Faculty Guide

Investigating Christian Theology 1



Clergy Development
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The **Modular Course of Study** is an outcome-based curriculum designed to implement the educational paradigm defined by the Breckenridge Consultations. Clergy Development is responsible for maintaining and distributing the Modular Course of Study for the Church of the Nazarene.

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Series Foreword

A Vision for Christian Ministry: Clergy Education in the Church of the Nazarene

The chief purpose of all persons—indeed, all of the creation—is to worship, love, and serve God. God has made himself known in His deeds of creation and redemption. As the Redeemer, God has called into existence a people: the Church, who embody, celebrate, and declare His name and His ways. The life of God with His people and the world constitutes the Story of God. That story is recorded principally in the Old and New Testaments, and continues to be told by the resurrected Christ who lives and reigns as Head of His Church. The Church lives to declare the whole Story of God. This it does in many ways—in the lives of its members who are even now being transformed by Christ through preaching, the sacraments, in oral testimony, community life, and in mission. All members of the Body of Christ are called to exercise a ministry of witness and service. No one is excluded.

In God's own wisdom He calls some persons to fulfill the ministry of proclaiming the gospel and caring for God's people, in a form referred to as the ordained ministry. God is the initial actor in this call, not humans. In the Church of the Nazarene we believe God calls and persons respond. They do not elect the Christian ministry. All persons whom God calls to the ordained ministry should continue to be amazed that He would call them. They should continue to be humbled by God's call. The Manual of the Church of the Nazarene states, "we recognize and hold that the Head of the Church calls some men and women to the more official and public work of the ministry." It adds, "The church, illuminated by the Holy Spirit, will recognize the Lord's call" (Manual, Church of the Nazarene, paragraph 400).

An ordained Christian minister has as his or her chief responsibility to declare in many ways the whole Story of God as fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth. His or her charge is to "tend the flock of God . . . not under compulsion, but willingly, not for sordid gain but eagerly. Do not lord it over those in your charge, but be examples to the flock" (1 Pet 5:2-3, NRSV). The minister fulfills this charge under the supervision of Christ, the chief Shepherd (1 Pet 5:4). Such ministry can be fulfilled only after a period of careful

preparation. Indeed, given the ever-changing demands placed upon the minister, "preparation" never ceases.

A person who enters the Christian ministry becomes in a distinct sense a steward of the gospel of God (Titus 1:7). A steward is one who is entrusted to care for what belongs to another. A steward may be one who takes care of another person or who manages the property of someone else. All Christians are stewards of the grace of God. But in addition, in a peculiar sense a Christian minister is a steward of the "mystery of God," which is Christ, the Redeemer, the Messiah of God. In all faithfulness, the minister is called to "make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel" (Eph 6:19, NRSV). Like Paul, he or she must faithfully preach "the boundless riches of Christ, and to make everyone see what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things; so that through the church the wisdom of God in its rich variety might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places" (Eph 3:8-10, NRSV).

In fulfilling this commission, there is plenty of room for diligence and alertness, but no room for laziness or privilege (Titus 1:5-9). Good stewards recognize that they are stewards only, not the owners, and that they will give an account of their stewardship to the master. Faithfulness to one's charge and to the Lord who issued it is the steward's principal passion. When properly understood, the Christian ministry should never be thought of as a "job." It is ministry—uniquely Christian ministry. No higher responsibility or joy can be known than to become a steward of the Story of God in Christ's Church. The person who embraces God's call to the ordained ministry will stand in the company of the apostles, the Early Fathers of the Church, the Reformers of the Middle Ages, the Protestant Reformers, and many persons around the world today who joyfully serve as stewards of the gospel of God.

Obviously, one who does not recognize, or who understands but rejects, just how complete and inclusive a minister's stewardship must be, should not start down the path that leads to ordination. In a peculiar sense, a Christian minister must in all respects model the gospel of God. He or she is to "shun" the love of money. Instead, the minister must "pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, gentleness." He or she must "fight the good fight of the faith" and "take hold of the eternal life, to which you were called" (1 Tim 6:11-12, NRSV).

Hence, the Church of the Nazarene believes "the minister of Christ is to be in all things a pattern to the flock—in punctuality, discretion, diligence, earnestness; 'in purity, understanding, patience and kindness; in the Holy Spirit and in sincere love; in truthful speech and in the power of God; with weapons of righteousness in the right hand and in the left' (2 Cor 6:6-7)" (Manual, Church of the Nazarene, paragraph 401.1). The minister of Christ "must be above reproach as God's steward, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not addicted to wine, not pugnacious, not fond of sordid gain, 8but hospitable, loving what is good, sensible, just, devout, self-controlled, ⁹holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching . . . able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict." (Titus 1:7-9, NASB).

In order to be a good steward of God's Story one must, among other things, give oneself to careful and systematic study, both before and after ordination. This will occur not because he or she is forced to do so, but out of a love for God and His people, the world He is working to redeem, and out of an inescapable sense of responsibility. It cannot be too strongly emphasized that the attitude one brings to preparation for the ministry reveals much about what he or she thinks of God, the gospel, and Christ's Church. The God who became incarnate in Jesus and who made a way of salvation for all gave His very best in the life, death, and resurrection of His Son. In order to be a good steward, a Christian minister must respond in kind. Jesus told numerous parables about stewards who did not recognize the importance of what had been entrusted to them (Mt 21:33-44; 25:14-30; Mk 13:34-37; Lk 12:35-40; 19:11-27; 20:9-18).

Preparation for ministry in Christ's Church—one's education in all its dimensions— should be pursued in full light of the responsibility before God and His people that the ministry involves. This requires that one take advantage of the best educational resources at his or her disposal.

The Church of the Nazarene recognizes how large is the responsibility associated with the ordained Christian ministry and accepts it fully. Part of the way we recognize our responsibility before God is seen in the requirements we make for ordination and the practice of ministry. We believe the call to and practice of Christian ministry is a gift, not a right or privilege. We believe God holds a minister to the highest of religious, moral, personal, and professional standards. We are not reluctant to expect those standards to be

observed from the time of one's call until his or her death. We believe Christian ministry should first be a form of worship. The practice of ministry is both an offering to God and a service to His Church. By the miracle of grace, the work of the ministry can become a means of grace for God's people (Rom 12:1-3). One's education for ministry is also a form of worship.

The modules comprising the Course of Study that may lead a person to candidacy for ordination have been carefully designed to prepare one for the kind of ministry we have described. Their common purpose is to provide a holistic preparation for entrance into the ordained Christian ministry. They reflect the Church's wisdom, experience, and responsibility before God. The modules show how highly the Church of the Nazarene regards the gospel, the people of God, the world for which Christ gave His life, and Christian ministry. Completing the modules will normally take three or four years. But no one should feel pressured to meet this schedule.

The careful study for which the modules call should show that before God and His Church one accepts the stewardly responsibility associated with ordained ministry.

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Introduction

Intended Use of This Faculty Guide

This faculty guide serves as an instructor's guide for teaching principles of Christian Theology 1 to adult learners who are preparing for ordination in the Church of the Nazarene. The content is based on intended outcomes defined through the collaborative process conducted at Breckenridge, CO, USA, between 1990 and 1997. The materials prepare the pastor-teacher to present the topic by providing background reading, lesson plans, lectures, instructions to the teacher, and teaching resources for each class session. In most lessons complete lectures, questions for guided discussions, and defined learning activities are provided.

The pastor-teacher who will lead this module should hold a master's degree. Ideally, the pastor-teacher should have participated as a student in a module using this material prior to teaching the material to others. This faculty guide assumes that the pastor-teacher has some basic understanding of systematic theology.

It is further assumed that learners participating in a module using this material will be high school graduates and be adult learners beyond the traditional college age. Learners are assumed to be motivated to learn, and to have adult life-experiences. No prior college classroom experience is assumed on the part of the learners.

Acknowledgments

Every module is the accumulation of effort by many people. Someone writes the original manuscript, others offer suggestions to strengthen the content and make the material more easily understood, and finally an editor formats the module for publication. This module is not different. Many people have contributed to this module. Every effort has been made to represent accurately the original intent of the principal contributors.

Principal Contributor

The principal contributor for this module is Rodrick T. Leupp. Dr. Leupp was born in Portland, Oregon. His parents provided wonderful Christian nurture within the Church of the Nazarene, a church he has attended all of his life. He was educated at Northwest Nazarene University, Pacific School of Religion, and Drew University, earning the Ph.D. in Theology at Drew University.

Dr. Leupp has fifteen years of teaching experience, including eight formative years at Asia-Pacific Nazarene Theological Seminary in Metro Manila, the Philippines, from 1992 to 2000. There he met Stephanie Brank, and they were married in 1993. Their two daughters were both born in the Philippines.

In 1996 Rod's first book was published, a work in trinitarian theology entitled *Knowing the Name of God.* He has written dozens of book reviews and several articles for *Holiness Today.* He has also pastored many small, United Methodist congregations. He is devoted to the Wesleyan theological heritage.

Responder

Each module was reviewed by at least one content specialist to ensure that the content did not represent a single, narrow view or opinion. The responder provided suggestions the principal contributor could integrate into this module.

The responder for this module was Wesley D. Tracy. Dr. Tracy has coauthored several books on spiritual formation. *The Upward Call: Spiritual Formation and the Holy Life*, written with Morris Weigelt, Janine Tartaglia, and Dee Freeborn, was published in 1994 by Beacon Hill Press and has gone through several printings in English and Spanish. Dr. Tracy was the principal author of *Reflecting God*, a layperson's textbook on spiritual formation published by Beacon Hill Press and the Christian Holiness Partnership and sponsored by the 23 supporting denominations of CHP. This book is supported by three other items written by Wesley Tracy: *The Reflecting God Workbook, Reflecting God Leader's Guide*, and *The Reflecting God Journal*.

Tracy holds five higher education degrees including degrees from Southern Nazarene University, Nazarene Theological Seminary and two doctorates from San Francisco Theological Seminary. He has published more than 1,000 articles and has written or coauthored some 25 books. He has served as a pastor, as editor of eight Christian periodicals, and as an educator at MidAmerica Nazarene University, Nazarene Theological Seminary, as well as special adult education projects in Europe, Latin America, and Asia.

Revision History

Second Quarter 2005, Revision 4, the current version,

• edited for gender inclusiveness

Fourth Quarter 2003. Revision 3,

 copyright was transferred to Nazarene Publishing House

Second Quarter 2003. Revision 2,

- lesson plan format was modified to reduce pages
- minor editing to comply with a copyright review

Fourth Quarter 2002. Revision 1,

• the Lesson Overview, Introduction, Body, Close format was established.

About This Module

Historically, theology has been known as "the Queen of the Sciences." While calling it that today may seem overly dramatic, all pastors-in-training will agree that a basic grounding in Christian theology is essential. Everything a pastor does—praying, counseling, preaching, leading in worship—can and in one sense *must* be understood theologically. Whether acknowledged or not, theological implications assert themselves throughout the entire pastoral task, from first to last, top to bottom, front to back, side to side. It is too much to claim that theology is "the only game in town," so far as the pastor is concerned, yet no other game makes any sense without theological awareness.

Even a seemingly non-theological task like conducting a church board meeting may be the occasion for theological reflection. For example, current approaches to God as triune suggest the Trinity is itself the model for perfect human community, being more than one that yet always functions, acts, and believes as one. Applied to the church board situation, this may mean the pastor does not dominate the meeting, but shares collegially with all present, working with them toward consensus or even unanimity.

It has been said that practical theology is the "crown jewel" of all theological study. These two modules are not strictly speaking courses in practical theology, and yet the practical dimension of theology must always be kept in view. Noted Nazarene theologian J. Kenneth Grider liked to talk about theology wearing overalls, and this homespun example is exactly correct. Albert Outler has well defined John Wesley's theology as an example of a "folk theology" at its best. Regarding Wesley's theology as a whole, "practical divinity" is the operative watchword.

Overall Hopes for These Two Modules

- To survey the grand heritage and great tradition of orthodox Christian theology. Our survey will touch on biblical foundations, selected historical developments, and some contemporary problems and restatements.
- 2. The tone of these two modules is intentionally *irenic* (leading to consensus and peace) rather than *polemic* (tending to seek conflict and emphasizing disagreement with other Christian traditions). To use a cliché, this means we are more interested in building bridges than walls. Doctrines such as the triunity of God, Jesus Christ as fully divine and fully human, the reality of sin, and Jesus Christ as God's anointed Redeemer are universally accepted across the Christian spectrum.
- 3. Having said that, Wesleyan distinctives such as prevenient grace and entire sanctification will be stressed where appropriate.
- 4. To understand something of how theologians work and what theologians do, which also means to appreciate the craft of theological thinking. We do this remembering that the local pastor is also a theologian. We desire to appreciate theology as both an intellectual and a practical discipline.
- 5. It is important to see links between Christian theology and both ethics and worship.
- 6. At times we may engage in some theological analysis of culture.
- 7. Overall, the goal of a deeper knowing of the Triune God must motivate our every impulse. Recall that Søren Kierkegaard said, "Only that which edifies is true for me." This is our goal: edifying truth.

A Few Governing Assumptions as We Begin

Virtually all systematic theologies have two or three central emphases that serve to govern and guide everything said, claimed, and articulated by that particular theology. Wesleyan or Nazarene theology has often been guided by

- a. the grace of God, especially the Wesleyan view of prevenient grace.
- b. the hope that Christian theology may be seen as an integrated whole. The *ordo salutis* (Latin, meaning "the order of salvation") is for Nazarene theology the organizing principle of the whole.

In "The Scripture Way of Salvation" John Wesley expressed the order of salvation in fluid and dynamic terms: "So that the salvation which is here spoken of might be extended to the entire

work of God, from the first dawning of grace in the soul till it is consummated in glory." Nazarenes have often stressed the two moments of justification (initial sanctification) and entire sanctification (Christian perfection). Wesley's quote means both of these two "moments" need to be taken in the broader context of the entire drama of salvation.

- c. the classic meaning of theology is that it is simply the study of God. To intend to study God may of course mean very many things, but it cannot mean *only* an intellectual and rational approach to God. Experiential knowing of God has always been important for Nazarene people. Studying God must always lead to praising Him. Orthodoxy (right or correct doctrine) cannot finally be separated from *Doxology*, the true worship of God. These must be wedded to correct conduct or action, which is Orthopraxis. These three realities—Doxology, Orthodoxy, Orthopraxis—in some ways function as a "holy trinity" of theological method and formulation. They can be conceptualized separately, but each needs the other two to be complete.
- d. Phineas F. Bresee believed Nazarene theology ought to be characterized by this dictum, which was not original with him, and yet reflected his way of theologizing and Christian ministry: in essentials unity, in nonessentials liberty, in all things love.

Module Materials

We have tried to design this module to be flexible and easy to adapt to your situation. For each lesson, there are several support pieces, which we have called simply "resources." These can be used in many different ways. Resources have been reproduced in the student guide for this module. The instructor will want a copy of the student guide for his or her own use.

- The instructor may photocopy these to use for his or her own lecture outlines. There is space to add notes from the faculty guide, from the textbook, or from the additional suggested readings. Add in your own illustrations too!
- 2. The pages may be photocopied onto overhead transparencies for use in class.
- 3. These pages appear in the Student Guide for the students' use and participation.

One reason for developing this module is for the benefit of extension education. We understand that teachers all over the world are called upon to teach courses not in their area of specialty, but they teach them because they want to see pastors trained and leaders developed for the church. Extension education is basic to rapid church growth. We want to provide this as a resource for extension educators. If it helps others along the way, that's fine too.

Another reason for developing this module is to equip indigenous faculty. We believe a class like this is best taught and contextualized by someone from within the culture of the students. Many fine teachers, who are leaders in our churches around the world, do not have higher degrees in theology but have the skills to teach a module like this effectively. We want to set them free to do so, and in so doing, to actually improve the module and make it more dynamic and meaningful for their context than it would have been had we held onto it and insisted on teaching it ourselves.

Intended Outcomes for the Module

The *Manual*, Church of the Nazarene, and the *International Sourcebook on Developmental Standards for Ordination* define educational preparation for ordination. Additionally, each region of the International Church of the Nazarene has developed educational guidelines to qualify educational programs for ordination offered within their region.

