particles, such as bacteria, to the disease process. Now a new set of spectacles, a new horizon for viewing reality, a new set of assumptions about reality, a new set of beliefs about reality enabled men of science to "see more fully" what was always before their eyes. The philosopher Wittgenstein was certainly correct when he said, "how difficult it is to see that which is always before our eyes." Our theories, ideologies, spectacles both enable us to see in the sense of "understand what we are seeing" as well as "blind us" so that we can't make sense out of certain traces of atomic particles until Weinberg fits a new pair of glasses or until Lister can enable us to have a theory that shows the relation to the bacteria we have been looking at for a hundred years and the disease that is killing so many thousands of women in childbirth.

Turning now to the field of physiology, we look at the development of modern ideology in the way we interpret human life. In the early 1840's, once more a time paralleling the heyday of the American Restoration Movement, four graduate students in Germany were studying physiology under the renowned Vitalist Johannes Muller. Muller was a Vitalist in that he accepted the study of man by scientific methods when it came to the body but reserved the spirit as not amenable to the investigative tools of physiology. God breathed into man the breath of life and this spiritual side was not a subject of science. The four graduate students, Carl Ludwig, Du `bois Reymond, Herman von Helmholtz and Ernst Brucke (Sigmund Freud's teacher) were all destined to distinguished careers in physiology. But what is most interesting to us is their "ideological" bent. They determined to upend the teaching of their master Johannes Muller with respect to his notion of Vitalism. History records that these students made a pact in 1842, swearing that in their lifetime they would prove that there was nothing operative in human beings except "physical, chemical processes". In their lifetime (the 19th century), they lived to see this "materialist" ideology become the "modern world paradigm" (Boring, 1929, p. 708). Physiology came to accept the reductionist view that a human being can be defined by "nothing but" physical and chemical processes. *This "ideology" is still an accepted canon of secular materialist thought in the post modern world view.*

What is the consequence of an "ideology"? You may choose to use a more limited term such as "theory" or "paradigm", but it still provides the same spectacles comprised of the assumptions and beliefs about the reality which in this case is the reality of what is a human being. I think one can surely anticipate that the assumptions and beliefs about what it means to be a human being will condition the values and actions which follow from the theory. When the physical, chemical processes in the human body produce a clump of cells called a tumor, we cut it out. I remember well the argument of a young woman, a nurse, in a child development class contending that another clump of cells, called a fetus, was just that, and if it was undesired, cut it out as you do the tumor. Values and actions do follow from our assumptions and beliefs about the nature of reality. In both the modern and postmodern epoch, those who accept

the reductionistic, materialistic view of man as formulated by Muller's four brilliant students and propagated in keeping with their "pact" will look at reality, in this case a human being, and their assumptions and beliefs will be as follows:

What is Religion? It is an anthropological study in that humans construct religious systems. This is seen as a natural process just as humans construct social systems such as family, tribe and nation. In this viewpoint, there is no need to look beyond a materialist explanation of man as a toolmaker, social meaning maker, religion maker. These activities are cut from the same cloth.

What is the Bible? It is a human record from the Judaeo-Christian perspective of man's speculations about the mysterious and the unknown. It is human document, nothing more.

Who is Christ? He is a man of the first century. Charismatic, in the sense that he exercised great influence on people then and now, but a man nonetheless, nothing more.

What is the Supernatural? This concept is a carryover from the days of superstition and is one of the ideas which science in the modern epoch wished to sweep clean in its efforts to begin with a new slate. There is no transcendent world. The universe is a closed system and there are no outside forces operative.

The ideology of the modern epoch has reduced religion to a purely human phenomenon. We turn now to an example of how the Bible and religion is viewed when one accepts the presuppositions of modernity as the "starting point" by examining some of the work of Rudolf Bultmann.

## RESTORATION IN THE MODERN, EXISTENTIAL MODE

One of the major twentieth century German liberal scholars, Rudolf Bultman, initiated a "restoration of Christian thought" which accepted fully the modern world view. He proposed that Christianity must be translated into terms acceptable to modern man since "all our thinking today is shaped irrevocably by modern science (Bultmann, 1961, p. 3). Furthermore, Bultmann argues that it is impossible for modern man to "seriously hold the New Testament view of the world." The New Testament view of the world is "mythological" in that it posits supernatural forces affecting events in our natural world. Bultmann insists that modern man can no longer believe in the miraculous or in spirits, whether good or evil. He asserts, "it is impossible to use electric light and wireless and to avail ourselves of modern medical and surgical discoveries, and at the same time to believe in the New Testament world of spirit and miracles" (Bultmann, 1961, pp. 4-5). To ask modern man to accept interventions of this nature into the closed system of his world would require a "sacrifice of the intellect." Furthermore, it would be impossible to revive an obsolete, mythological view of the world today in view of the shaping

power of modern science on our contemporary world view. Even if we tried to revive the mythical world view of the New Testament it would be futile in that he considers it impossible for a man to "adopt a view of the world by his own volition--it is already determined for him by his place in history" (Bultmann, 1961, p. 3).