The USA Region *Sourcebook for Ministerial Development* defines outcomes for the overall ministerial development program. The module assists candidates in developing these skills. Other modules in the program may also address the same outcomes. The specific outcomes that relate to this module are:

- CN18 Ability to list and explain the Nazarene Articles of Faith
- CN19 Ability to identify and explain the main characteristics of the nature of God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, the Human Person, Sin, Salvation, the Christian Life, the Church and Sacraments, and Eschatology
- CN20 Ability to reflect theologically on life and ministry
- CN21 Ability to demonstrate understanding of the sources of theological reflection, its historical development, and its contemporary expressions
- CN22 Ability to articulate the distinctive characteristics of Wesleyan theology

- CP10 Ability to synthesize, analyze reason logically for discernment, assessment, and problem solving, and live with ambiguity
- CP11 Ability to analyze the validity of arguments and to identify their presuppositions and consequences
- CP21 Ability to envision, order, participate and lead in contextualized theologically grounded worship

The intended learning outcomes are

- Ability to integrate Scripture, tradition, reason, and experience for theological reflection
- Ability to describe the role of systematic (or Christian) theology in the life of the church
- Ability to systematically reflect on the Christian faith
- Ability to reflect theologically on specific activities in parish ministry and discover adequate foundations for appropriate actions
- Ability to give a theological rationale for leading a church-in-mission (i.e., a missional church)
- Ability to integrate Wesleyan disciplines into spiritual practices that are becoming significant enrichments to one's personal journey
- Ability to reflect systematically and comprehensively about the nature and content of the Christian faith, and to do so for the sake of Christ's Church and His World.
- Ability to discern theological trends in the wider culture, especially as these trends impact the progress of Christian ministry
- Ability to defend the historic Christian faith.
 Christian Theology 1 is not primarily an apologetic venture, yet everyone who takes this class must emerge with a defined sense of the integrity of the Christian faith, which would necessarily translate into the ability to be a defender of the faith to one degree or another.

Recommended Textbooks

Each module within the Modular Course of Study is intended to be textbook independent. This does not imply that the modules are textbook irrelevant, or that the module content cannot be enriched by selecting and requiring that students study a textbook along with the lessons provided in this faculty guide. If these modules are adapted for use outside of the English-speaking countries of North America, a specific textbook may not be available in the language of the students. Therefore, the module does not rely on one textbook. The instructor may select any doctrinally sound textbook available to the students.

The following books by Nazarene authors are used extensively in these modules on Christian Theology. They provide a rich understanding of theology for study in these modules and also for continued reference throughout the student's career. Whenever possible, they should be a part of every Nazarene pastor's personal library.

- Dunning, H. Ray. *Grace, Faith, and Holiness: A Wesleyan Systematic Theology.* Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1988.
- Grider, J. Kenneth. *A Wesleyan-Holiness Theology*. Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1994.
- Lodahl, Michael. *The Story of God: Wesleyan Theology and Biblical Narrative*. Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1994.
- Staples, Rob L. *Outward Sign and Inward Grace: The Place of Sacraments in Wesleyan Spirituality.*Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1991.
- Staples, Rob L. Words of Faith: An Easy Reference to Theological Terms. Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 2001.
- Wynkoop, Mildred Bangs. *A Theology of Love: The Dynamic of Wesleyanism*. Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1972.

Suggested Meeting Schedule

The module lessons are designed to last 90 minutes each. Each lesson is complete in itself with an opening, a middle, and a closing. They are sequential. Each lesson assumes the learners have mastered material presented in previous lessons. The lessons can be grouped in a variety of ways to accommodate the schedules of your learners.

When lessons are taught in the same meeting, instructors will need to adjust homework assignments because participants will not have time between lessons to prepare homework. It is very important for the instructor to always be looking ahead and planning for upcoming lessons.

Here are three suggestions (out of many) for ways the meetings can be organized.

- 1. Resident campus. The class can meet two days a week for 90 minutes. Present one lesson per meeting time. Total time: 10-11 weeks.
- 2. Extension education. The class can meet one day (or evening) each week for 3 to 3½ hours. Present two lessons per meeting with a break period between lessons. Participants will need to travel to a centralized location for meetings, so make it worth their time. Total time: 10 weeks.
- 3. Intensive module. The class can meet five consecutive days for 7 to 8 hours per day. Present two lessons in the morning with a break period between lessons and two lessons in the afternoon with another break period between the lessons. Participants must complete reading assignments before arriving at the module site, and written assignments can be submitted 30 to 60 days following the class meeting. Total meeting time: 1 week. (Elapsed time including reading and written assignments: 1 to 2 months.)

The module is divided into 20 lessons. The progression of these lessons can be seen in the chart below. Space is given for you to fill in the dates when your class sessions will meet.

Date	Lesson
	Christian Theology—Its Function, Focus, and Practice in the Local Church
	The Sources and Definition of Christian Theology
	3. How Can We Speak of God?
	4. Five Theological Models of Revelation
	5. Knowing God as Creator
	6. What Kind of a World Is It?
	7. Some Classic Approaches to Thinking About God's Power and Wisdom
	8. Some Classic Approaches to Thinking About God's Holiness and Love
	Recent Ways of Speaking of God and Thinking Theologically
	10. Continuing the Conversation About Contemporary Theology
	11. The Doctrine of the Trinity: Vital Center or Antique Relic?

12. Biblical Foundations of the Trinity
12. Biblical Foundations of the Tillity
12 Who Is the Christian Cod?
13. Who Is the Christian God?
14. The Christian Life and the Trinity
15. The Convergence and Divergence of
Philosophy and Christian Theology
16. Further Investigations into
Demonstrations for the Existence of God
17. How Should We Regard Religions Other
than Christianity?
18. Christianity Engages Culture
3.3
19. Humanity Graciously Endowed:
Theological Anthropology
20. The Element Within Us, or Thinking About
Sin

About This Faculty Guide

Note: It is critical to remember that active participation by the learners will enhance their learning. That means you will not be an information giver. This module is not about you. The focus of the module is helping students learn. Your role is to design an environment in which your students will learn. Sometimes you will give lectures. At other times you will guide discussions or assign your students to work in groups. These kinds of activities keep the participants actively involved in the learning process. Learning is a team activity.

The faculty guide has been written to guide an instructor as he or she prepares to teach this module. It contains complete lesson plans and resources to provide a solid educational design for the topic. You will need to prepare for each lesson well in advance of the meeting time. Often there are background reading suggestions for the instructor, or you may know additional reference materials you want to interject into the lesson. Questions intended to be answered or discussed by the students are in italic type.

A two-column format was chosen for the faculty guide. The right-hand column contains the content of lectures, descriptions of activities, and questions to keep students involved. The left-hand column is to give suggested instructions to you, the teacher. It also contains examples you can use to illustrate concepts in the lectures. Whenever possible you should use examples from your own experience and from your students' real-life context.

Large white space has been left in the left column to allow you to write notes and personalize the faculty guide.

The faculty guide has three major components: the Faculty Guide Introduction, the Lesson Plans, and the Teaching Resources. The Introduction and Lesson Plans are in this document and the Resources are contained in the companion student guide. You are

reading the Faculty Guide Introduction now. It provides a teaching philosophy for adult learners, background information for organizing the module, and ideas about conducting the lessons.

Each section of the faculty guide is numbered with a two-part page number. Page 5 of Lesson 3 would be numbered "3-5." The first number is the lesson number and the second is the page number within the lesson. Each resource sheet is numbered for the lesson in which the resource is first used. The first resource page for Lesson 2 is numbered "2-1."

The Lesson Plans are complete in themselves.

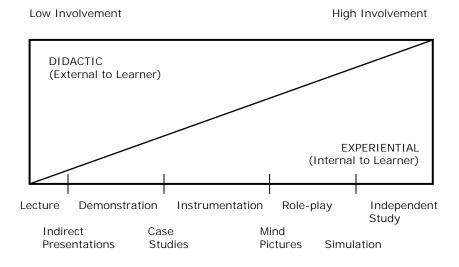
They contain an Overview, Introduction, Body, and Close. The Lesson Overview provides you with a planning tool for preparing and conducting each lesson.

The Lesson Introduction should get participants' attention, orient them to the place this lesson holds in the overall module, define the intended objectives, and prepare them for the learning activities.

The Lesson Body is the core message of the lesson. The key is to keep the learners actively involved. Even in lectures, ask questions that prompt learners to think about the content, not just hear the lecture.

The following chart shows a continuum of learner involvement in different teaching methods. Lecture requires the least learner involvement, and independent study requires the most learner involvement.

METHODS CONTINUUM



A variety of learning activities are used to present information and allow learners to experiment with their new knowledge. Each learner has a set of preferred methods of learning and has different life experiences that can color or filter what one actually learns. A variety of learning activities help adults adapt to the learning task—by hearing, by doing, by reading, by discussing, or by combinations of these. The learners should have opportunities to test and clarify their new learning by talking with the instructor and other participants, and applying new knowledge in real or contrived situations as soon as possible.

The Lesson Close provides a time for answering questions, reviewing the information, connecting this lesson to future lessons, making assignments, and punctuating the finish. The close does not provide any new information but gives a sense of closure to the lesson.

Homework assignments are important learning activities. They provide the student with an opportunity to synthesize classroom learning. Working on these assignments also extends the learning experience beyond the time constraints of class time.

The student—especially the adult student—needs frequent and timely feedback about his or her learning. While interaction with other students helps the learner refine what he or she is learning, feedback from the instructor is also critical to the quality of learning and ultimately to his or her persistence in the Course of Study.

It is your responsibility as the instructor for this module to provide students with timely responses to homework assignments in order to enhance the learning process. Reviewing and responding to homework will also provide you with critical information about what your students are learning and whether or not the teaching-learning process is succeeding.

Since these modules are preparing the learner for ordination rather than leading to a university degree, a letter grade may not be appropriate. Your response to the learners' assignments should be thoughtful and in most cases it should be written. Its purpose will always be to refine and enhance the learning of the student.

Teaching Resources are reproduced in the student guide. Each resource sheet is numbered for the lesson

in which the resource is first used. The first resource page for Lesson 2 is numbered "2-1."

You must determine how each resource will be used in your context. If an overhead projector is available, transparencies can be made by replacing the paper in your photocopy machine with special transparency material.

The student guide for this module contains the series foreword, acknowledgments, syllabus, copies of all resources, lesson objectives, and assignments. A copy of the student guide should be made available to each student.

Recommendations for printing You may print this faculty guide if desired. The introduction and lesson plan segments are formatted for printing on both sides of the paper. The resource pages of the student guide should be printed on one side for use as transparency or handout masters.

The student guide should be printed on one side.

A Hidden Agenda

Hidden curriculum issues . . . because the way we teach teaches

In each session, there are certain methodological and environmental things to consider.

First, consider the classroom arrangement. Whenever possible, the room should be arranged to encourage a sense of community. Either the group should sit in a circle or around a table. If the group is very large, chairs can be arranged for easily moving into clusters for discussion.

Second, consider how you present yourself as teacher. Standing behind a lectern with your students facing you in rows says you are above the students and have something to give them (although in a very large group this standing to teach may be unavoidable). Sitting as part of the circle makes the teacher a colearner at the same level as the students. Speak naturally. Pay close attention to your students, and value the things they share. Learn their names. Encourage participation. Remember that you are modeling for them, and the way you teach will teach them far more than the words you say.

Third, invite the Holy Spirit's presence in the classroom. Do this each time the class meets.

Fourth, the sharing-of-stories activity does more than help the students begin to reflect on their own Christian experiences. It is a way to build community between the students. This is more than an exercise to be checked off. It is vital to set the tone of your intentional community.

When meeting times exceed 90 minutes, consider adding break times. The break between segments is an important time for community building. Remain available to the students during this time. Consider offering coffee or tea during this time as a way to encourage fellowship.

Journaling: The Key to Spiritual Formation

Journaling is a major assignment of each module in the Ministerial Preparation Course of Study. It is the integrating element that helps you draw spiritual meaning and ministerial application from the content of each module whether the module concentrates on content, competency, character, or context. It ensures that the "Be" component of "Be, Know, and Do" is present in every module in which you participate. What is journaling and how can it be meaningfully accomplished?

Journaling: A Tool for Personal Reflection and Integration

Participating in the Course of Study is the heart of your preparation for ministry. To complete each module you will be required to listen to lectures, read several books, participate in discussions, and write papers. Content mastery is the goal.

An equally important part of ministerial preparation is spiritual formation. Some might choose to call spiritual formation devotions, while others might refer to it as growth in grace. Whichever title you place on the process, it is the intentional cultivation of your relationship with God. The module work will be helpful in adding to your knowledge, your skills, and your ability to do ministry. The spiritual formation work will weave all you learn into the fabric of your being, allowing your education to flow freely from your head to your heart to those you serve.

The Syllabus contains this explanation of journaling.
Journaling provides the spiritual formation component for the module and is an integral part of the learning experience.

Have students read the journaling section during the Syllabus review in Lesson 1 and emphasize that journaling is an assignment for each lesson in the module.

When giving assignments in each lesson, assign journal writing each time the group meets.

Although there are many spiritual disciplines to help you cultivate your relationship with God, journaling is the critical skill that ties them all together. Journaling simply means keeping a record of your experiences and the insights you have gained along the way. It is a discipline because it does require a good deal of work to faithfully spend time daily in your journal. Many people confess that this is a practice they tend to push aside when pressed by their many other responsibilities. Even five minutes a day spent journaling can make a major difference in your education and your spiritual development. Let me explain.

Consider journaling time spent with your best friend. Onto the pages of a journal you will pour out your candid responses to the events of the day, the insights you gained from class, a quote gleaned from a book, and an ah-ha that came to you as two ideas connected. This is not the same as keeping a diary, since a diary seems to be a chronicle of events without the personal dialogue. The journal is the repository for all of your thoughts, reactions, prayers, insights, visions, and plans. Though some people like to keep complex journals with sections for each type of reflection, others find a simple running commentary more helpful. In either case, record the date and the location at the beginning of every journal entry. It will help you when it comes time to review your thoughts.

It is important to chat briefly about the logistics of journaling. All you will need is a pen and paper to begin. Some folks prefer loose-leaf paper that can be placed in a three-ring binder, others like spiral-bound notebooks, while others enjoy using composition books. Whichever style you choose, it is important to develop a pattern that works for you.

Establishing a time and a place for writing in your journal is essential. If there is no space etched out for journaling, it will not happen with the regularity needed to make it valuable. It seems natural to spend time journaling after the day is over and you can sift through all that has transpired. Yet, family commitments, evening activities, and fatigue militate against this time slot. Morning offers another possibility. Sleep filters much of the previous day's experiences, and processes deep insights that can be recorded first thing in the morning. In conjunction with devotions, journaling enables you to begin to weave your experiences with the Word and also with module material that has been steeping on the back burner of your mind. You will probably find that carrying your

journal will allow you to jot down ideas that come to you at odd times throughout the day.

It seems we have been suggesting that journaling is a handwritten exercise. Some may be wondering about doing their work on a computer. Traditionally, there is a special bond between hand, pen, and paper. It is more personal, direct, aesthetic. And it is flexible, portable, and available.

With regular use, your journal is the repository of your journey. As important as it is to make daily entries, it is equally important to review your work. Read over each week's record at the end of the week. Make a summary statement and note movements of the Holy Spirit or your own growth. Do a monthly review of your journal every 30 days. This might best be done on a half-day retreat where you can prayerfully focus on your thoughts in solitude and silence. As you do this, you will begin to see the accumulated value of the Word, your module work, and your experience in ministry all coming together in ways you had not considered possible. This is integration—weaving together faith development and learning. Integration moves information from your head to your heart so that ministry is a matter of being rather than doing. Journaling will help you answer the central question of education: "Why do I do what I do when I do it?"

Journaling really is the linchpin in ministerial preparation. Your journal is the chronicle of your journey into spiritual maturity as well as content mastery. These volumes will hold the rich insights that will pull your education together. A journal is the tool for integration. May you treasure the journaling process!

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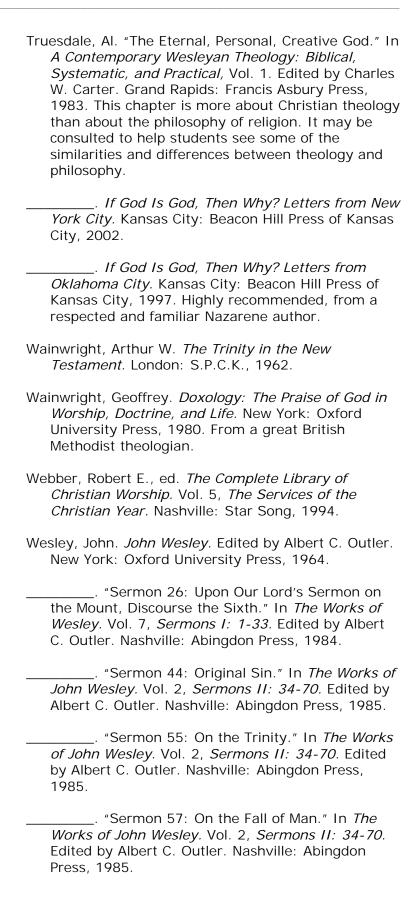
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Lesson 1

Christian Theology—Its Function, Focus, and Practice in the Local Church

Lesson Overview

Schedule

Start Time	Task or Topic	Learning Activity	Materials Needed
0:00	Introduction	Orient	Student Guide
0:10	A House of Theology	Lecture	Resource 1-1
0:16	A House of Theology	Student Activity	
0:25	The Focus and	Lecture/Discussion	Resource 1-2
	Function of Theology		Resource 1-3
0:50	Why Is Theological	Lecture/Discussion	Resource 1-4
	Study Practical and		
	Necessary?		
1:15	Lesson Close	Review, Assign	Student Guide

Suggested Reading for Instructor

- Dunning, H. Ray. "The Nature and Scope of Theology." Chapter 1 in *Grace, Faith, and Holiness: A Wesleyan Systematic Theology*. Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1988, 23-54.
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Lesson Introduction

(10 minutes)

Motivator

In the 1960s mod and rock scene in London, Eric Clapton was regarded as a guitar god. It happened one night that a Clapton "acolyte" painted the following graffiti on a London wall: *Clapton is God!!*

On the face of it, this claim is absurd. And yet claims to and for divinity are a seemingly constant part of our everyday lives. Without a doubt, each of us is guilty of self-adulation and self-worship to one degree or another. What really separates us from the one who declared a mere guitar player to be divine?

Syllabus Review

Either read the statements yourself or have one of the students read them to the class. Open your Student Guides. Look at the opening comments and rationale for this course as stated by the writer.

Orientation

In today's lesson we will survey several introductory ideas that will help you see the nature, function, focus, and necessity of "faith seeking understanding," that is, the significance of doing Christian theology. Whether or not we know it, all of us are engaged in theological reflection and activity. It is better *to know*, to be self-consciously aware of our theological leanings, habits, inclinations, and predispositions.

Learner Objectives

Instruct students to locate objectives in the Student Guide.

Restating the objectives for the learners serves as an advanced organizer for the lesson and alerts learners to key information and concepts.

To help students

- understand the focus and function of Christian theology
- see how theology and ministry are connected as a practical matter
- · ask why theological study is necessary
- become aware of how theological situations and problems are necessarily a part of their everyday lives—to begin to view life theologically

Lesson Body

Lecture: A House of Theology

(6 minutes)

Every Christian pastor, simply by virtue of holding and fulfilling the pastoral office, is a working theologian. This equivalence, that the pastor is a theologian, should also be reversible. That is, every theologian, regardless of where employed, should be a pastoral or practical theologian. Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768—1834), who is often called the Father of Modern Theology, declared that practical theology is the crown jewel of all theological reflection. This sentiment is as true today as when he first spoke it.

Some of the greatest works in the history of Christian theology were created in full awareness that all theological work is carried forth in the presence of the Triune God. Think of *The Confessions* of Augustine (354-430), an account of Augustine's conversion, which never sidesteps the many false paths Augustine trod before being fully claimed by God. The ontological argument for the existence of God, which suggests that the very idea of a perfect Being implies the necessary existence of that Being, appeared in the *Proslogion* of Anselm of Canterbury (c. 1033-1109), a work Anselm offers to God as a prayer.

Everything the Christian pastor does, whether in thought, word, or action, should be characterized by the highest degree of theological integrity. What exactly do we mean by theological integrity? If we envision the craft of Christian theology as erecting a house of theology, it must be a house fit for the indwelling of God the Holy Spirit, and one that welcomes and embraces all the many and rich varieties of humankind.

If Christian theology is a house to be constructed, then we must take care not to build a house we cannot live in. Consider the following parable by the Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard (1813-55):

A thinker erects an immense building, a system, a system which embraces the whole of existence and world history etc.—and if we contemplate his personal life, we discover to our astonishment this terrible and ludicrous fact, that he himself personally does not live in this immense high-

From Parables of Kierkegaard, edited by Thomas C. Oden (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1978), 21.

From Christianity in Culture: A Study in Dynamic Biblical Theologizing in Cross-Cultural Perspective (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1979), 296.

Refer to Resource 1-1 in the Student Guide.

vaulted palace, but in a barn alongside of it, or in a dog kennel, or at the most in a porter's lodge. If one were to take the liberty of calling his attention to this by a single word, he would be offended.

A house of theology could be thoughtfully assembled and yet still be unfit for human dwelling, to say nothing of divine presence. Such an ill-fitted theology would neither praise God nor edify humanity. It may be intellectually impressive and rigorously applied, yet still spiritually irrelevant. The missiologist and theologian Charles Kraft has written, "Theology that is perceived as irrelevant, is in fact irrelevant."

Whose judgment should we trust as to whether or not any Christian theology is relevant? We mentioned that every minister of the gospel of Jesus Christ is in fact a working theologian. That may be the first criterion of relevance. That would include:

- Can this theology be preached?
- Can it be prayed?
- Can it be sung?
- Is it sufficient for launching the missionswork of the church?
- Can it be effectively and simply presented to non-Christians in a compelling and convincing way?
- Is this theology a fully formed pastoral theology that can address any conceivable pastoral situation: sickness, death, bereavement, exultation, skepticism, secularism, materialism, etc.?

While it may be overly expanding the definition of who is a theologian to include *all* members of the laity, every theology must take account of the common person in the pew, who is seeking to worship the Triune God with all of his or her being. As in every avenue of life, so here also—we must trust the goodness of the Holy Spirit to guide us into all truth. Ultimately, the Holy Spirit can never be the spirit of strife, contentiousness, or disunity. He is always the Spirit of unity (which is not exactly the same as uniformity), love, charity, and grace.

We will have occasion in the future to discuss further the true criteria of Christian theology. Let us now return to the metaphor of theology as a constructed house. Specifically, how many forms might the house of Christian theology take?

Cabin in the woods Mansion on the hill Cottage by the lane Condominium by the thoroughfare Four-bedroom house in the suburbs
Apartment in the central business district

These are all typical, affluent, North American examples. How about such dwellings as:

Native Alaskan igloo Filipino nipa hut, made of bamboo Melanesian house, built with posts from the jungle Native American tepee

We mention these by way of contrast, to suggest that the dwellings of Native Americans, Native Alaskans, Melanesians, and Filipinos are erected without very much regard for their *permanence*. Native Alaskans may move, not taking their homes with them. Jungle heat and rain forest humidity will destroy the most artfully built structure of Melanesian and Filipino homes. The tepees of the Plains Indians were never meant to be fixed-address homes.

The horrific aggression perpetrated in New York City on September 11, 2001, demonstrated conclusively that some structures meant to last essentially forever are subject to collapse long before their time is up.

Regarding the theological houses we construct, are they meant to stand forever? By using the example of the World Trade Center, we do not wish to imply that any given system of theology necessarily should collapse under attack, but only that no system of theology lasts forever. There is no perennial theology.

Student Activity: A House of Theology

(9 minutes)

Offer assistance, but not finality. Students' ideas may change or shift by the end of this session and the next. This exercise is designed to help students to move from the concrete to the abstract.

You may wish to return to this idea at the end of the session.

In groups of two, construct, draw, or diagram a "house of theology" using the ideas and information just presented. What is the foundation? Walls? Roof? Floor? Windows? Doors?

You will have five minutes to work together.

Save your work as you may want to reflect on it during this module.

Lecture/Discussion: The Focus and Function of Theology

(25 minutes)

Refer to Resource 1-2 in the Student Guide.

Theology—the Study of God

Briefly put, the study of theology is the study of God. We hope it is self-evident *why* anyone would want to study God. We study God simply because God *is*, and to study Him is to practice loving God with our minds, as Thomas Aquinas said.

It is often said that theology is a *reflective* enterprise. The study of God should work like a mirror held up before us. If the Holy Spirit holds the mirror, then reflective theology will know *accurately* and *truly*, if at the same time *incompletely* and *hopefully*, about God. Christian theology is not possible without the assistance of the Holy Spirit, for "the Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God" (1 Cor 2:10). At the same time, the Spirit shows the inquiring theologian truths about himself or herself.

The writer John Updike once said theology is an enterprise that by its very definition must unravel and be knitted together again for every new generation. Contemplate his metaphor. It can be taken to mean that the *substance* of Christian theology (the yarn, so to speak) does not and cannot change. What changes is not the substance, but the various ways this substance is configured, or knitted together. The basic root ingredients or substance of theology does not change, but the ways of application necessarily must change with changing times, cultures, and situations.

In broadest outline, that upon which virtually all Christians agree is:

- The Triune God. God is Three Persons who yet share one nature. There are not three gods, but one God who yet has three distinguishable identities: God the Father, God the Son, God the Spirit.
- 2. *The Person of Jesus Christ.* Jesus Christ has always been confessed by orthodoxy to be fully human and at the same moment fully divine.
- 3. The Work of Jesus Christ. The reconciling work perfectly accomplished by Jesus Christ is a work of total reconciliation, especially of an alienated humanity to a forgiving God, but also of self to self, of self to others, of all of the created order together.

The *substance* of Christian theology does not change, and yet its form and application necessarily do change as the gospel is interpreted and applied to contemporary situations. Paul Tillich reminds us that every symbol is subject to changes in meaning. Some symbols arise and find a new and truer lodging in our beings; other symbols are corrupted by age and lose their vitality. For many Christians the symbol of Lord remains potent, while for others it may sound like it belongs to the Middle Ages, the lord of the manor, or to the world of buying and selling, the landlord, or even oppressive, the lord of the plantation.

Refer to Resource 1-3 in the Student Guide.

Tillich believes symbols, especially religious ones but also from the realms of politics, history, and art, are characterized by the following four criteria:

- A symbol, unlike a mere sign, actually participates in the reality to which it points.
- A symbol invites us into levels of reality that are otherwise closed for us. Examples would be a great play or piece of music.
- Symbols cannot be made up out of the thin air whenever one wishes to do so. Tillich writes that "they grow out of the individual or collective unconscious and cannot function without being accepted by the unconscious dimension of our being."
- Because no one can invent symbols at will, they are like living beings, and therefore they grow and they die.

From Dynamics of Faith (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1957), 42-43.

Discussion Interlude

The Church of the Nazarene is a church that comes out of traditions of revivalism, which in turn has given rise to many colorful and exciting persons and practices.

How many of these symbols are still alive in the Church of the Nazarene today?

The sawdust trail
The altar call
Singing "Just as I Am"
Faith healers
The traveling evangelist
The mourner's bench
Summer camp meeting

Ask students to share with the class what religious symbols are real in their own spiritual lives, and why.

From Principles of Christian Theology (Second ed., New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1977), 14. We agree with John Macquarrie when he writes, "the work of theology needs to be done again and again, for its formulations are culturally conditioned, and therefore need reinterpretation as cultural forms change." To agree with Macquarrie is not necessarily to claim that every generation of theologians has to begin at the very beginning, with no clue as to how to move forward. In theology, as in any cultivation of the mind, soul, and spirit, we always stand on the shoulders of those giants who have preceded us. So also here. Our contemporary theologizing must be done in full awareness of the treasures of Christian theology that continue to cast very long shadows all around us.

Every pastor should work to develop a sense of the history of Christian thought. Every Nazarene pastor will be familiar with the life and thought of John Wesley (1703-91) to one degree or another. Well and good. Wesley is a valuable resource, and one could never know too much about his theology and his zeal for evangelism. However, he is only one among the past luminaries of Christian theology. Irenaeus, Tertullian, Athanasius, Origen, Augustine, Aquinas, Luther, Calvin, Schleiermacher, Kierkegaard, Tillich, and Barth should also be studied. Recent trends such as process theology, various theologies of liberation, and feminist theology must not be overlooked. Philosophers and cultural figures whose thinking has impacted modern theology should also be grappled with: Kant, Nietzsche, Marx, Sartre, Freud, Darwin, Einstein. One should also develop a working knowledge of some of the other great faith traditions of the world: Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, Confucianism, Taoism.

Nazarene Focus: In addition to the theologians and philosophers just cited, we must consider some of our finest Nazarene authors and their notable contributions to our study.

(Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 2001).

(Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1994).

- See especially "Theology," pp. 15-16 in Rob Staples' book, Words of Faith: An Easy Reference to Theological Terms.
- See J. Kenneth Grider, *A Wesleyan-Holiness Theology*, pp. 22-27, where Grider gives many examples of the relevance of Christian theology to everyday lives, and repeatedly testifies to the necessary connections between the theologian's personal life setting and the theological work this theologian produced.

Lecture/Discussion: Why Is Theological Study Practical and Necessary?

(25 minutes)

For any student taking a class in basic Christian theology, there may be a great deal of initial inertia to be overcome. It may be difficult to convince the student of the relevance or practical necessity of the subject. Theology is often criticized and derided from Nazarene pulpits by both the humble and the famous. What such shortsighted critics do not realize is their indebtedness to theologians of the past. They might not have a pulpit to stand behind were it not for these theological forebears.

For those who want to build churches, send missionaries, save souls, rescue families in crisis, and preach sermons, theology may be of only passing interest. To insist strongly that every pastoral responsibility has layers of theological grounding may not be enough to stir theological wonder. Thinking is hard work, action is easy and expedient, and for too many people action simply happens, simply erupts, without acknowledging how thoughtful action and active thought need one another.

At this point in this introductory lesson, the instructor should explore with the students some of their reasons for any initial distrust of and discomfort with the study of theology. You may want to tell this fictionalized story from the life of a young Francis of Assisi.

At about the age of twelve, and possibly younger, Francis and his mother were in the town square of the Italian village of Assisi. All of the townspeople had gathered to hear a famous theologian who was traveling in the region. In his eloquent way this great theologian was explaining everything there was to know about God, the world, human nature, salvation, and the life to come. He mounted abstraction upon abstraction. The young Francis could scarcely take it all in. He grew dizzy with details. Finally he shouted out: "Stop! Let us hear the baby Jesus crying in his crib!" At the time his mother was embarrassed and silenced him, but later, at home, she blessed him.

Why would anyone settle for arid abstractions of theology when the Christian experience is immediate, pulsating, and undeniable? That seems to be the point of Francis of Assisi's story, and many of the detractors of theological work have taken note. Everyone admits that by its very nature theology is a reflective

enterprise, meaning it is one or two steps removed from the immediacy of God. Why sit in the stands watching when one can play the game? Why sit at home and read the cramped postcards of others when we can take the journey ourselves?

The "old-time" religion is often the religion of the heart. Mature theology will always show itself as a synthesis of the head and the heart, wedding the enthusiasm (which means in a literal sense to be filled with God!) of the old-time religion to the deeper stability of reason and tradition. Neither head-religion nor heart-religion is able to sustain itself by itself. Only by embracing the other can the two become one.

Some Reasons Why Theology Is Thought to Be Unappealing or Unnecessary

Here are some of the common reasons why theological study is thought to be unappealing or irrelevant, or both.

- As already stressed, theological study seems to rob Christian experience of its throbbing vitality. Theology is a corpse, not an organism, say these critics.
- 2. Theological study's demand for hard, integrative thinking is way too hard—especially for busy pastors. Every pastor will be tempted to cut corners in his or her theological education and continuing theological awareness. In days of old it was the accepted rule that standing behind every minute of preached sermon was an hour in the pastor's study. But now at least some pastors get their sermons from the Internet, claiming there is not sufficient time to write decent sermons.

Are we ready for the strong challenge of theological study? This discipline brings together the aesthetic, the experiential, the discursive, the historical, the contemporary, and the cultural, in ways not found elsewhere in the overall curriculum of pastoral studies.

3. We have suggested already that there can be no fixed, final, or perennial theology that is altogether impervious to change. This does not mean we should abandon the classics of recent Wesleyan theology, such as the three-volume *Christian Theology* (1940-43) by H. Orton Wiley. But it does mean we read the classics with a keen eye as to their applicability to the present era.