It may seem paradoxical but Bultmann is involved in our project of the "restoration of New Testament Christianity for modern man." He answers our question, "Can we take seriously modern thought and restoration" with a decisive YES! How can this be? The answer is found in Bultmann's belief that the New Testament contains "transhistorically valid truths". Truths valuable not just to first century man but to modern man as well. The problem is that these "truths" are encapsulated in an outmoded world view and language. The restoration of these truths is the purpose of his program of demythologizing the New Testament. Bultmann might have preferred the concept of "the retrieval of New Testament thought" rather than our concept of "the restoration of new testament Christianity." Nevertheless, he is seriously endeavoring to retrieve what he considers the "core" message of Jesus and the New Testament for our modern world. When the "core ideas" in the New Testament faith are rescued from a "mythological" world view and a first century language, the "truth" of that message can be understood by modern man. Modern man closes his ears to the gospel because of its strange world view and its language which is no longer meaningful to him.

Bultmann spells out his assumptions and beliefs for us and thereby provides an excellent opportunity for an analysis of his ideological system. His theological model is important for our present study because it is based on the paradigm of "modern thought". Furthermore, his position calls in question a number of assumptions in the Stone-Campbell ideology lying behind the restoration plea. The particular challenges to "restoration" which we will consider deal with the question of the "uniqueness of Jesus for faith", the "relation of the supernatural or, in particular, the concept of miracle as inseparable from the basic meaning of the concepts of the gospel especially with reference to the resurrection of Jesus," and the "possibility or impossibility of our being able to adopt a world view by our own volition." With regard to this last issue, Bultmann takes a deterministic stance that is analogous to an evolutionary view in a biological model of human evolution. In the biological model of man's development, human ancestry is the sea. Man evolved into an air-breathing, land-animal, and now cannot return "by volition" to the sea as a natural habitat. Likewise, in the intellectual realm, man has evolved "a world-view". Man has evolved from a world view that was based on superstition or belief in the supernatural intervention in history to a new world view which is based on the premises of modern science and now understands that the universe is a closed system determined by immanent laws. Consequently, according to Bultmann, man cannot return to his former world view or ideology. A world view is a "given" for man in that it is simply determined for him by his time of birth in the continuum of world history. From this ideology, Bultmann's project of translating the New Testament language into the terms of Existential Philosophy in order to conform to "modern thought", challenges the very heart of Campbell's plea. Campbell intended to return to the very language of scripture by calling "Bible things by Bible

names". We will treat these issues raised by Bultmann as an example of the type of concerns which must be evaluated in order to determine whether the Stone-Campbell Restoration Plea is viable for our Postmodern world.

As we have noted, Bultmann's life project was an attempt to translate the "core" of meaning in the gospel from the New Testament and present it in concepts and language understandable within the ideology of the modern, scientific world view. Now we can ask, "what is the essential gospel stripped of myth and translated into modern concepts?" In brief, as I understand Bultmann's program, he asserts that the central message of Jesus and the New Testament is that man can "attain authentic historical existence" by coming to a new understanding of himself as free from his past, and as "open to the future" in this freedom. Bultmann insists that this "self-understanding" is, in principle, "potentially possible" to man as man but is "factually possible" only to the man who has faith in Jesus Christ, thereby retaining a unique place for Jesus.

Since Bultmann's work has been absorbed into the agenda of Postmodern religious thought, I wish to push to its conclusion what the Bultmannian gospel would be. Schubert Ogden (1961,p. 114), one of Bultmann's interpreters, summarizes the endpoint of demythologizing as follows:

*"In other words, Bultmann reduces the entire contents of the traditional Christian confession to one fundamental assertion: I henceforth understand myself no longer in terms of my past, but solely in terms of the future that is here and now disclosed to me as grace in my encounter with the church's proclamation. Thus, from the standpoint of existential interpretation, to affirm that Jesus Christ is the preexistent Son of God, that he was born of the Virgin Mary, that he descended into hell, that on the third day he arose again from the dead, that he now sits at the right hand of the Father from whence he shall eventually come to judge the quick and the dead--in short, to affirm any or all of the church's traditional assertions about Christ is in reality simply to affirm the authentic self-understanding presented in the Christian message. This is the import of all of Bultmann's constructive statements, and it is for this reason we have said that, for him, the Christian faith is to be interpreted exhaustively and without remainder as man's original possibility of authentic existence." (p. 114).*

This is certainly a radical pruning of the New Testament concepts. The Gospel is reduced to the modern concepts of a "new self-understanding" leading to what Bultmann calls "authentic existence".

It is interesting to me as a Psychologist to note that Bultmann's later life overlapped the pervasive influence of humanistic psychology. Yet, I doubt that he would have approved the meaning which the terms in his gospel would likely evoke in a contemporary audience. Authentic existence, as a concept used in contemporary humanistic psychology, refers to an individual living in a self-actualizing manner whereby the person experiences integration or congruence encompassing his/her

feelings, thoughts and behavior. In Humanistic Psychology, what the "authentic" person feels, he/she can bring to awareness in thought, and what he/she feels and thinks, can be expressed appropriately in verbal and non-verbal behavior. This, in turn, leads to a fuller sense of integration as a fully functioning person. This "full self acceptance" and expression of "experiencing" seems to be attainable by psychological techniques independent of any religious faith or association.