That there is no final and permanent theology may distress some students. In some cases this may mean that "unlearning" some shallow or immature theology from the past will be necessary. Students may resist this needed unlearning. They will not take kindly to the suggestion that their theological perspectives are unbalanced, unexamined, or hasty. They may have assembled from various sources a sort of "patchwork" theology, which they are reluctant to question or scrutinize critically.

No ministerial student comes to the study of theology as a blank tablet. Nor does anyone come with a fully formed perspective. Everyone arrives with something. The pursuit of theological depth and clarity may quickly bring a person to a *decision* as to what is inadequate in one's received theological past. *Decision* means to sever or to cut off. It is exceedingly difficult to cut off what we think is of value, even when we are confronted with evidence that there is a more mature perspective to be gained through the loss of some of our immature beliefs.

What are some examples of theological views that might be better left behind?

- In the face of evil that does not yield to easy explanations, many of our statements and declarations about God are simply wrong. We may subtly or even blatantly blame God for the evil. Common sentiments such as "God took her home" may or may not be worth saying, depending on the circumstances. They might even do more harm than good. To speak of God's enduring goodness, justice, and mercy when things have turned impossibly bad is a miracle of grace.
- The "name it and claim it" theology, which tries to force God's hand toward bestowing material gain
- Speaking of love sloppily without counterbalancing it with justice and responsibility.
- 4. If Christian theology is viewed exclusively or even primarily as theory detached from practice, it is very easy to deem it unimportant, and possibly even boring. The American people as a whole are often characterized by pragmatism, practicality, results over process, and success. If the study of theology does not lead to these desired goals, it will be rejected at some level.

Refer to Resource 1-4 in the Student Guide.

An Example from Greek Mythology: The mythical figure of Sisyphus was condemned to spend eternity rolling a huge boulder up an incline. Just when he thought he would at last be freed from this trial, pushing the boulder to its resting place atop the hill, the rock would roll past him and down to the bottom of the hill.

The grace of God insures that the task of Christian theology is not a despairing task like the one borne by Sisyphus. Karl Barth called theology "That Happy Science." A subtle but definite joy should accompany all of our theological efforts.

Here the instructor should interact with the students personally to draw forth from them the positive reasons for the study of theology, as well as factors that discourage theological study.

Discussion Interlude

How and why can theology be "the happy science"?

Can the study of Christian theology actually improve one's spiritual life before God? How and why?

Nazarene Focus: H. Ray Dunning, in "The Nature and Scope of Theology," Chapter 1 of *Grace, Faith, and Holiness,* employs the following outline:

- What Is Theology?
- What Is Systematic Theology?
- The Norm of Systematic Theology
- A Note on Legitimacy

Dunning quotes John Wesley on the relation between opinions held by people and religion.

[Whatever most people think,] it is certain that opinion is not religion: No, not right opinion; assent to one, or to ten thousand truths. There is a wide difference between them: Even right opinion is as distant from religion as the east is from the west. Persons may be quite right in their opinions, and yet have no religion at all; and, on the other hand, persons may be truly religious, who hold many wrong opinions.

What would Wesley say about commonly held opinions of the majority of people in a society? How about political decisions made on the basis of opinion polls?

(Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1988), 23-54.

From "Sermon 55: On the Trinity," in The Works of John Wesley, Vol. 2, Sermons II: 34-70, ed. Albert C. Outler (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1985), 374.

Lesson Close

(15 minutes)

Review

Ask students to write a two-minute paper in answer to this thought-starter:

Theology is about . . .

After two minutes are up, ask students to write another twominute paper in response to the next thought-starter: I should study theology because . . .

Collect the papers. By reading these short exercises the instructor will get a sense of what has been learned. You might also read a couple of the responses to the class.

Look Ahead

For the next session we will explore a definition of Christian theology and evaluate the sources of theology such as Revelation, Reason, Experience, Tradition, and Culture.

Assign Homework

Direct students to the Homework Assignments in the Student Guide.

Read:

- The syllabus for Investigating Christian Theology 1. Note any questions you want to ask the instructor.
- Resource 1-5, The Study of Christian Theology.
 Note the scripture references. Be prepared to discuss the rationale and relevance of Christian theology to preparation for Christian ministry.
- Resource 1-6, Christian Theology or Systematic Theology. Note the reasons given for selecting Christian Theology as the name of this module and the proposed structure for the lessons.

Write a three- to four-page theological autobiography. Use the following for guidelines:

- What is your earliest recollection of and interest in religious and spiritual matters?
- What are the formative factors in your theological outlook? Include reference to persons, circumstances, events, travels, study, etc.
- When you were very young, did you think of God as more like your father or more like your mother? Or most of all like your pastor?
- · What is the relationship between your knowledge of

Christian theology and progress of your spiritual life? How can theological study bring you closer to God?

 How is a theological autobiography similar to a confession of personal faith in Jesus Christ or a story of conversion? How different?

Bible Study

As part of your preparation for the next session, study 2 Timothy 3:16-17 and 2 Peter 1:20-21.

Journal Prompts

- Write in your journal about a new concept you encountered in today's lesson. In what ways could this new idea influence your life? Your assumptions about religion or spirituality? What feelings did this new insight provoke? Suspicion, fear, anger, freedom, joy, relief?
- Listen and write. Listen with "theological ears" to the common conversations you hear for the next three days, at home, in the supermarket, at work. Notice how many theologically oriented statements you hear:
 - "I guess it wasn't meant to be."
 - "God helps those who help themselves."
 - "Those kinds of people should keep their place."
 - "Mother Nature must have been offended; the hurricane killed ten people."
 - "She was killed by a drunk driver—God must have had a reason."
 - "He was always such a proud one. Now he has cancer. Just goes to show you."
 - "Why would God let me get pregnant?"
- Theology and Ministry. Ponder the story about Fred Craddock (told in "Punctuate the Finish") and reflect in your journal about how theological study and ministry necessarily go together.

Punctuate the Finish

If you have sufficient students, consider using the Grider material (from pp. 22-26 of the source listed in 'Suggested Reading') and organizing students into a kind of "reader's theater." The instructor could give to each student one of the "Theology Is" statements, and all could share in this exercise as the instructor directs.

Tell the following story about Fred Craddock, a noted teacher of preaching.

Dr. Fred Craddock had endured all the Wittgenstein, von Rad, and Brueggemann he could absorb for the

moment. He took a break from the joint meeting of the American Academy of Religion/Society of Biblical Literature in Los Angeles.

In the lobby of the convention hotel he was interrupted by a woman who clearly was not dressed for a religious meeting. She was carrying an old, zippered Bible. She asked Craddock if he was part of this meeting of teachers of religion. She then asked him if she could join the group. She wanted to find out how to become a Christian and figured this was the place to be. Dr. Craddock looked at the program with all of those complicated seminars and papers and couldn't find a place to send her.

Finally Fred invited her to join him in the coffee shop and asked her why she suddenly wanted to be a Christian.

She told him, "I have walked the streets of Los Angeles since I was 16 years of age, selling my body. The other night I caught my teenage daughter doing the same thing. I would like to become a Christian."

Dr. Craddock then spent over an hour sharing with her, marking her Bible, and praying for and with her. Then he got a telephone directory and called a nearby pastor. He came by in thirty minutes. And the pastor and the prostitute with her marked Bible drove off to the church.

Later someone scolded Fred for missing a sparkling seminar. He told him that there was this woman, and "somebody's got to answer her questions."

Yet, at the same time, Craddock had strong words for those who would pipe up and say, "See all the foolishness of these scholarly meetings."

Craddock's response to that was "Phooey. Scholarly work is extremely important; otherwise the good ship Zion would be so covered with the barnacles of prejudice and sentimentality that it would sink! But somebody's got to answer the woman's questions. In the church—both the critical community and the confessing, evangelizing community are extremely important."

Closing prayer, song, or benediction.

Lesson 2

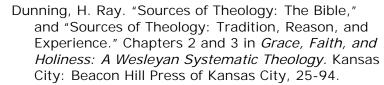
The Sources and Definition of Christian Theology

Lesson Overview

Schedule

Start Time	Task or Topic	Learning Activity	Materials Needed
0:00	Introduction	Orient	Student Guide
0:10	An Overview of	Lecture/Discussion	Manual
	Definitions and		Resource 2-1
	Sources of Theology		Resource 2-2
			Resource 2-3
			Resource 2-4
0:25	The Bible as a Source	Small-Group Activity	Resource 2-5
	for Theology		
0:45	Tradition, Experience,	Small-Group Activity	Resource 2-6
	Reason, and Culture		Resource 2-7
	on the Job of		Resource 2-8
	Constructing Theology		Resource 2-9
1:05	Shaping Our	Guided Discussion	
	Definition of Christian		
	Theology		
1:20	Lesson Close	Review, Assign	Student Guide

Suggested Reading for Instructor



- Grider, J. Kenneth. "The Nature of Theology," and "Theology's Written Authority." Chapters 2 and 4 in *A Wesleyan-Holiness Theology*. Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 28-36, 63-100.
- _____. "The Nature of Wesleyan Theology."

 Wesleyan Theological Journal 17 (Fall 1982): 43-53.
- Lodahl, Michael. "Part I: How God's Story Gets Told: Foundational Doctrine." Chapters 1-4 in *The Story* of God: Wesleyan Theology and Biblical Narrative. Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1994, 16-48.
- Maddox, Randy. "Human Knowledge of the God of Responsible Grace." Chapter 1 in *Responsible Grace: John Wesley's Practical Theology.* Nashville: Kingswood Books, 1994, 26-47.
- Staples, Rob. "Authority," "Scripture," and "Inerrancy." In Words of Faith: An Easy Reference to Theological Terms. Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 2001, 17-22.
- Wiley, H. Orton. "The Sources of Theology." Chapter 2 in *Christian Theology, Volume I.* Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1940, 33-52.

Lesson Introduction

(10 minutes)

Accountability

Call on one student to read one section of their theological autobiography.

Call on two or three students to give their thoughts or the principle ideas from reading assignments, Resources 1-5 and 1-6.

Collect homework.

Motivator

From Nine Stories (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1953), 288.

Allow students to respond.

In J. D. Salinger's popular story a spiritually sensitive boy watches his sister drink a glass of milk. This inspires an eager insight. He says, "All of a sudden I saw that she was God and the milk was God. I mean, all she was doing was pouring God into God."

In what specific ways has culture influenced this boy's theology?

What have you encountered lately in your culture that teaches a similar doctrine of God?

In what important ways is this different from the biblical theology of God?

Orientation

As we thoughtfully and prayerfully construct "the house of Christian theology" we draw upon several sources. Today we will explore how the Bible, revelation, reason, tradition, experience, and culture help us with our construction project.

Learner Objectives

Instruct students to locate objectives in the Student Guide.

Restating the objectives for the learners serves as an advanced organizer for the lesson and alerts learners to key information and concepts.

To help students

- discover, identify, and explain some of the ways Scripture, Revelation, Reason, Tradition, Experience, and Culture contribute to the construction of Christian theology
- embrace the study of theology as a worthy life goal and to "do" theology with competence
- write an acceptable definition of Christian theology that provides a foundation for personal life and ministry

Lesson Body

Lecture/Discussion: An Overview of Definitions and Sources of Theology

(15 minutes)

Present the survey of sources but do not go into great depth at this time. Meld and explain John Macquarrie's Six Formative Factors and the Wesleyan Quadrilateral.

Refer to Resource 2-1 in the Student Guide: The Wesleyan Quadrilateral. Point out the shape and the reasons for the foundation being more pronounced.

Definitions

Refer to Resource 2-2 in the Student Guide.

The classic definition of theology, which can scarcely be improved upon, is that it is "faith seeking understanding." This comes from Augustine, seconded later by Anselm in the Middle Ages. Faith is not so much a human accomplishment as it is a supernatural gift, although the faithful human will is a will fully engaged and fixed on God. The act and art of Christian theology should be accomplished from "faith to faith." All of one's own cognitive skills should be employed in the study of theology, but even here we humbly remember that every good gift is "from above, coming down from the Father of lights" (Jas 1:17).

From The Melody of Theology: A Philosophical Dictionary (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988), 217.

Jaroslav Pelikan teaches that "theology is a disciplined reflection upon the truth of Christian revelation." We will have more to say about revelation later. The sixteenth-century Church of England's Richard Hooker defined theology as "the science of things divine." This followed Thomas Aquinas's earlier definition naming it "sacred science." In the twentieth century Karl Barth used similar language in calling theology "the happy science."

It is important that students give examples of each of these three criteria, so they are able to express them in their own words and see their value for their personal and professional lives. Pelikan points out that today the word "science" rarely refers to religion, but almost always to empirical studies of the natural world. Still, Pelikan thinks theology deserves to be called a science if it has "a prescribed function, a disciplined methodology, and a rational structure."

Prescribed Function

Refer to Resource 2-3 in the Student Guide.

- Is there one main function supported by auxiliary functions?
- If so, what is that main function?
- Is it to understand the mysteries of God, to uphold believers in their faith, to present an apology for the gospel to unbelievers, to support the missionary efforts of the church, to evangelize the unreached, to provide a theological grounding for the church's compassionate ministries and social outreach?

Disciplined Methodology

- Is the work of theology to be compared to other sorts of intellectual work?
- How can anyone learn more about his or her way of "doing" theology, that is to say, of theological method?
- Is the discipline theology requires different from the disciplines of the Christian life such as fasting, prayer, attending worship, reading the Bible?

Rational Structure

Christian doctrine."

- We have earlier likened the task of building a theology to the building of a house.
- Some commentators liken theology to the rules necessary to play a game, or the grammar that gives structure, form, and cohesiveness to every language.

Pelikan's three criteria—function, methodology, structure—are not synonymous, but they obviously overlap. They are at least a triad, and possibly even a trinity, three that are really one. Elsewhere Pelikan asserts that Christian theology is exercised and perfected through believing, teaching, and confessing. "What the church of Jesus Christ believes, teaches, and confesses on the basis of the word of God: this is

The Sources of Christian Theology

It may seem that the object of all theological thinking must be the Triune God. This is partly true, but mostly wrong. It is wrong because any object of our study, our reverence, our affection becomes in quick order

Pelikan, Melody of Theology, 217-19

From The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine, Vol. 1, The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition (100-600) (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1971), 1.

part of us, and is therefore no longer a "mere" object. To say that Jesus Christ is closer than a brother or that God is closer than the vein on one's neck, as some Muslims say, is to confess that theological study cannot be undertaken with any single part of our being, but expects the whole.

Hence God is better called the *subject* of theology rather than its *object*. God is Eternal Thou in whom all lines of relationality converge. He is therefore never an object to be held at arm's length but rather the Eternal Subject to be loved even as He is studied. For the Christian theologian, to love God and to study Him are inseparable.

What then are the sources of theology? The primal source is obviously God himself, because if God chose not to make himself known, there would be no knowing of Him. To name auxiliary sources of theology is to recognize that in His sovereign wisdom God has chosen to make himself known to humankind.

John Macquarrie names six sources of theology in his *Principles of Christian Theology.* He calls them "formative factors in theology." Macquarrie makes three important points regarding these six factors.

They are not all equal and should not be regarded as equals.

- 2. Every one of them taken by itself could conceivably be, and in fact has been, the launching point and centering insight for an entire theological system.
- 3. Every sound theology must take all six of these factors into consideration as it is constructed. There needs to be a kind of dialectical interplay among these six factors, rather like the five basketball players on the court and the coach on the sidelines. The coach acts as a kind of sixth player, influencing the minds and the moves of the players through his sound teaching.

Experience

Theology is an intentionally reflective endeavor. But reflection upon what? The easy answer is reflection upon the real, vital, and true experience of the Triune God. The hard questions then begin:

- How can one tell a false experience of God from a true one?
- Can one experience religious meaning in what seems to be a purely secular event? Many thoughtful people have said "yes" to this question.

From Principles of Christian Theology, *4-18*.

Refer to Resource 2-4 in the Student Guide.

What are some examples of a blurring of the boundary line between the sacred and the secular? Common examples include aesthetic experience of beauty, family warmth, political commitments, etc.

 Will the experience of God inevitably reduce and dilute the mystery of God?