I don't think Bultmann meant to put theologians completely out of work by turning "salvation" over to the Psychologists. He wished to retain the notion that Jesus made "factually possible" the "authentic existence" which is only "theoretically possible" to man as man. This contention for the uniqueness of Jesus is the major point of attack for Schubert Ogden (1961) with regard to Bultmann's demythologizing project and Ogden charges him with holding an inconsistent and indefensible view. Ogden contends that a consistent application of the Bultmannian position would lead to "man as man" having both the "potential" and "actual" possibility of attaining "authentic existence" apart from Jesus. This argument by Ogden seems to be the grounds for the complete secularization of salvation, a term now reduced to meaning the attainment of "authentic historical existence" which we have seen to be achievable by modern and postmodern man apart from Jesus. It seems to me to be a natural precursor to current Liberal Pluralism which proclaims the non-uniqueness of Jesus as well as what became the secular faith of the "death of God" theologies.

Bultmann, along with some of the theologians in the old liberal paradigm, considered the miraculous element in the New Testament as "mere husk" which could be discarded while retaining the "kernel" or real substance of the gospel. In point of fact, almost everyone readily dispenses with some of the customs of New Testament times by viewing these particularities as not part of the transhistorical, once-for-all message. Let us then consider an argument somewhat analogous to what Bultmann proclaimed. Since first century man lived in an age in which the cultural world view included superstition and miraculous intervention in nature, the gospel as proclaimed in the first century would necessarily have to validate itself to a superstitious age by means of "superior miracles". Now, this type of validation, which was appended to the gospel message as an aid to belief among superstitious people, would be offensive and meaningless to twentieth century man in the epoch where "thought is shaped irrevocably by modern science." Why not remove the false stumbling block of an outmoded world view and thereby confront man with the real stumbling block or scandal of the gospel message, namely the cross of Christ (1 Co 1:23). Modern man can understand the "self-giving for others" exemplified by Jesus on the cross even though it is a stumbling block to him due to his narcissism and egocentricity. It is along these lines that the argument for demythologizing or removal of the miraculous elements of New Testament thought was made.

From a traditional, Biblicist position and the Restorationist view point, Paul explicitly taught the miraculous intervention of God in the form of the resurrection of Jesus as the central core of the gospel message by asserting that "if Christ has not been raised, then our faith is vain" (1 Co



15:1-19). From this historic Christian viewpoint, we cannot sacrifice the miraculous as "husk" to be demythologized from a supposed "kernel" to be retained. Apart from this direct intervention in the historical process in Jesus' resurrection there might be a "proclamation" (κήρυγμα), to use one of Bultmann's key words, but it would certainly not be gospel (εὐαγγέλιον) or the good news which, according to Paul, involves the proclamation that death has been overcome. Bultmann (1958, p. 61) clearly rejects the notion of divine causality "inserted as a link in the chain of events which follow one another according to the causal nexus" and asserts (1961, p.39) that "an historical fact which involves a resurrection from the dead is utterly inconceivable". In the traditional, Biblicist interpretation this would, by Paul's account (1 Co. 15:12-19), render the gospel meaningless. Furthermore, Paul's use of the term "resurrection" cannot be satisfied by the modern, liberal notion of the resurrection as nothing more than the revival of the disciples' faith in Jesus (Via, 1967, p. 199). The contemporary theologian, David Tracy (1988, p. 400), has argued cogently that we now have the linguistic materials from the relevant time periods to bracket the use of the word "resurrection" before, during and immediately after the time period in which the concept occurs in the New Testament. We now know enough about the literature of the period in which Paul wrote to assert with regard to the word "resurrection" that

"the one thing that would not have merited the word,  
we may be sure, was an 'event', if such it could be called,  
which left the physical body in the tomb".

We are not denying that there is ambiguity in attempts to interpret the relationship between the concept of an "empty tomb", involving the absence of the physical body of Jesus, and the textual representations of the form of the appearance of the risen Christ (Fuller, 1971). These concerns involve a different kind of analysis than our interest which centers on a contention for the intervention of God in the space-time continuum of human history in the resurrection of Jesus in what Pannenberg (Braaten & Clayton, 1988, p. 176) calls a unique event "which appears to have no analogies elsewhere in history or experience". What is being promulgated here is that the term "resurrection", as used by Paul, refers to the assertion that something happened between the earthly Jesus and the Living God (Schillebeeckx, 1987) and this concept does not merely refer to the revival of the disciples' faith in Jesus as merely a subjective experience apart from any objective, historical event. The problem with the concept of "resurrection" is not an issue of "language" alone, it is rather an issue of "ideology" or of one's "world view". This matter was an issue which faced the first century person in a manner similar to the issue for the twentieth century individual. The philosopher, Karl Jaspers (1958, p. 5), in his written debate with Bultmann over "demythologizing", asserts that:

"The resurrection, for instance, was just as implausible to the contemporaries of Jesus as it is to modern man. To exaggerate the spiritual differences between one age and another leads to overlooking the identical elements that characterize man as such. Thus materialism and a naturalistic realism have always been with us . . . "

So, it is contended, that there is inconsistency in Bultmann's demythologizing project in its radical and unnecessary discontinuity with Paul's teaching concerning the resurrection and the reality of supernatural intervention in the time-space continuum of human history. The traditional or historic Christian position presents the case for miracle in categories that are not reducible solely to the concepts derived from modern historical analysis or natural science. This sets a limit on demythologizing which goes beyond the extended treatment of Macquarrie (1959) in his sympathetic critique of Bultmann. We are asserting that "demythologizing" gives away too much to modern man.

It is certainly possible to argue that the gospel is outmoded and should be rejected; but it is another matter to contend that one has restored the first century gospel with full integrity with regard to its content while deleting the supernatural intervention of God. The Stone-Campbell Restoration position, along with contemporary Evangelicalism (Noll, 1986, pp.142-161), is that a gospel is not the "true gospel" apart from both the transcendent as well as the human element. If this is granted, there can be no "restoration of New Testament Christianity" that excludes the "miraculous" regardless of the embarrassment to modern and postmodern man. We will, of course, not be allowed to adopt the interpretation we are making of the Pauline view of resurrection without being charged as accepting an outmoded literalism and Biblicism by those who subscribe to the Postmodern critique of religion.

An area of the analysis of the Bultmannian view yet remains which I think is perhaps the most crucial one if there is any hope for sustaining the restoration concept as having validity for the late twentieth century. It should be recognized that we have set the Restoration Position in contradiction to another contention by Bultmann, namely that "modern man cannot adopt a world view or ideology by his own volition". To believe in the gospel today as involving the transcendent element of divine intervention in human history is to say that "by volition" we will choose a world view which is both impossible and a sacrifice of the intellect, according to Bultmann. In response, we note another inconsistency in his claim in that Bultmann himself chose a world view, a set of assumptions and beliefs about reality derived from the philosopher Heidegger's existentialism. There were other philosophical options than existentialism available as a "translation language" for reworking the New Testament. He could have chosen another philosophical paradigm or even have chosen to critique the modern positivist paradigm of contemporary science as many others have done today (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, pp. 14-47). Therefore, it seems consistent to argue that we can choose to adopt the first century world view and even to allow it to criticize the world views of modern and postmodern man (Lindbeck, 1984, 132).

Let us pursue this last critique of Bultmann's position on choice of "world view or starting point" a bit further, since if it cannot be challenged there is no need to proceed with our contention for restoration within the Stone-Campbell tradition. The Post Modern position in the philosophy of science is that every "starting point" is based on values and assumptions

adopted by the individual. We are contending that this "levels the playing field" for those of us in the religious ideology and, more specifically, the Fundamentalist-Evangelical ideology. The now widely accepted fact that one makes a personal decision about the starting point is an admission of the value laden, ideological nature of this choice. This means that value-neutrality with regard to the "starting point" is not possible. James Adams (1971,p. 7) tells the following story which demonstrates the necessity of "personal choice" in this regard. Adams relates that:

Sometime during the course of World War II the United States War Department brought together a selected group of cultural anthropologists in order to secure their counsel regarding the management of psychological warfare in the face of German National Socialism. After the group had assembled in Washington, one of their number asked what the War Department really expected of these men. He explained that in his work the cultural anthropologist for the sake of scientific objectivity presupposes the point of view of cultural relativism, and that therefore he entertains no biases or ethical preferences, in short, that he is not accustomed to making value judgments regarding the various cultures he studies. He went on to say that if the Germans preferred Nazism, they were entitled to that preference, just as democratic Americans are entitled to their own different preference. In either case, he said, the preference is simply an expression of a cultural milieu.

The Cultural anthropologist Robert Redfield, commenting subsequently on the colloquy, pointed out that although the attitude of ethical neutrality is an appropriate element in scientific method, it certainly may not be adopted as a way of life appropriate for responsible human beings. Moreover, he said, a decision in favor of ethical neutrality (or its opposite) is a personal decision not to be confused with or derived from cultural relativism considered as an element of objective scientific method.

Analagous to Redfield's critique, we are contending that adoption of a world view, whether it is an ideology assuming the supernatural or one that rejects any notion of transcendence as in secular materialism, is not a decision compelled by the so-called "brute facts" of reality but rather reflects a value-based, personal decision. As noted earlier, Steven Seidman's (1992) postmodern critique of science has singled out the value laden nature of choices lying behind scientific theorizing. The facts simply do not speak for themselves. Interpretation, which always proceeds from our "ideological" world view, enters the human studies at every phase from the very beginning.

For emphasis, we repeat the assertion that the ideological nature of scientific theorizing, especially in the Social Sciences and the Human Studies precludes a "neutrality" with regard to the choice of starting point or the choice of assumptions and beliefs about reality underlying such personal decisions by the scientist. This point needs careful consideration, since it illustrates the historical nature of the sciences.

Since the time in which Bultmann wrote about the fact that modern man's thinking was shaped irrevocably by modern science and that no one could choose a world view by volition, there has been a veritable explosion of criticism with regard to the assumptions and beliefs underlying the world view of positivism and modern science. This turn of events illustrates that "self-transcendence" can enable us to critique even the powerful ideology of modern science. Postmodernism asserts that by "intellectual awareness" and "by will" we can choose a world view that subsumes the role of science and technology under values (Feyerabend, 1987, pp. 24-30).