Class discussion opportunity:

Ask each student to remember his or her first awareness of God. Ask everyone to recall a more recent time of knowing and feeling the real presence of the Lord God. Commonly, we think of experience as inherently personal, individual, or even private. Macquarrie reminds us that we are inherently social beings, and that our own personal religious experiences need to be validated and corroborated by a wider community of faith.

Revelation

Macquarrie names revelation as "the primary source of theology." Revelation is characterized by a "gift-like character," and hence it is a kind and form of knowing that is distinctly different from our ordinary ways of knowing.

Revelation and experience are closely linked. We can see these links as Macquarrie discusses how revelation is commonly received and how it affects those who receive it.

- an openness to the possibility of encountering the transcendent
- a sudden eruption or incursion of the divine, often accompanied by light
- a response of profound humility, through which a consciousness of sin may arise
- the content of the revelation itself, which may involve the disclosure of the divine name
- obligation, calling, or vocation placed upon the recipient of revelation by God

It will be wise to review this scripture, Isaiah 6:1-8.

Many, if not all, of these features are demonstrated in Isaiah's vision of God in the Temple.

We will discuss revelation further, later in this module.

The center of Christianity is Jesus Christ, the very incarnation of the Eternal Word of God the Father. Through Jesus Christ revelation is much more than a centering theological concept. It is the centering truth of all there is.

Scripture

Macquarrie, in writing, "the Christian revelation comes in a person, not a book," believes the Bible is a witness

to the reality of revelation but is not itself to be considered as revelation.

Here we must part company with Macquarrie, preferring instead the outlook of Karl Barth, who taught that revelation followed a triune pattern. Jesus Christ is incarnate revelation, the Bible is written revelation, and the preached Word can become, under the anointing of the Holy Spirit, spoken revelation.

There are some churches that claim to take the Bible seriously, but not literally. The Church of the Nazarene is not such a church, because Nazarenes take the Bible both seriously and literally. Since the Holy Scriptures undoubtedly feature poetic expression, not *all* parts can be taken literally, but every part is taken seriously.

Nazarene teaching on Scripture is plain and compelling. God has sown within Scripture all that must be known in order to become reconciled to the Father, through the Son, in the power of the Holy Spirit. For Nazarenes the Bible is not a mere book, but a living reality through which the Spirit still speaks. We hear this Word addressed to us as individuals and especially as members of the covenant family of faith.

Tradition

"Scripture," Macquarrie believes, "needs the complement of tradition in order to guard against private interpretations of scripture, for almost anything can be read into scripture." Tradition lives when the Holy Spirit is the enlivening breath animating the Church and its members; tradition dies when merely human efforts reject divine presence. An old saying is to the point here:

Tradition is the living faith of the dead, Traditionalism is the dead faith of the living.

Tradition as a formative factor in theology says that many hands and perspectives are better than one. No responsible preacher prepares sermons apart from studying relevant books, commentaries, and other resources. Every preacher knows he or she needs the distilled heritage of the ages to enliven his or her preaching. This living history is tradition.

Culture

The first four formative factors—experience, revelation, Scripture, tradition—are "from faith to faith." They are conceived in faith, grow in faith, and mature in faith.

But Macquarrie's last two shaping elements help us discern theology's character as an intellectual discipline. They are culture and reason.

To say that one must be culturally aware is simply to claim that every theologian must be in the world. Every pastor must understand the cultural dynamics of the flock if pastoral ministry is to be effective. "Culture" as we are using it here simply means the sum total of our ways of life. The clothes we wear, the vacations we enjoy, the sentences we speak, the cars we drive are all components of culture. Initially at least, culture should not be used as an evaluative word, separating "high" culture from "low" culture. Rather, "culture" should be used to describe the way people organize and live their lives.

But why is culture to be valued as a formative factor of theology? If we believe Jesus Christ is the center of Christian theology, and that through the Incarnation Jesus Christ came to assume all parts of the human situation, except for sin, then we have very strong evidence that cultural realities are valuable, for God has declared them to be.

Reason

"Give me a place to stand," said the ancient philosopher Archimedes, "and I will move the earth." How we use our reasoning capacity is one way we demonstrate to ourselves and to the world exactly where we stand.

Some theologians, including at times Martin Luther, have denounced reason as fallen and altogether contrary to biblical revelation. John Wesley, and Nazarene theology following him, have taken the more sensible path of allowing reason to be a partner with revelation; never equal partners, but a partner in a supporting and auxiliary role. Revelation may often transcend or supersede reason, but should rarely, if ever, oppose or contradict reason.

Alert listeners will have noticed that John Macquarrie's six formative factors are identical to the Wesleyan quadrilateral, with the addition of culture and revelation.

MacquarrieWesleyExperienceScriptureRevelationTraditionScriptureReasonTraditionExperience

Culture Reason

It might be said that culture could be understood under the dual headings of reason and experience, and that revelation could be subsumed under Scripture and tradition. So perhaps Macquarrie's six formative factors are roughly in keeping with the four components of the Wesleyan quadrilateral.

One major difference is that for Wesley, Scripture is not just one factor of equal weight among the other three. Scripture is clearly the number-one source of Christian theology, but is constantly read through the three lenses of tradition, reason, and experience, lenses that are themselves shaped and grounded by the Bible.

Small-Group Activity: The Bible as a Source for Theology

(20 minutes)

Divide the class into groups of three.

Each group will need a Manual and Bibles.

Refer to Resource 2-5 in the Student Guide.

Assign each group one Article of Faith. If the class is small, you may not have a group for each article.

Other sources to draw on for this section:

- Dunning's Grace, Faith, and Holiness, ch. 2.
- Grider's A Wesleyan-Holiness Theology. 30-32 and 63-100.
- Staples' articles on "Authority, Scripture, Inerrancy" in Words of Faith

You will have 15 minutes to work in your group to complete the Resource guide.

Select a recorder/reporter who will give a brief (one minute) summation of the one most significant insight or encounter. Keep the focus on how Scripture was used to build the theological house of which this Article of Faith is a part.

Small-Group Activity: Tradition, Experience, Reason, and Culture on the Job of Constructing Theology

(20 minutes)

Divide the class into four groups.

Assign each group one of the Resources 2-6—2-9.

You may want to have copies of the following available for the class Each of your groups will work on your assigned resource. Select a recorder/reporter to report to the class. You will have 15 minutes to work together.

- *Dunning*, Grace, Faith, and Holiness, *ch. 3*.
- Grider, "The Nature of Wesleyan Theology," Wesleyan Theological Journal 17 (Fall 1982): 43-53.
- *Grider*, A Wesleyan-Holiness Theology, *ch. 2*.
- Lodahl, The Story of God: Wesleyan Theology and Biblical Narrative (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1994), chs. 2, 3, and 4.

Note: If you choose to photocopy any materials for class distribution, be sure to include source information on each copy.

Guided Discussion: Shaping Our Definition of Christian Theology

(15 minutes)

Since it is commonly said that the best sermons have three points, it may be helpful to draw some quick comparisons between Pelikan's three points and the ways in which a sermon works. Recall that the great Karl Barth once said the form of systematic theology is the prayer and the sermon.

Allow students an opportunity to respond.

What is the "prescribed function" of Christian theology?

What is the prescribed function of the sermon? To evangelize? To edify believers? To comment on cultural issues? To take moral stands? To defend the faith?

How many of these functions might also "belong" to Christian theology?

What is the "disciplined methodology" of Christian theology?

Is it the same as the sermon? Does the preacher necessarily "impose" his or her own methodology on the preparation and delivery of the sermon?

Is this true also for the working theologian?

Lesson Close

(10 minutes)

Review

Suppose that when you get home tonight, your child or spouse asks, "What did you learn in school today?"

Allow students to respond.

What would your answer be?

Look Ahead

Next time we will tackle the challenge of understanding God and revelation and the reliability of our knowledge about God.

Assign Homework

Direct students to the Homework Assignments in the Student Guide. Interview three people.

- Ask them if they use expressions like "Good heavens" or "My God" or "For heaven's sake" or "For God's sake" or similar expressions.
- One theologian has written that when such expressions are used, "Neither belief nor unbelief is any longer involved here."
- If someone uses some of these expressions, ask if he or she is using them in a religious or nonreligious way.
- Write a short essay of two to three pages reporting your findings.

Journal Prompts

- In your journal write the final draft of your definition of Christian theology.
- You may wish to begin by defining something that seems very familiar to you, but that is yet capable of abstraction. Three ideas could be family, freedom, and love. You may also want to try to define evil, to go in a different direction. Once you have defined with success one of these familiar and yet perplexing—realities, you are ready to try to define Christian theology.
- It is also suggested that you discuss a proper definition with your spouse, your pastor, your spiritual guide.

Punctuate the Finish

"Open your eyes! Look around you! See darkness that may be felt; see ignorance and error; see vice in ten thousand forms; see . . . guilt, fear, sorrow, shame,

From John Wesley, "Sermon 57: On the Fall of Man," in Works, Vol. 2, 410. remorse covering the face of the earth. See misery, the daughter of sin. See, on every side, sickness and pain . . . driving on the poor, helpless sons of men, in every age, to the gates of death."

Answering God's call to help the people Wesley describes will take more than clever witticisms in the pulpit, pop psychology in the counseling office, and dry formulas at the altar of prayer. It is time to study theology as never before.

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Lesson 3

How Can We Speak of God?

Lesson Overview

Schedule

Start Time	Task or Topic	Learning Activity	Materials Needed
0:00	Introduction	Orient	Student Guide
			Resource 3-1
0:15	Speaking of God:	Lecture	Resource 3-2
	Three Choices		Resource 3-3
			Resource 3-4
0:30	God Speaks about	Small Group Activity	Resource 3-5
	Himself: The Reality		Resource 3-6
	of Revelation		
0:50	Two Customary Ways	Lecture	Resource 3-7
	of Speaking of		
	Revelation		
0:55	Jesus Christ, the	Lecture	
	Father's True Word		
1:00	Worship of the	Class Worship	Resource 3-8
	Majestic God		Hymnals
			Resource 3-9
1:20	Lesson Close	Review, Assign	Student Guide

Suggested Reading for Instructor

- Barth, Karl. *Church Dogmatics: A Selection.* New York: Harper and Row, 1962, 87-133.
- ______. "The Humanity of God." In *The Humanity of God.* Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1960.
- Berkhof, Hendrikus. *Christian Faith: An Introduction to the Study of the Faith.* Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1979, 41-104.
- Dunning, H. Ray. "Part II: Our Knowledge of God." In *Grace, Faith, and Holiness: A Wesleyan Systematic Theology.* Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1988, 97-179.
- Grider, J. Kenneth. *A Wesleyan-Holiness Theology.* Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1994, 126-28.
- Leupp, Roderick T. *Knowing the Name of God: A Trinitarian Tapestry of Grace, Faith, and Community.* Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996, 15-50.
- Macquarrie, John. *Principles of Christian Theology.*Second edition, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1977, 84-103.
- Pelikan, Jaroslav. "Revelation." In *The Melody of Theology: A Philosophical Dictionary*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988, 205-09.
- Wiley, H. Orton. *Christian Theology*, Vol. 1. Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1940, 124-65.

Lesson Introduction

(15 minutes)

Accountability

Call on two to three students to read their homework report.

Return and collect homework.

Motivator

Recount the following personal story from the life of the module writer.

At the conclusion of the story, ask students if they have similar experiences or stories to share. One day many years ago I was wandering around the upper reaches of Manhattan, otherwise known as New York City, and came upon a yeshiva, a training school for Jewish boys. Entering with discretion I glanced briefly at some notices posted on the hall bulletin board. Immediately my eyes were arrested by how these Jews referred to God. For them God was so holy that the divine name could not be written out in full. To write the name in completeness would be to presume to know God in completeness. For these Jews, this teetered on blasphemy and the unpardonable sin. So they wrote G*d, with the intervening asterisk meaning that the Holy One of Israel could never be reduced to human consumption or even human comprehension.

This Holy One of Israel is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one Christians call God the Father is one and the same as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, of Ruth, Miriam, and Deborah. With these reverent Jews, we can say (in the words of another) that a God comprehended is a God denied. Someone else has said, in similar words, that if one thinks he or she has understood God, what he or she has understood is *not* God.

Orientation

To further enthusiasm for the topic of revelation, make and mount posters featuring selected quotations about revelation.

You could make this part of the previous lesson's homework by assigning each student one or two of the quotes.

Refer to Resource 3-1 in the Student Guide.

"A God comprehended is a God denied."

"If one thinks he or she has understood God, what he or she has understood is *not* God."

"If one subjects everything to reason, our religion will lose its mystery and its supernatural character. If one offends the principles of reason our religion will be absurd and ridiculous."

-Blaise Pascal

"Truly you are a God who hides himself, O God and Savior."

—Isaiah 45:15, NIV

"Who has directed the Spirit of the Lord, or as his counselor has instructed him?"

—Isaiah 40:13, RSV

From Christian Faith: An Introduction to the Study of the Faith (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1979), xii.

"What God has given to us is inexhaustible, but we are only little people, still on the way to fully understanding everything, while the gospel needs restating in ever new situations."

-Hendrikus Berkhof

"As a result of the earthly distance and man's guilty estrangement from God, revelation now takes place in a hidden manner."

—Hendrikus Berkhof

Ibid., 57.

"The doctrine of revelation is not simply one doctrine among others, but a doctrine by which every other doctrine may be said to stand or fall."

—Jaroslav Pelikan

From The Melody of Theology, 205.

"O the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!"

-Romans 11:33, RSV

The Psalmist's Theology

"For who in the skies above can compare with the LORD?"

-Psalm 89:6a, NIV

This utterance by the psalmist is great theology. To what, indeed, can the Lord God be compared? God is incomparable. To follow this logic to its finality would mean we could say nothing at all about God. Some mystics have in fact taken that less-traveled road. Theologians, however, have taken up the challenge to say something meaningful, coherent, practical, and true about God. In this lesson we will pay close attention to how theological speech *names* God. Throughout this lesson we will endeavor neither to say too much nor too little about God. We will strive to say what is fitting, appropriate, and most of all, what is edifying and praiseworthy.

In earlier times it was common to claim that *all* of theology was concerned with the doctrine of God. Once one veered into other topics one had left the province of "theology properly so-called." While few if any take

this view today, it still remains that one's doctrine of God necessarily impacts (for good or for ill) everything else one wishes to say theologically. Hence one must speak very carefully about God. This is the singular theological seed that will necessarily be reaped at all other points in one's theological harvest. As has often been said, the doctrine of God is the stream than which one's subsequent theology cannot rise higher. It is the main sail on the good ship *Theologia*.

To understand and to comprehend God is, using the common understandings of these words, to approach God cognitively, analytically, rationally. The gift of a mind is among God's choicest bestowments. When the Holy Spirit's light infuses the human mind we can, with discernment, know God. The discerning mind understands two things about itself: (1) its potential to know the truth; (2) the danger of overreaching and misusing its potential.

We should not discount the value of reason in Christian theology (for it is a God-given gift), but neither should we overvalue reason. Blaise Pascal (1623-62), a French writer, understood this two-sided reality of appreciating the mind's obvious powers while carefully acknowledging the mind's profound limitations: "If one subjects everything to reason our religion will lose its mystery and its supernatural character. If one offends the principles of reason our religion will be absurd and ridiculous. There are two equally dangerous extremes, to shut reason out and to let nothing else in."

The instructor should be prepared to share a story as well.

Would any of you like to share your own personal story about knowing God?

Learner Objectives

Instruct students to locate objectives in the Student Guide.

Restating the objectives for the learners serves as an advanced organizer for the lesson and alerts learners to key information and concepts.

To help students

- appreciate that the Triune God has made himself known to mortals
- recognize how theological speech is related to common, everyday speech, yet also different from it
- learn something of analogical speech, and how this relates to the general task of speaking and thinking about God

Lesson Body

Lecture: Speaking of God: Three Choices

(15 minutes)

One old-time college football coach, in the days when the forward pass was still considered to be somewhat novel and experimental, explained why he seldom called a pass play. The logic was simple: of the three possible outcomes when the ball is lofted, only one is good (a completion) but two are not good (incompletion or interception).

Refer to Resource 3-2 in the Student Guide.

Likewise, we can point to three ways of speaking about God. These ways are often utilized by Christian theologians who have used the tools of philosophy in the attempt to understand God better.

Two of these ways yield unproductive results, which leads us to conclude that the third way is the best way.

Univocal

We may, first of all, speak of God in a *univocal* way. This simply means that whatever we say about ourselves as creatures must be true in the same way about God, and vice versa. If human beings have hair and two eyes, so also must God. If human beings cannot fly, then neither can God. To speak of God *univocally* is clearly to create God in a human image, which is the same as making God into an idol. This will not do.

Equivocal

We may also speak of God in an *equivocal* way. Here we go in the complete opposite direction of univocal speech. Equivocal speech means there are no points of contact at all between the divine and the human. The end result of addressing God in an equivocal way is that our creaturely meanings cannot be applied in any way to God. Let us take love for example. We surely believe there is some relation between the way we love and the way God loves. Human love, we rightly conclude, is but a dim shadow of God's love. But equivocal speech will not allow us to make any such comparisons at all.

Analogical

We must rest, then, on the third way to address God, and that is through the medium of *analogical* speech. Analogical speech gives us the only feasible answer to the psalmist's perplexing question raised before. Strictly speaking, God is incomparable. But through His providence and mercy, God has allowed us to know Him. We cannot know everything there is to know about God, but what we can know we believe to be *representative* and *true* knowledge.

The Bible itself offers many answers to the Psalmist's question of an appropriate comparison to the Lord God. Analogical speech is symbolic speech. God is *like* a ferocious lion, menacing she-bear, watchful mother hen, attentive mother bird, the Bible tells us. God is also *like* such heavenly and earthly certitudes as light, cloud, rock, fire, water, and even life itself. Some of the human professions can be employed to describe what would otherwise be indescribable: laundress, construction worker, potter, fisherman, midwife, merchant, physician, baker woman, teacher, writer, artist, nurse, metal worker, homemaker.

See Elizabeth A. Johnson, She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Discourse (New York: Crossroad, 1992), 118.

What biblical citations can you think of for the analogies just mentioned?

What are the appropriate limits to be placed upon the use of analogy? For example, if you visit the ocean on a stormy weekend, and see a lighthouse in the distance, you may compare God to a lighthouse. But could you compare God to a shipwreck? Why not?

To speak of God through the use of analogy is valuable for several reasons:

Refer to Resource 3-3 in the Student Guide.

- Analogies connect what is otherwise vague and abstract with the real world of human experience and knowing.
- Analogies are not forever. They take their meaning from the surrounding culture of meaning. Hence new situations and new occasions may well call forth fresh ways of addressing God analogically.
- Analogies are important for the missional work of the Christian church, because they allow the traditional and often timeless statements about God to be restated in fresh and relevant ways. But as we suggested above, there are limits as to what is appropriate. Jesus Christ is the *Lamb of God*, but this cannot be translated into the "pig of God" just because a given culture favors pigs over lambs. Pigs are not lambs, and lambs are not pigs.

 Analogies are also appropriate for every level of Christian education. To tell a primary learner that Jesus is just like your best friend invites the immediate comparison between the friend, who is known, and Jesus, who is now known according to how the best friend is known.

As a way of helping students to comprehend and illustrate the important differences of univocal, equivocal, and analogical speech about God, ask each student to give examples of physical objects that illustrate the differences represented by these three concepts.

Focus especially on the analogical, asking each student to name a physical object that (for the student at least) answers the question, "What is God like?"

You might list the items on a marker board or overhead.

Example: In the Bronx Zoo, there used to be a cage that had the foreboding warning, "Most dangerous animal known to man." What do you suppose was inside of the cage? Why, of course, it was a mirror! Man is the most dangerous animal known to man!

Someone could name a mirror to the class and say that its reflection was an accurate knowing of God, since humans are created in the image of God.

Recall that Karl Barth said we cannot speak of God simply by speaking of the human in a loud voice. Barth would not believe a mirror to be an appropriate vehicle for speaking about God. A mirror to represent God would be an example of univocal speech about God, because it attempts to recast God in human form.

Refer to Resource 3-4 in the Student Guide.

One Analogy That May Not Work, and Two That Do Work

Barth, a Reformed theologian from Switzerland, said the one reason he could never become a Roman Catholic was because of the *analogia entis*, or the analogy of being. Roughly speaking, the analogy of being says there is a chain of being that is unbroken from the Triune God through celestial beings such as angels, through human beings, through the animal kingdom, perhaps ending with lower life forms such as

insects. While Barth appreciated the sovereignty and majesty of God, he feared the belief in an unbroken chain between the divine and the human might in the end mean there was nothing separating us from God, no original or actual sin, and hence no need for Jesus Christ as *Mediator*.

Barth preferred two other analogies, the analogy of faith, analogia fides, or the analogy of relations, analogia relationalis. We know God through faith, through relating to Him through His Son Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit, and these two analogies make this valuable point.

For the Wesleyan tradition, relationality is a theological key. The relationship between God and humankind is not a relationship between equals, but a relationship of grace, where God willingly gives of himself to humanity. The divine offering of grace enables a human response of faith.

Question

Give the students a minute to write out their question.

Write out your response to the following:

If time permits, the instructor can read each question aloud and try to answer the "most asked" questions. The instructor can work with all class members to come to If I could ask one question at this point, it would be

Small-Group Activity: God Speaks about Himself: The Reality of Revelation

(20 minutes)

We have already been introduced to the idea of revelation in the opening lesson. There are some words in our everyday speech that take on new urgency when we use them in theological speech. Some obvious examples are love, faith, mercy, grace, sin, salvation, and even *truth* itself.

Among these theological words, revelation perhaps has a place of privilege as the single most important. Like the idea of God, the idea of revelation inevitably filters down and influences one's entire theological outlook, whether or not one is consciously aware of this dynamic.

Some psychologists speak of the "aha" experience. Women (and some men) speak of women's intuition. A perceptive person may be said to have a sixth sense. Young people in love thrive on the "chemistry" that

bonds them together. Do these various impulses, urges, and expectations have anything to do with Christian revelation?

Jaroslav Pelikan offers some helpful background information on the reality of revelation. He indicates some of the possible meanings we may attach to revelation.

Refer to Resource 3-5 in the Student Guide.

- "The disclosure of the hidden future." This is suggested by the Greek word apokalypsis, which means "revelation."
- Revelation as event, which is grounded in the covenant theology of the Old Testament and taken up by Christian theology.
- The chief revelatory event for Christians is the Incarnation, meaning that now revelation is to be found in a person, Jesus Christ.
- Revelation as doctrine, for example 1 Timothy 6:20, "Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to you" (in some versions "the deposit of faith").

Pelikan also indicates the centrality of revelation for all of theology:

The doctrine of revelation is not simply one doctrine among others, but a doctrine by which every other doctrine may be said to stand or fall. If the claim to divine revelation is groundless, the entire fabric of Christian belief and life will have to be called fundamentally into question.

The Melody of Theology, 205-9.

Divide the class into groups of three to work on Resource 3-6.

They should have at least 15 minutes to work on the Study Guide. Remind them to not spend too much time on just one of the questions.

Refer to Resource 3-6 in the Student Guide.

Pelikan's Four Points Study Guide

- 1. Which of these four examples of defining revelation is best understood by the average Christian layperson?
- Write the outline of a parable expressing the truth of revelation as found in one of Pelikan's definitions. You may recall some of the parables of Jesus Christ as the truths they were meant to impart.
- 3. Contrast Christian revelation with ideas in the broader culture that pose themselves as "revelatory" in quality and nature. Some obvious "false" revelations would be psychics and the new age movement. But what of talk show hosts? Are

they selling their own special brand of revelation? What about the entire American consumer culture? How much advertising is predicated on "revelation"?

- 4. What are the implications of Christian revelation for the devotional life?
- 5. How does this information instruct my intellectual life? How is the "knowing" of revelation different from, and related to, any other sort of knowing?
- 6. In what ways does what we have studied inform the practice of the Christian ministry?
- 7. What are the implications for Christian worship?
- 8. If we truly believe God is in many ways hidden, transcendent, and unknowable, then why are there so many books, tapes, workshops, and traveling seminars that promise "Five Easy Steps to Divine Intimacy"?

Lecture: Two Customary Ways of Speaking of Revelation

(5 minutes)

General and Special Revelation

Refer to Resource 3-7 in the Student Guide.

In theological textbooks it is often traditional to make a twofold distinction regarding revelation. There is first of all *general revelation*, to which the Apostle Paul bears witness in Romans 1: "Ever since the creation of the world [God's] eternal power and divine nature, invisible though they are, have been understood and seen through the things he has made."

General revelation, then, is that revelation which God has sown in the created world, in moral order, in human conscience, in the patterns of history that prove that God loves and cares for the world, in the sense of beauty that sometimes overtakes all but the most jaded and cynical.

A centering concept of Wesleyan theology is of course prevenient grace, and it is related in some ways to general revelation. Both of these are bestowed upon all people, for their own good. Both of these can move the receptive heart closer to God, although neither general revelation nor prevenient grace is coercive in the sense of God's canceling or suspending human freedom.

Just as prevenient grace is designed to lead one to justifying grace and sanctifying grace, general revelation is designed by God to lead one to the more specific revelation, called *special revelation*.

Special revelation is closely tied to the biblical history of creation and redemption, which begins with God's calling the world forth into being out of nothing.

The chosen people of Israel are the special focus of God's concern throughout the Hebrew Scriptures, and the Anointed One of God, Jesus Christ, is the perfection and culmination of all revelation.

The veteran Nazarene theologian H. Ray Dunning stresses the importance of special revelation as follows:

The Christian faith understands itself to be a response to a divine self-disclosure. It claims that God has made himself known in a preliminary way in a history recorded in the sacred writings known as the Old Testament and in a final and decisive way in the person and work of Jesus of Nazareth. Revelation, the doctrine of this divine self-disclosure, is the central methodological category of Christian theology.

See Grace, Faith, and Holiness, 97.

There is nothing magic about these two words: *general* and *special* revelation. Newer works of theology seem not as interested in using these terms, perhaps because they are just too vague. The meanings of "general" and "special" perhaps cannot be easily standardized. They sway and shift too much with the context.

Another twofold distinction often applied to revelation is perhaps more meaningful, because it seems to make good intuitive sense. Both of these explanations of revelation can be easily demonstrated in our everyday Christian lives.

Propositional Revelation and Experiential Revelation

First of all, as was hinted at before, there is *revelation* as doctrine. If Jesus Christ is the Eternal Word of God the Father, then the witness to this Eternal Word can itself take the form of carefully chosen words, or doctrine. This view is also known as *propositional* revelation. The American Fundamentalists of the 1920s believed in propositional revelation. Five or six propositions comprised the center of Christian theology, and everything else had to be understood in terms of this list.

- the inerrancy of the Bible
- the deity of Jesus Christ

- the virgin birth of Christ
- the substitutionary atonement for sins
- the miracles of Christ
- the literal Second Coming

Nazarenes obviously affirm all of these six principles, although the *Manual* statement about the Holy Scriptures, Article IV, limits inerrancy to what is relevant to our salvation, something the Fundamentalists were *not* willing to do. Nazarenes believe the Bible "inerrantly [reveals] the will of God concerning us in all things necessary to our salvation," whereas Fundamentalists expand the definition of inerrant to cover any conceivable error that might be contained in the Bible.

Revelation as encounter, which might also be called experiential revelation, is often contrasted with propositional revelation. Those who hold to this idea say, with much plausibility, that God does not reveal merely words or propositions about himself, but reveals His very essence, His inner self, the Triune God. Just as the mystery of one's spouse deepens over the course of a long marriage, so also does God's mystery deepen through knowing Him. The flavor of this approach is well captured by the Roman Catholic theologian Karl Rahner: "Revelation is not the bringing of what was once unknown into the region of what is known, perspicuous [clear] and manageable: it is the dawn and the approach of mystery as such."

From Theological Investigations, Vol. 4, More Recent Writings (New York: Crossroad, 1982), 330.

Lecture: Jesus Christ, the Father's True Word

(5 minutes)

This lecture stresses that God's pouring forth of Himself in Jesus Christ is totally adequate for our knowing of God.

The Apostle Paul testified, "in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, and you have been given fullness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority" (Col 2:9-10). In Jesus Christ we come truly to know "the mystery of God," because in Christ "are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Col 2:3).

Among recent theologians, perhaps none has had the Christological power and focus of Karl Barth. Importantly, he wrote:

Refer to Resource 3-8 in the Student Guide.

Theology must begin with Jesus Christ, and not with general principles, however better, or, at any rate, more relevant and illuminating, they may appear to be: as though He were a continuation of the knowledge and Word of God, and not its root and origin, not indeed the very Word of God itself. Theology must also end with Him, and not with

From Church Dogmatics: A Selection (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), 87-88.

supposedly self-evident general conclusions about what is particularly enclosed and disclosed in Him: as though the fruits could be shaken from this tree; as though in the things of God there were anything general which we could know and designate in addition to and even independently of this particular. The obscurities and ambiguities of our way were illuminated in the measure we held fast to that name and in the measure that we let Him be the first and the last, according to the testimony of Holy Scripture. Against all the imaginations and errors in which we seem to be so hopelessly entangled when we try to speak of God, God will indeed maintain Himself if we only allow the name of Jesus Christ to be maintained in our thinking as the beginning and the end of all our thoughts.

This statement from the great theologian, if taken for all it is worth, may cause us to qualify, even severely, much of what we have already said in this lesson on revelation.

Barth seems to throw out the typical distinction between **general revelation** and **special revelation** made by so many theologians. For Karl Barth, Jesus Christ is not only the fruits from the tree, but He is the tree itself! Furthermore, Barth doubts anything **general** can be known apart from the **particular revelation** of God in Jesus Christ. Some of Barth's critics used the term "revelation-positivism" to describe what they took to be a narrow and constricting view of revelation, namely, that *only* in Jesus Christ can God be known.

While this position was typical of the early writings of Karl Barth in the 1920s and 1930s, by the time of his 1956 address to Swiss Reformed pastors, "The Humanity of God," his views had moderated somewhat. Barth still clung tenaciously to the fact that Jesus Christ is the primal revelation of God the Father, but the God whom Jesus Christ revealed was now less distant, less foreboding, and now more accessible, even human, as the title of his address states. For example, "It would be the false deity of a false God if in His deity His humanity did not also immediately encounter us. Such false deities are by Jesus Christ once for all made a laughingstock. In Him the fact is once for all established that God does not exist without man."

From Karl Barth, The Humanity of God (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1960), 50.

Barth's breakthrough argued that uniquely present in Jesus Christ one finds *both* the truly divine *and* the really human: "In Jesus Christ there is no isolation of

Ibid., 46.

man from God or of God from man." Here is Barth's marvelous summary statement:

He is the Lord humbled for communion with man and likewise the Servant exalted to communion with God. He is the Word spoken from the loftiest, most luminous transcendence and likewise the Word heard in the deepest, darkest immanence. He is both, without their being confused but also without their being divided; He is wholly the one and wholly the other. Thus in this oneness Jesus Christ is the Mediator, the Reconciler, between God and man. Thus He comes forward to man on behalf of God calling for and awakening faith, love, and hope, and to God on behalf of man, representing man, making satisfaction and interceding. Thus He attests and guarantees to man God's free grace and at the same time attests and guarantees to God man's free gratitude.

Ibid., 46-47.

Notice how Barth ascribes to Jesus Christ *both* "luminous transcendence" and "darkest immanence." In his early theological years, Barth was more inclined to speak of transcendence (God as "Wholly Other") and somewhat less interested in immanence.

Class Worship: Worship of the Majestic God

(20 minutes)

The instructor should facilitate a short worship interlude, but the participation should rest with the students. Students need practice in reading Scripture, leading in singing, and offering devotional thoughts.

Assign certain students to read the following scriptures:

- Romans 11:33-36
- Ephesians 3:8-21
- Isaiah 40:13-18
- Psalm 93:1-5
- Job 9:4-12
- Isaiah 6:1-7

Assign the following hymns to be led by students. In whole or in part, from Ken Bible, ed., Sing to the Lord, (Kansas City: Lillenas Publishing Co., 1993).

- "Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise," No. 65
- "Thanks to God Whose Word Was Spoken." No. 686
- "How Majestic Is Your Name," No. 71

You may ask one or two students to give a devotional thought.

End with the prayer of St. Augustine, Resource 3-9 in the Student Guide. "GOD, always the same, let me know myself, let me know you. I have prayed. . . .

"God our Father who exhorts us to pray, who makes it possible for us to pray, our entreaty is made to you, for when we pray to you we live better and we are better.