With regard to the Social Sciences and Human Studies, the Postmodern scholar Steven Seidman (1992, p. 66) challenges pretensions to a neutral and value free world view. He writes:

"The history of human studies exhibits a parade of pretenders to having achieved a true science of society; in turn, their claims to value-neutrality, objectivity, and universality have been invalidated by revealing their particular social interests, value commitments, and social agendas."

Not even the enormous technical advantages and progress in the natural sciences have precluded the critique of the value-laden nature of this enterprise. Mary Hesse (1981, p. 290), while acknowledging the success of the natural sciences, rejects the "privileged status" claims which would attempt to exempt them from the guidance of "value-laden" ideology. She writes:

"Privilege has been based on the perception of science as (a) that which works practically, and (b) that which discovers natural truth. There is no reason to deny that instrumental success does constitute knowledge of a progressive sort. But science has always been regarded as more than instrumental--the question is whether its further claims ought to have cognitive privilege not accorded to other types of belief systems. Social and epistemological analysis suggests that we should not. Moreover, it suggests that we should regard the significance of scientific theory and metaphysics in the *same* way that we regard other cultural products, namely as reflecting social and psychological ideology and symbolism."

In the same spirit of Hesse's critique, Lincoln and Guba (1985, pp. 14-47), two Social Science Methodologists, provide an extended review of the wide ranging attack by contemporary scholars on the modern "positivist" paradigm in science. They demonstrate that scientific methods are themselves subject to a "value-laden" context, and involve a personal decision by the scientist. Furthermore, each scientific paradigm rests upon axioms which by definition involve "basic beliefs" accepted by convention or established by practice as the building blocks of the conceptual, theoretical structure or system. These axioms represent "the statements that will be taken as Truth". From a historical analysis they demonstrate that in the move from pre-positivistic to a positivistic

paradigm, scientists were not necessarily aware of the "presuppositions" and "belief systems" underlying their choice. They note:

"If it is difficult for a fish to understand water because it has spent all of its life in it, so it is difficult for scientists--and pre-positivist scientists were no exception--to understand what their basic axioms or assumptions might be and what impact those axioms and assumptions have upon everyday thinking and lifestyle."

This postmodern critique of the "ideology" of both the natural and social sciences certainly calls in question Bultmann's claim that modern man's thinking is shaped irrevocably by modern science and that he cannot choose a world view by his own volition since a world view is given to him by his place in history. This challenge of his claim is necessary in order to remove a major obstacle. If we are "determined" by our place in history such that when the majority or "informed" position has become anti-supernatural, anti-mythological, then we are trapped in this epoch and cannot believe in God's acting in history. If the universe is a closed system, then the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is unthinkable by modern man, as Bultmann claimed. Obviously, it would then be useless, from this non-transcendent viewpoint, to argue for an external authority derived from "revealed knowledge". The Bible cannot be authoritative in the sense argued by Campbell to the effect that scripture was assumed to contain revealed, verbal, cognitive knowledge about God who acts or intervenes in human history. If Bultmann's position cannot be brought into question, then we could not with integrity hold to the Restoration plea.

James Robinson (1959) notes that Bultmann's position has been superseded, at least with regard to his view of the historical Jesus, by his students. However, our interest in Bultmann's way of "doing theology" lies elsewhere and focuses on his acceptance of the viewpoint of modern science as a given with regard to what is or is not possible in God's action in the world and in his communication or lack of same with man. As such, his position is similar to, if not generative of, much of contemporary liberal and liberal pluralistic thinking.

It is important to remember that Bultmann was deeply impressed with and equally concerned to respect the boundaries of thought allowed by modern science. He seems to think that modern scientific thought has a "unified" view of the world and that "unified view" rules out any interjection of "transcendent powers", whether God, angel or Spirit, into the closed, space-time world. This closed, space-time world is understandable solely in terms of its immanent laws and these laws are fully discoverable by the methods of modern science. Karl Jaspers (1958) has critiqued Bultmann's understanding of the viewpoint of modern science and charges Bultmann with "misunderstanding it" (Jaspers, 1958, pp. 5-6). Jaspers contends that "a crucial feature of modern science is that it does not provide a total world-view, because it recognizes that this is impossible." Jaspers contends that religion is concerned with a world view and with the totality of being. Science, according to Jaspers, is a more limited project of system building through hypothesis testing on

more particular and less general matters. Objective language is the appropriate language for this more limited project of science, whereas Jaspers contends that the language of myth in the Bible, as defined by Bultmann, is the appropriate language to talk about a total world view and the ultimate being of God. He explains his objection to Bultmann's program from the viewpoint of the philosophy of science by attacking his idea that modern science can or does provide a total world view and that modern science represents a unified system of thought as follows:

When Bultmann speaks of modern science, he uses various traditional expressions, in a fairly summary way. For instance, he refers to mythical and scientific thinking as mere contraries, and he says that scientific thinking is prefigured in operational thinking. In each instance, he has hit on a partial truth. But he completely misses the meaning of modern science when he asserts that scientific thinking arose out of the Greek search for the arche, or the principle that introduces unity into the manifold. This question was and remains a philosophical question; science cannot ask it methodologically, nor can it answer it. Only systematic theories are scientific: they are built on assumptions which are always hypothetical, and are guided by unifying ideas which can never bear upon the whole of Being. Questions are scientific only when they indicate starting points for genuine methodological investigations. Bultmann's statement, "The unity of the world in scientific thinking is matched by the unity of scientific thinking itself" is completely false. The opposite is true. (Jaspers, 1958, p. 7).

To summarize the major areas of our critique of Bultmann's project, we have pointed out the following kinds of difficulties. First, Bultmann has been shown to be inconsistent by Schubert Ogden with regard to his retaining a unique position for Jesus. Ogden has shown that Bultmann's assumptions and methodologies when carried to their ultimate conclusion will effectively eliminate the need for modern man to look to Jesus for attaining the "authentic existence" which Bultmann considers the salvation offered in the gospel of Christ. If one accepts Ogden's critique of Bultmann's position, then neither Jesus nor the New Testament proclamation are ultimately essential for salvation. Furthermore, the loss of the unique place for Jesus in salvation is the loss of Christianity itself. The Roman Catholic scholar Hans Kung (1984, pp.123-124) states concerning the importance of Jesus' uniqueness for Christianity that

"the special feature, the most fundamental characteristic of Christianity is that it considers this Jesus as ultimately decisive, definitive, *archetypal*, for man's relations with God, with his fellow man, with society; in the curtailed biblical formula, as "Jesus Christ". ... Hence Christianity can ultimately be and become relevant only by activating, in theory and practice-*the memory of Jesus as ultimately archetypal*: of Jesus the Christ and not only as one of the "archetypal men."

A second critique pointed to the "discontinuity" with respect to Paul's view of the gospel. Paul contends that the supernatural intervention of God in the resurrection of Jesus by a divine act unique in human history is the very thing that makes the word "gospel" the good news. This stands in opposition to Bultmann's view of the resurrection as an impossibility. Restoration of New Testament Christianity will, of necessity, confront the

"ideology" of the modern world-view that the universe is a closed system precluding supernatural intervention rather than accepting its assumptions as the ground for theology in the Bultmannian fashion. A third critique has centered on his concept that modern man cannot adopt a world view by his own volition and that his thinking is shaped irrevocably by modern science--even to the extent that it is impossible for modern man to think otherwise in that his world view is "determined" for him by his place in history. We have pointed to the "avalanche" of criticism in the postmodern epoch of "modern science". This postmodern critique drives to the heart of the issue by contending that modern man can exercise his "self-transcendence" and become aware of the assumptions, beliefs, unprovable axioms, and the "value-laden" nature of the entire scientific enterprise. The contemporary critique involves the notion that not only can modern man choose a world view by his own volition but that he, in truth, cannot avoid making such a choice.

### IDEOLOGY IN THE POSTMODERN WORLD

Let us note again that the Post Modern world view has "leveled the playing field" by contending for the ideological nature of human thought. Each world view, from fundamentalism to secular materialism, is based on assumptions and beliefs about reality which tend to be translated into programs of action and expressions of values. Consequently, everyone should join the "conversation" as a peer at the conference table for the expression of world views and state his/her assumptions and beliefs, or ideology in the Post Modern spirit. If the game is to be fair, all bets are open; everyone with a coherent system should be heard fairly. In this setting, the religious scene, with its varying conceptualizations of the meaning of the Christ event can be viewed as a "Continuum of Ideologies".

### CONTINUUM OF IDEOLOGIES

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FUNDAMENT- ALIST	EVANGEL- ICAL	OLD LIBERAL	LIBERAL PLURALISM	HUMANISM MATERIALISM
RM -- Churches of Christ Campbell/Warfield/Barth/Cobb-Griffin		Disciples Paul Tillich John Hick S. Weinberg R. Bultmann Paul Knitter B. Russell		
Historical Open Universe	Supernatural	Modern Yes	Ideology Closed Universe.....	PostModern Yes
Jesus as example of faith		Yes		Nihilistic Yes
Jesus as object of faith		No		No
Jesus as unique		Yes		No
=====				
=====				

What can such an array of "ideologies" have in common? One thing would be that each has a viewpoint on the "life of Jesus" and its meaning for the Post Modern world. The Churches of Christ branch of the Restoration Movement is categorized under the "Fundamentalist" and "Evangelical" label with regard to the "assumptions and beliefs" about the nature of reality (Noll, 1986, pp. 142-161).