From The Macmillan Book of Earliest Christian Prayers, ed. F. Forrester Church and Terrence J. Mulry (New York: Macmillan, 1988), 236-7.

"Hear me groping in these glooms, and stretch forth your right hand to me. Shed your light on me, call me back from my wanderings. Bring yourself into me so that I may in the same way return to you. Amen."

Lesson Close

(10 minutes)

Review

Call on different students to define words or phrases used in this lesson. Words that were used in this lesson include:

- Univocal
- Analogical
- Revelation as encounter
- Propositional revelation
- Analogia entis
- General revelation
- Special revelation
- Analogia fides

Look Ahead

Next time we will explore five theological models of revelation: Revelation as doctrine, as history, as inner experience, as dialectical presence, and as new awareness.

Assign Homework

Direct students to the Homework Assignments in the Student Guide.

Research/Writing

Find eight or ten sentences/statements containing the word "revelation." These sentences should **not** be taken from books of Christian theology, but rather from general media sources such as magazines, the Internet, advertising, newspapers, television, and so forth. Once the sentences have been collected, analyze the various uses of "revelation" uncovered, showing agreement and disagreement with the Christian view of revelation.

Journal Prompt

Go to a favorite spot of natural or scenic beauty, a wayside, a park, a stream. Look around you. Do you see the hand of God there?

Punctuate the Finish

From The Imitation of Christ, trans. Leo Sherley-Price (London: Penguin, 1952), 27.

"Of what use is it to discourse learnedly on the Trinity, if you lack humility and displease the Trinity?"

--Thomas à Kempis

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Lesson 4

Five Theological Models of Revelation

Lesson Overview

Schedule

Start Time	Task or Topic	Learning Activity	Materials Needed
0:00	Introduction	Orient	Student Guide
0:05	Focus on Revelation	Lecture/Discussion	Resource 4-1
	as Doctrine and		Resource 4-2
	Revelation as History		
0:30	Focus on Revelation	Lecture/Discussion	Resource 4-3
	as Inner Experience,		Resource 4-4
	Revelation as		Resource 4-5
	Dialectical Presence,		
	and Revelation as		
	New Awareness		
0:55	Jesus Christ—the	Lecture/Activity	Hymnal
	Answer to Every		Resource 4-6
	Question Posed by the		
	Doctrine of Revelation		
1:05	Evaluating the Five	Evaluation	Resource 4-7
	Models of Revelation		
1:25	Lesson Close	Review, Assign	Student Guide

Suggested Reading for Instructor

Consult the Suggested Reading in Lesson 3.

Lesson Introduction

(5 minutes)

Accountability

Have students pair with another student to exchange and read their homework.

Return and collect all homework.

Motivator

Through the centuries personal experiences of divine revelation have been marked by several shared traits or commonalities. These include a sudden encounter with the Holy, a shining light, a feeling of self-abasement, humility, shame, even terror in the presence of the Divine, or the receiving of new truth or insight into the nature of God. But there is something else in that repeating pattern of revelation experiences. That is a call, a commission, a task, a mission.

When Moses put his sandals back on after the "holy ground and burning bush" experience, God instructed him to work toward freeing his people. When Isaiah saw God "high and lifted up" he cried out, "Here am I; send me." After Saul was dazzled blind on the road to Damascus he shouldered a commission to win the Gentile world for Christ.

Is that not your story also? When God came to you in saving grace, did He not call you to minister in His name—as pastor, evangelist, or teacher? Let us prepare not only to see the light and to embrace new insights, but also to accept the challenge of service.

Learner Objectives

Instruct students to locate objectives in the Student Guide.

Restating the objectives for the learners serves as an advanced organizer for the lesson and alerts learners to key information and concepts.

To help students

- understand the five basic views of revelation
- appreciate the centrality of the doctrine of revelation for all of Christian theology
- evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of revelation when viewed in terms of Scripture, tradition, reason, and experience, which necessarily includes personal experience

Lesson Body

Lecture/Discussion: Focus on Revelation as Doctrine and Revelation as History

(25 minutes)

(Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1983).

Refer to Resource 4-1 in the Student Guide.

From The God Who Is There (Chicago: InterVarsity Press, 1968), 93.

From God, Revelation, and Authority, Vol. 3 (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1976-83), 487. Avery Dulles, a Roman Catholic theologian whose writings have often been studied with approval by evangelical Christians (for example Thomas C. Oden), advanced five basic approaches to revelation in his book *Models of Revelation*. Let us briefly survey some of Dulles's central arguments. Some of his models overlap with some of what we have previously discussed. This is fine, because learning moves ahead by overlap and repetition.

Revelation as Doctrine

This position is the same as *propositional revelation*, discussed before. Francis Schaeffer represents this perspective when he writes, "God has spoken in a linguistic propositional form, truth concerning himself and truth concerning man, history, and the universe." Faith would then be mental and moral assent to the propositions that can be clearly "mined" from the Bible. Carl Henry warns that to stray from this view of faith is to leave Christianity behind. "Faith divorced from assent to propositions," Henry claims, "may for a season be exuberantly championed as Christian faith, but sooner or later it must become apparent that such mystical exercises are neither identifiably Christian nor akin to authentic belief."

Mystical exercises? In the second module of Christian Theology there may be more discussion of the various meanings of "mystical." Henry is clearly opposed to mysticism, at least as he understands it. Yet to be "in Christ," as Paul viewed it, may be considered one way of mystical expression. What separates true from false mysticism is whether or not it points to knowing Jesus Christ.

Advantages of the revelation as doctrine approach are chiefly these:

 Those who live their Christian lives according to this plan have a clear and distinct sense of where they stand as Christians. Most if not all ambiguity, perplexity, and confusion are swept away, leaving only the clear and piercing light of Christian truth.

- Likewise, someone who is schooled in this approach to revelation will be able to give a clear and convincing account of his or her Christian faith.
 Propositional revelation is a powerful tool for Christian apologetics.
- Because all are clear as to where they stand, a lively sense of mission and outreach is fostered.

Weaknesses include:

- Does the Bible make any self-sustaining claims of propositional infallibility? In other words, is the revelation as doctrine model even supported in the Bible?
- This model is highly authoritarian. It is based on Thus Saith the Lord rather than on Come, Let Us Reason Together.
- In communications as a whole, propositions ordinarily play a rather minor role.
- God really reveals not propositions, but rather *himself*.
- This model of revelation does not promote "dialogue" with other religions, and not even with other Christians who are not convinced of the truth of propositional revelation.

Revelation as History

The main contrast with the preceding view is that here revelation means the "mighty acts" through which God reveals himself in history. Scottish theologian John Baillie wrote in 1956, "God reveals himself in action—in the gracious activity by which he invades the field of human experience and human history which is otherwise a vain show, empty and drained of meaning." Another advocate of this approach, the biblical theologian G. Ernest Wright, wrote, "the primary means by which God communicates with man is by his acts, which are the events of history."

Advent, Christmas, and Holy Week may lend themselves to this outlook. For example, noted worship theologian Robert Webber writes in reference to Advent:

To be serious about the Christian faith is to be serious about its history. To be sensitive to the history of God's people is to be responsive to the

Refer to Resource 4-2 in the Student Guide.

From The Idea of Revelation in Recent Thought New York: Columbia University Press, 1956), 49-50.

From The God Who Acts: Biblical Theology as Recital (London: SCM Press, 1952), 107.

From The Complete Library of Christian Worship, Vol. 5, The Services of the Christian Year, ed. Robert E. Webber (Nashville: Star Song, 1994), 107. movement of time. The God 'in whom we live, and move, and have our being' is made known to us and interacts with us in history. In certain dynamic moments, God invades our time and our history, and affords us a divine-human encounter, a glimpse, a momentary revelation. The ultimate act of God's invasion into history is Jesus Christ—incarnate, crucified, dead, risen, ascended, and coming again.

Discussion opportunity

One word used by both Webber and Baillie is "invade." Is this a suitable way to describe the general pattern of God's relating to the world?

Is there a better word that carries the same impact and seriousness, while perhaps avoiding some of the negative connotations of "invade"?

As the Church of the Nazarene approaches its centennial observance, God's gracious shaping of and even intervening in history are not to be forgotten or downplayed.

For some people, perhaps, it is almost easier to document and show the *absence* of God in human history rather than God's dynamic *presence*. Much good came in the *aftermath* of the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks in New York City and Washington, D.C., but no one would say that God was *present* in the attacks themselves. One of the common criticisms leveled at the revelation as history paradigm is that it is very difficult to define and describe with any accuracy exactly *what is* an "act of God." Hurricanes, earthquakes, and lightning storms may be defined as "acts of God" by the insurance industry, but are they really?

Strengths of revelation as history would be:

- The Bible seems to depict a God who acts, first of all in the history of Israel, and in the fullness of time in His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ. This way of understanding the Bible is sometimes called the *Heilsgeschichte* approach, a German compound word meaning "holy history," or (better) "the history of salvation."
- God is a God who acts, who willingly engages people where they need Him the most, in their respective histories.

 Not only does God act, but also in the Bible God consistently acts on behalf of the poor, a point picked up today by liberation theologians.

Weaknesses:

- As suggested, it is very difficult to determine exactly what is an act of God.
- Should "event" be elevated over "word" in the Bible? The Incarnation is the "Word made flesh." In the Old Testament Israel was often reminded to "Hear, O Israel."
- Much of what is found in the Bible is not really historical material at all; for example, the Wisdom literature.
- Although there is history in the Bible, the consistent viewing of things through the lens of history has only been possible since the rise of "historical consciousness," which is barely two hundred years old. Earlier periods in the history of the Church may not have used history as a means of interpretation. For example, James Barr has written, "it is certain that our forefathers, emphatically as they understood that Christian faith was implanted in earthly reality, in space and time, flesh and blood, were able to do this without accepting 'history' as an organizing bracket in their theology at all."

From "Revelation Through History in the Old Testament and in Modern Theology," in New Theology, No. 1, ed. Martin E. Marty and Dean Peerman (New York: Macmillan, 1964), 72.

Guided Discussion

Let us say there is a pastor who believes in revelation as doctrine. This pastor is going to preach a sermon on "Becoming a Christian." What will the main points of this sermon be?

They might be any of the following: Creation, Incarnation, Crucifixion, and Resurrection.

Let us imagine a theologian or other Christian teacher is going to prepare a short book on the subject of "The Mighty Acts of God." What would be the subjects of the first three chapters?

One pastor believes strongly in revelation as doctrine while a second one holds to the revelation as history persuasion. Given these two orientations, which pastor is likely to be the most interested in debating the Bible's inerrancy? Which is most likely to believe the Scripture gives infallible propositions?

Which of the two pastors in might be more likely to raise more money for evangelistic missions?

How would one's ecclesiology (doctrine of the Church) be affected by one's perception of revelation?

Lecture/Discussion: Focus on Revelation as Inner Experience, Revelation as Dialectical Presence, and Revelation as New Awareness

(25 minutes)

Refer to Resource 4-3 in the Student Guide.

From A. Sabatier, Outlines of a Philosophy of Religion Based on Psychology and History (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1987), 34.

From On Religion: Speeches to Its Cultured Despisers (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1958), 90.

Revelation as Inner Experience

Revelation as doctrine and revelation as history located revelation as something "out there" given to the world by God, whether through God's Word (doctrine) or God's activity (history).

Revelation as inner experience is more concerned with the *reception* of revelation than with the *giving* of revelation. We have all had the experience of giving someone a gift, seeing the visible appreciation on the face of the recipient, and then later wondering to ourselves, What did she really think? Did she truly appreciate the gift, or was it only show?

Here we are more interested in the interior state of the recipient than on the gift itself. For example, it has been said, "religion is simply the subjective revelation of God in man, and revelation is religion objective in God." Or again, "A revelation of God is found wherever a real religion is found."

Advocates of this position may distinguish between *faith*, wherein one gives all of oneself to God in totality, and *belief*, which means an only intellectual assent to doctrines.

In fact those who see revelation as inner experience doubt there are any revealed doctrines. Belief in a revealed doctrine costs one nothing in terms of commitment and life orientation. It is faith that matters. Friedrich Schleiermacher discounted mere belief using these words: "Belief, which is to accept what another has said or done, or to wish to think and feel as another has thought and felt, is a hard and base service" that is far removed from a true grasp of God.

How then can we tell whether revelation is authentic? The only answer must be the *quality* of the inner experience itself. *Quality* might be judged in several ways: one's openness to God, one's reverential attitude, one's service to others, one's love for family and others.

Advantages of viewing revelation as inner experience include:

- It promotes the devotional life.
- It may lead the gifted to write poetry and hymn lyrics that edify the Body of Christ.
- It may further dialogue with other religions, because Christian religious experience may be similar in some ways to followers of other religions.

Weaknesses:

- It seems to assume that one is "spiritually gifted" in much the same way that some people have a "knack" for music, art, or the study of languages. But not everyone is religiously "musical" in exactly that way. This model may therefore be somewhat elitist and exclusive.
- Certainly there are instances in the Bible of "ecstasy" before God, but we must also remember that some of the prophets complained that they were deaf, dumb, and blind when it came to the knowledge of God.

Revelation as Dialectical Presence

Dialectics is a "call and response" to Christian theology and living. Presence implies that whatever the first apostles felt and believed when in the presence of Jesus Christ is also available to us today. "Each generation has the same original relation to revelation," is how Rudolf Bultmann summarized revelation as dialectical presence. He also said, "revelation encounters man in the word—in a word that sounds forth in his present."

Previously, we distinguished between propositional revelation and revelation as encounter. The encounter view of revelation agrees with the dialectical presence position. Both stress the *immediacy* of knowing God through human experience, including literature and politics. Revelation as inner experience is somewhat more reflective and contemplative—in some ways mystical—than is the dialectical approach. Christian existentialism has grown from the seeds of dialectical presence.

Whereas proponents of revelation as doctrine tend to view the Bible as itself being revelation, dialectical presence argues that the Bible is a *witness* to

Refer to Resource 4-4 in the Student Guide.

From Existence and Faith (New York: Meridian Books, 1960), 89.

Ibid., 79.

From Dogmatik des christlichen Glaubens, Vol. 1 (Tübingen: Mohr, 1979), 252.

revelation, which comes really and truly only in Jesus Christ. To receive revelation is at the same time to receive Jesus Christ, because they are one. The message of revelation brings with itself the message of salvation. Gerhard Ebeling, another proponent of this view, explains, "revelation, as an event that bears on the fellowship between God and man, does not consist merely in its happening to transmit a doctrine of salvation, but rather in its bringing God and man together and reconciling them."

The advantages of the dialectical presence view are:

- It has some foundation in the Bible, especially in the prophets and the "message about the cross" (1 Cor 1:18).
- Because this view of revelation centers in Jesus Christ, it gives new force and meaning to the subjects of sin and redemption.
- The emphasis on Word and Spirit may also lead to a renewed interest in the doctrine of the Trinity.
- It may lead to strong preaching, with its heavy emphasis on the Word of God made available in Jesus Christ.

A basic criticism of this persuasion would be:

The stress on Jesus Christ is to be praised, but this
may lead to what is sometimes called
"Christomonism," meaning revelation is nowhere
found but in Jesus Christ. This seems like an
extreme position, which may work against the idea
of general revelation, wherein God is known
through nature, creation, art, beauty, history,
politics, family life, and so forth.

Revelation as New Awareness

Refer to Resource 4-5 in the Student Guide.

The Star Trek TV series and movies are examples of this model.

This model is close to revelation as inner experience, although that idea is here expanded and "radicalized." "New awareness" means cosmic consciousness in ways that mere inner experience does not. To be in the company of new awareness is also to appreciate the unity of all world religions. Many commentators, Christian and otherwise, believe a common core of revelation is at the base of all of the world's great faith traditions, that by definition cannot be known completely. Each religion understands this common

core of revelation only partially, and bears a partial witness to the unknowable whole.

This view also affirms the validity of human evolution. As the human species evolves, new vistas and horizons of revelatory potential open up before us. The nagging reality of human sin and deception may be downplayed.

Discussion

Divide the class into groups of three. Assign one person to revelation as inner experience, another to revelation as dialectical presence and the third to revelation as new awareness.

Each person will have one minute to tell the others in their group what they learned about their assigned topic.

If there is time, have all the students with the same topic group together to share ideas.