As our chart indicates, the mainstream of the Churches of Christ would proclaim the supernatural aspect of Jesus to the effect that the "Word became flesh". This emphasizes both the human nature and the divine nature of Jesus as the Christ. The theological buzz words today would be the proclamation of a Christology from above (emphasizing the divine nature of Christ) and a Christology from below (emphasizing the human nature of Jesus). Fundamentalists are accused by liberal theologians, or so it seems to me, of overplaying the "supernatural" aspects, or the Christology from above, and underplaying the "natural" aspects, or the Christology from below, when presenting the Jesus event. In reviewing the Fundamentalist-Evangelical view of Jesus, our chart indicates that this ideology includes the assumption and belief that the "universe is open" to the intervention of the supernatural. God has acted and continues to act in history. Miracles, as they are called in theology, represent God's acts in a particular instance, whereas the ongoing, natural stream of history represents God's acts in a general sense, in that he upholds the world continuously by his power. In this view, the concepts "supernatural" and "natural" represent an artificial dichotomy in that the so-called laws of nature are God's laws. As noted in the chart, Jesus is regarded as both an "example of faith" and an "object of faith". With Thomas, this viewpoint would confess Jesus as object of faith in his cry, "my Lord and my God" (John 20:28). Also, Jesus is unique. He is not merely the "decisive self disclosure" of God, as Ogden (1961) contends, but He is "unique" in that "salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12, NIV).

In this matter of Christology, a critical difference emerges in our "Continuum of Ideologies." In the second column of our chart we review the "Old Liberal" position which stressed the "historical Jesus" and rejected the miraculous element in the presentation of the "Jesus Event". Jesus is regarded as an "example of faith" but not as an "object of faith". However, the Old Liberal theologians, such as Bultmann and Paul Tillich, wished to cling to the "uniqueness of Jesus" for faith. They rejected Jesus as an "object of faith", in contrast to both Fundamentalist and Evangelical believers, but they accepted Jesus as the unique "example of faith".

This latter aspect of the uniqueness of Jesus introduces the critique of Post Modern theologians. As we have seen, they accept a thorough "relativism" and in theology this relativizes Jesus. They emphatically reject the "unique Jesus" proclaimed by the Old Liberal theologians, such as Bultmann and Tillich. The new Liberal Pluralism of the Post Modern epoch involves the reduction of Jesus to simply one "example of faith" among others (Hick and Knitter, 1989). He is not above Buddha, Confucius or Mohammed. He is not even first among equals with regard to rank. Jesus is one religious man, one example of faith, among many peers.



Our final "ideology", that of "Materialism", would, as a matter of course, view Jesus as simply an "example of religious faith" with the addition that his faith involves a "transcendent" or "other worldly" component. This other worldly component would be viewed negatively by "secular materialism" as a holdover from an age of superstition. Secular Materialism is a vigorous option in the Post Modern world. Atheism, as a philosophical position, was generally confined to a small minority of individuals in the Pre-Critical Epoch of human history. The reductionist agenda, noted in the debate with Johannes Muller in the 1840's over vitalism, secured a position in the Modern Epoch of Western thought that viewed even human beings as definable in terms of merely physical-chemical processes.

I find it interesting that it has become difficult to be an "atheist" today. What is startling is to find a "new theological ideology" wedged in between the "Liberal Pluralist" and "Materialist" ideologies on our "Continuum of Ideologies". This is the phenomenon which came to the fore after World War II, called the "death of God theology". A group of radical theologians seemed to claim the "atheist" as a new type of religious prophet. They proposed to rework religious language into a thoroughgoing naturalism that eliminated the "outmoded" vocabulary of God, transcendence, and the supernatural. This seems to be an extension of the project begun by Bultmann to demythologize (i.e., "remove all supernatural elements") religious language. It is beyond the scope of this presentation to look more closely at this fascinating problem in "linguistic philosophy" and the assumptions underlying it. However, this attempt to embrace the "atheist" into the "fellowship" does illustrate the endpoint of what Peter Berger (1969) has dubbed the "accommodationist" move in theology's response to "Modernism". As he views it, there are many in theological circles who would like to be "with it" with regard to one's standing in the contemporary scene.

I think this psychological need to be "with it" is important for our present stance with regard to the "restoration of new testament Christianity". Let us consider this "drive" to be "with it" for a moment. In the heated battles for an intellectual acceptance in the Modern and Postmodern world, it is easy to begin looking over the fence at positions more liberal than one's own and envy the supposed "acceptance" such positions offer. Fundamentalists, who form the first position in our Continuum of Ideologies, can find themselves looking longingly at the Evangelicals who seem to be enjoying more theological freedom, academic respectability and social acceptance. However, if one jumps the fence with this motive, it is hardly possible to get settled in the Evangelical chair until you realize that just over the fence in the Old Liberal ideology there is a great deal more comfort with modernity and less embarrassment over supernatural elements in religion. It is obvious that even more academic respectability, theological freedom and social acceptance is available in the modern world in the Old Liberal camp. Alas, if one bolts to this position anticipating being "with it" at last, it once more becomes evident that the really "with it" theologians of the new Liberal Pluralistic ideology have thrown off the shackles of intolerance in the viewpoint of the "uniqueness of Jesus" and now

experience full freedom in the Post Modern, multi-cultural, thoroughly pluralistic age of the peer status of all the world religions. Freedom and acceptance has finally been attained. One can now be religious with all of one's egalitarian feelings and the modern notion of the "tolerance of all ideas" intact.

Wait one moment please before settling into your easy chair of "religious pluralism". Alas, there is yet one more ideological option to be weighed. The seemingly final ideology in the Post Modern Epoch is that of a thoroughgoing "Materialistic Naturalism". Here postmodern man has truly come of age. This is the place where we can be "with it" in the final sense.

We may need some of the stoutheartedness of Bertrand Russell's "confident despair" in the face of the nothingness which he saw from his vantage point of Materialistic Naturalism. A stiff upper lip will be needed to deal with the nihilism expressed by our nobel laureate, Steven Weinberg (1977) referred to earlier, who notes that as the universe becomes more comprehensible it also becomes more meaningless and along with it life becomes meaningless.

The Postmodern, Materialist ideology looks at all religious options as antiquated superstitions. Even the latest option of Liberal Pluralism now fashionable in the "with it" religion departments of the major university scene is still not "with it" with regard to intellectual respectability from the secular-materialist point of view. I remember well a graduate seminar at the University of California in Berkeley in which the professor, a thorough going materialist, departed from his lecture to express his views on dedication to scientific research. His anecdotal support for his values referred to one of his brilliant graduate students who had requested that he serve on his dissertation committee. He recounted how that he had determined that he would not give of his time and thought to this student unless he made up his mind that he was thoroughly dedicated to a life of scientific research. In short, he wanted to know whether he was committed to a career in religion or a career in science. He reportedly sent the young man home to think the issue over and was happy that he came back to state his full commitment to a scientific career. He continued his thought about how wasteful it was that in the modern era so much human brain power, so many millions were being spent on an outmoded superstition. Such brain power, such energy, such funding should be spent on modern scientific research. He told this incident in a room only a short distance from the place where Gerhard Ebeling, one of Bultmann's brilliant disciples, had delivered the Earl Lectures on religion in Berkeley. So, even the Old Liberal or Liberal Pluralist position will not be truly "with it" or secure "intellectual respectability" from the Secular Materialist Ideology. Alas, there is no hiding place down here.

Peter Berger points out the options for our present religious scene wherein those who hold to the "supernatural" are in the status of a minority or what he calls a "cognitive minority". The first option is that of maintaining a supernaturalist position, a stance which is increasingly difficult in the post-modern world. It will require its adherents to huddle

closely together with those of like persuasion. The polar opposite of this defiant stand is one of surrender. Those who wish to avoid "cognitive deviance" and who wish to be "with it" have chosen this second option. "Modernity is swallowed hook, line and sinker, and the repaste is accompanied by a sense of awe worthy of Holy Communion", according to Berger (1961, pp. 21-35). In this latter position, the translation of the ancient Christian ideas into the modern age involves liquidating the supernatural elements of religion and transferring them from the "other-worldly" to "this-worldly" referents. I feel that Berger may well be referring to projects like the one undertaken by Bultmann in converting the contents of the gospel to the contemporary philosophical, this-worldly language of "authentic historical existence" and "a new self-understanding". Berger notes that this kind of "accommodationist" process involves the theologian in a "trading game" with the modern world; a trading game in which Berger feels the theologian is likely to come out with a poor bargain. He points out that the theologian will likely have to "give" far more than he "gets" in dealing with the powerful trading partner called the modern age. As a reminder of the danger in this accommodationist role, Berger quotes the old proverb that "he who supps with the devil had better have a long spoon."

Looking back at Berger's first option, he suggests that it is possible with full awareness of the opposing views to choose a stance in respect to the relativism of the modern and postmodern world. One can look at our "Continuum of Ideologies" previously sketched and with a reasonable awareness of the assumptions and beliefs undergirding the various options, choose a position--even that of the ancient supernatural view--if one is stouthearted enough to be willing to be in a "minority" or, if you please, "a cognitive minority". Berger states his position as follows:

The history of human thought demonstrates rather clearly, that it is possible to ask questions of truth while disregarding the spirit of an age. Genuine timeliness means sensitivity to one's socio-historical starting point, not fatalism about one's possible destination. It is possible to liberate oneself to a considerable degree from the taken-for-granted assumptions of one's time. This belief has as its correlate an **ultimate indifference to the majority or minority status of one's view of the world.** (Berger, 1961, p. 34).

There was a time in our Restorationist heritage when we pointed to the case histories of Noah and Elijah as instances of "minority positions". We looked to these instances as examples of standing apart from the "majority view" as evidence that we should be wary of the "accommodationist" moves in facing the modern world. This is not a retreat to "a siege mentality" (Tracy, 1981, p. 451) or to anti-intellectualism but rather, as in the spirit of Berger's quote, a willingness with "full awareness" of the options to stand for a position which we have weighed carefully without yielding to the pressures to be "with it" in the postmodern world. Since there is no place of respectability in the religious scene today short of moving all the way to the "Secular Materialist" position in our "Continuum of Ideologies", we have every reason to test our convictions

and to be ready to come to the "conversation table" of ideas with a clear statement of our assumptions and beliefs. We are now aware that every one of the conversation partners at the Post Modern Conference Table is, in this "level playing field of ideation," equally obligated to spell out the assumptions and beliefs underlying the self-chosen ideology. We have learned from the Post Modern critique that there "is no privileged position" with regard to "truth claims" for the Social Sciences, the Human Studies and perhaps not even for the Natural Sciences. All human thought, at least in the Social Sciences and Humanities, is based on a paradigm or theoretical schema which, in turn, rests upon apriori assumptions and beliefs about reality. This forms the opening for stating a restoration position with regard to our Christian belief.

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