Summarizing the Five Models

In the carefully chosen words of Avery Dulles, here are summary statements of all five of the models we have discussed:

Refer to Resource 4-5 in the Student Guide.

- Revelation is the divinely authoritative doctrine inerrantly proposed as God's word by the Bible or by official church teaching.
- Revelation is the manifestation of God's saving power by His great deeds in history.
- Revelation is the self-manifestation of God by His intimate presence in the depths of the human spirit.
- Revelation is God's address to those whom He encounters with His word in Scripture and Christian proclamation.
- Revelation is a breakthrough to a higher level of consciousness as humanity is drawn to a fuller participation in the divine creativity.

From Models of Revelation, 115.

Lecture/Activity: Jesus Christ—the Answer to Every Question Posed by the Doctrine of Revelation

(10 minutes)

Theologians often say of Jesus Christ that He is the *final* revelation of God. That can only mean that no definitive revelation of God can come after Jesus Christ. There may be other figures who claim to have made known the mystery of God, but all such claims must be judged, sifted, evaluated, and scrutinized through the lens of the One universally acknowledged as God's final revelation: Jesus Christ.

At least four of the five models of revelation we have surveyed identify themselves overtly or implicitly with this claim. Only in the case of revelation as new awareness is there a weakening of this cardinal claim, because "new awareness" may soon become vague and diffuse without definite Christological content.

But in one way or another, the other four hold high the truth of John's affirmation, "The Word became flesh and lived for a while among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth" (Jn 1:14).

For a class exercise assign some of the Resource 4-6 hymns to individual students. There is insufficient time for each student to review every hymn. Have students report their findings to the whole group. Page references are to Sing to the Lord. The Church's central teaching about Jesus Christ is necessarily found in its trove of classic hymns. Locate the hymns from Resource 4-6 in *Sing to the Lord*.

What evidence do you find in each hymn for revelation as doctrine, revelation as history, revelation as inner experience, revelation as dialectical presence?

Evaluating the Five Models of Revelation

(20 minutes)

Refer to Resource 4-7 in the Student Guide.

Allow the students about 10 minutes to complete Resource 4-7 in the Student Guide.

Call on students to share responses.

You have now studied the strengths and weaknesses of five models of revelation. Consider these five once again in terms of what you know of Scripture, reason, tradition, and experience—including your own personal experience. Having evaluated these models, you are now asked to rank them according to your personal choice, as to how they match up with the Wesleyan Quadrilateral of Scripture, reason, tradition, and experience. Rank the five from one to five, with ONE being the greatest agreement with the Wesleyan Quadrilateral and FIVE being the least agreement. Be prepared to explain and defend your ranking.

You may want to write out some of your reasons on the back of the resource page.

The Probable Stance of the Church of the Nazarene

Before sharing the opinion of the writer of the module as to which of these five models represent the Church of the Nazarene, the instructor should ask the same question of the students.

Where do Nazarenes typically fit in these five models?

Historically, the Church of the Nazarene has probably been a combination of the first and the third models Dulles discusses: revelation as doctrine (propositional revelation) and revelation as inner experience. Although officially the Church of the Nazarene is *not* a fundamentalist church, in practice it has often veered in that direction. Common sentiments such as "Heart Holiness" and "the Second Blessing" quite naturally lend themselves to the inner experience understanding of revelation.

The new awareness view would be too "liberal" for many Nazarenes. Noted Nazarene theologian J. Kenneth Grider was heavily influenced by Karl Barth, the chief figure behind the dialectical presence view. To the extent that Grider's teaching influenced Nazarene preachers during his lengthy tenure at Nazarene Theological Seminary, the dialectical presence view may be represented in some quarters. There may also be some pockets of the revelation as history paradigm.

Lesson Close

(5 minutes)

Review

Instruct students to locate objectives in the Student Guide.

Look at the learner objectives for this lesson. Did you

- understand the five basic views of revelation?
- appreciate the centrality of the doctrine of revelation for all of Christian theology?
- evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of revelation when viewed in terms of Scripture, tradition, reason, and experience, which necessarily includes personal experience?

Look Ahead

Our next lesson will be concerned with God as Creator.

Assign Homework

Direct students to the Homework Assignments in the Student Guide. The Models of Revelation

- Interview two Nazarene pastors. Explain to them
 the five models of revelation as best you are able.
 Ask each of them to say which of the five models is
 typical of the Church of the Nazarene, both laity
 and clergy.
- Write a three-page paper about the experience and the responses.

Journal Prompt

All Christians agree in one way or another that Jesus Christ reveals the truth about God. For you personally, how, why, and under what conditions does Christ reveal the reality of God?

Punctuate the Finish

No one has ever seen God, but God the only Son, Who is at the Father's side, Has made him known.

—John 1:18, NIV

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Lesson 5

Knowing God as Creator

Lesson Overview

Schedule

Start Time	Task or Topic	Learning Activity	Materials Needed
0:00	Introduction	Orient	Student Guide
			Resource 5-1
0:15	Bible Study About	Small-Group Activity	Resource 5-2
	Creation		
0:35	The Doctrine of	Lecture/Discussion	Resource 5-3
	Creation		Resource 5-4
1:00	Three Ways of	Lecture/Discussion	Resource 5-5
	Understanding the		
	Relation Between God		
	and the World		
1:20	Lesson Close	Review, Assign	Student Guide

Suggested Reading for Instructor

Dunning, H. Ray. "God the Creator." Chapter 8 in *Grace, Faith, and Holiness: A Wesleyan Systematic Theology.* Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1988, 234-71.

Grider, J. Kenneth. "The Christian Doctrine of Creation." Chapter 7 in *A Wesleyan-Holiness Theology*. Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1994, 160-83.

Johnson, James Weldon. "The Creation." In *Modern American Poetry*, ed. Louis Untermeyer. New York: Harcourt Brace and World, 1958, 149-51. Available at www.poets.org/poems.

- Lodahl, Michael. "The God Who Creates," and "The Universe as Creation." Chapters 5 and 6 in *The Story of God: Wesleyan Theology and Biblical Narrative*. Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1994, 51-66.
- Macquarrie, John. *Principles of Christian Theology.*Second edition, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1977, ch. 10.
- Purkiser, W. T., Richard S. Taylor, and Willard H. Taylor. "Creator and Father-King." Chapter 13 in *God, Man, and Salvation: A Biblical Theology.* Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1977, 226-38.
- Staples, Rob L. "Creation." In Words of Faith: An Easy Reference to Theological Terms. Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 2001, 27-28.

Note to Instructor

Some instructors may want to teach Lesson 7, which is about the qualities, traits, and attributes of God, before this Lesson 5. I have placed this lesson about what God does (which is obviously at the same time still an expression of who God is) before the one about God's attributes not only because of the political and moral turmoil flowing from September 11 but also because the Christian doctrine of creation is one of the chief apologetic arguments Christians can use against other spiritualities, including perhaps especially the New Age movement.

Lesson Introduction

(15 minutes)

Accountability

Have the students share the comments or reactions of those whom they interviewed.

Return and collect all homework.

Motivator

In the first lesson we stressed that all of Christian theology should have a *doxological* quality. Everything the theologian does should in one way or another praise and exalt the Triune God. We worship a God who is unseen, not made with human hands, yet who also has left ample testimony to His loving character in the world we have been given. Charles Wesley's wondrous hymn, "Love Divine, All Loves Excelling," not only testifies to the Three-in-One God but also points ahead in hope to the new creation that God is even now working within us and within our world. As we begin to understand the work of God in creating the world, it would be well to pause and reflect on a hymn that is surely among Wesley's finest.

Refer to Resource 5-1 in the Student Guide.

Love divine, all loves excelling,
Joy of heav'n, to earth come down!
Fix in us thy humble dwelling;
All thy faithful mercies crown.
Jesus, Thou art all compassion;
Pure, unbounded love Thou art,
Visit us with Thy salvation;
Enter ev'ry trembling heart.

Breathe, O breathe, Thy loving Spirit Into ev'ry troubled breast!
Let us all in Thee inherit
Let us find that second rest.
Take away our bent to sinning;
Alpha and Omega be.
End of faith, as its Beginning,
Set our hearts at liberty.

Come, Almighty to Deliver; Let us all Thy life receive. Suddenly return, and never, Nevermore Thy temples leave. From Sing to the Lord, ed. Ken Bible (Kansas City: Lillenas, 1993), 507. Words: Charles Wesley, Hymns for Those that Seek and Those that Have Redemption in the Blood of Jesus Christ, 1747. Music: 'Beecher,' John Zundel, Christian Hear Songs, 1870. Thee we would be always blessing, Serve Thee as Thy hosts above, Pray and praise Thee without ceasing, Glory in Thy perfect love.

Finish then Thy new creation;
Pure and spotless let us be.
Let us see Thy great salvation,
Perfectly restored in Thee;
Changed from glory into glory,
Till in heav'n we take our place,
Till we cast our crowns before Thee,
Lost in wonder, love, and praise.

Verse 1 is primarily about God the Son, verse 2 primarily about God the Spirit, and verse 3 brings us into the company of the Almighty, God the Father. The culmination of this glorious hymn is verse 4, where the Triune God is implored to finish His new creation, where all of God's creation will be perfectly restored in Him. Our anticipated response when we reach heaven, to be lost in wonder, love, and praise, is highly appropriate for everything the Christian does in the current age.

Orientation

Present the following materials. At the end of this presentation give guidance as to where the class is headed for the remainder of the session. In the weeks and months following the tragedies of September 11, 2001, many churches and even some civic organizations displayed religious and patriotic messages on their public signboards. My favorite among those I read said, simply and convincingly, "The Battle Belongs to the Lord." Many people were comforted by the expected language that "God Is Still in Control," in spite of appearances very much to the contrary. To say either of these things—the battle belongs to the Lord or God is still in control—is to engage in what might be called a theological approach to or interpretation of human history.

The God who is "in the beginning" is the same God who is "in the midst" and who can be counted on to be at "the end of all things." From first to last, the God who created all things imprints His creativity on the biblical record. The visionary who wrote Revelation knew that everything to which the Lord God lends breath must finally come to praise Him: You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created (Rev 4:11).

These time-inflected expressions, in the beginning, in the midst, at the end, all speak of God as Creator. The One who made us will not forsake us from beginning to end. The Christian doctrine of creation is the main theological expression of this vitally central truth.

Learner Objectives

Instruct students to locate objectives in the Student Guide.

Restating the objectives for the learners serves as an advanced organizer for the lesson and alerts learners to key information and concepts.

To help students

- value the centrality of God as Creator for the whole of Christian theology
- see the necessary connection between our thoughts about creation and other points of Christian theology
- become discerning observers of other worldviews, to evaluate and understand how they agree and disagree with Christian perspectives

Lesson Body

Small-Group Activity: Bible Study about Creation

(20 minutes)

Refer to Resource 5-2 in the Student Guide.

Divide the class into three groups. Assign each group one-third of the scripture references to explore.

After 10-15 minutes call the class together to share their findings.

Lecture/Discussion: The Doctrine of Creation: A Christian Consensus

(25 minutes)

The biblical doctrine of creation is of course found in Genesis, parts of Isaiah (called "Second" or "Deutero" by some scholars), and scattered elsewhere throughout the Scriptures.

Anne M. Clifford elegantly states the scope and intent of the understanding of creation:

The doctrine of creation expresses the belief that God is the origin, ground, and goal of the world and of everything in it. Creation is a fundamental belief from which flows much of what Christians profess about God, about the cosmos we inhabit, and about our destiny and hope. The doctrine of creation is shaped by presuppositions about God—fundamental beliefs that are difficult to conceptualize, and yet make a profound difference in how Christians view the world.

The following points represent a biblical understanding of creation:

Refer to Resource 5-3 in the Student Guide.

Anne M. Clifford, "Creation," in Systematic Theology: Roman

Catholic Perspectives, Volume I,

Augsburg/Fortress Press, 1991),

John P. Galvin (Minneapolis:

ed. Francis Schussler Fiorenza and

1. All that is, or could be, owes its existence to the sovereign God. The idea of creatio ex nihilo (creation out of nothing) is not explicitly found in Genesis, but does not violate the spirit of Genesis. Theologians have insisted that God formed the world out of nothing, from nothing other than His desire that there should be a world. God did not create the world out of some prior existing stuff, and not even out of His own divine nature. Although God did not create the world out of

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himself, the world obviously bears His divine imprint and stamp. To have created the world out of himself is conceivably to have created a rival for God, and God reigns supreme over the entire cosmos. God is a *creator* and not merely an *arranger* or *designer* of materials that were already there. In the very strictest sense, *only* God is capable of creating, at least, out of nothing, because *only* God is without limitations.

- 2. Creation is basically good, although evil soon perverts and ruins God's good world.
- 3. Because God created all things good, the presence of evil in the world does not count against God's goodness. There must be some other explanation (which we will consider in the next lesson).
- 4. Creation is the work of the entire Triune God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
- 5. The goal toward which creation is headed is expressed in the incarnation of Jesus Christ. In the New Testament, the reality of creation is broader than just the origins of all things. In the New Testament, the doctrine of creation is closely allied with the hope of redemption.
- 6. Therefore creation is the first link in the chain that is the Christian doctrine of redemption: *creation—covenant—salvation.*
- 7. Reconciliation should be thought of as occurring on a cosmic scale, enveloping thrones, powers, dominions, principalities, and authorities, and not merely individual souls. The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the firstfruits and ultimate promise for such cosmic reconciliation.

Three Final Points

- To speak of creation is to speak of far more than how things began, as we have said time and again.
 Creation says very directly that since God made the world, God will care for the world in sovereign love, seeing the world to the end of its final culmination.
- Therefore we must continually hold *creation* and *redemption* together. Isaiah 43:1 links creation and redemption together: "But now thus says the Lord, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel; Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine."

• All Christians can agree to care for the earth ecologically, if stopping short of worshiping the earth in the manner of many people today.

Discussion Opportunity

In the Old Town section (sometimes called Skid Row) of my home city of Portland, Oregon, I passed a rescue mission with 2 Corinthians 5:17 posted inside of the window on a crudely lettered placard: "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!" That scripture has obvious relevance for someone "down on his luck."

Allow students to respond.

To what other situations might this scripture have special meaning?

One of the last sermons John Wesley wrote, in 1785, took for its text Revelation 21:5, "Behold, I make all things new." Throughout this late sermon (Wesley died in 1791) Wesley displayed what Albert Outler calls "an optimism of grace rather than of nature." Outler further notes, "the aged Wesley returned again and again to his vision of cosmic redemption: the restoration of all creation, including the entire human family, as the final, full benefit of God's unbounded love." Here is how Wesley ended "The New Creation":

Refer to Resource 5-4 in the Student Guide.

As there will be no more death, and no more pain or sickness preparatory thereto; as there will be no more grieving for or parting with friends; so there will be no more sorrow or crying. Nay, but there will be a greater deliverance than all this; for there will be no more sin. And to crown all, there will be a deep, an intimate, an uninterrupted union with God; a constant communion with the Father and his Son Jesus Christ, through the Spirit; a continual enjoyment of the Three-[in]-One God, and of all the creatures in him!

From: "Sermon 64: The New Creation" in Works, Vol. 2, 500.

What is the difference in meaning between renewal and recreation?

Allow students to respond.

What are relevant examples of each of these?

Take the students back to the earlier mention of thrones, dominions, principalities, powers, and authorities.

The entrenched drug culture of the USA has sometimes been cited as an example of principalites.

Do you see it that way?

Have a student read Romans 8:18-25.

From this reading let's list five important points that these eight verses hold for the doctrine of creation.

Lecture/Discussion: Three Ways of Understanding the Relation between God and the World

(25 minutes)

Refer to Resource 5-5 in the Student Guide. Direct the students to make the "matches" as they listen to the lecture.

If God is a creator God, then Christian theology must say something about how God relates to the world He has created. Three views have emerged. Key words used in defining these three views are *immanence* and *transcendence*.

Immanence

This simply means God is present throughout the world He has made. In theological terms this is often described as "omnipresence." Theologian Thomas C. Oden calls omnipresence "God's way of being near," and comments that "no atomic particle is so small that God is not fully present to it, and no galaxy so vast that God does not circumscribe it. No space is without the divine presence. God is in touch with every part of creation. God cannot be excluded from any location or object in creation."

From Systematic Theology, Vol. 1, The Living God (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1987), 67.

Discussion Interlude

Can any of you give an example of the truth of the omnipresence of God in your own personal life?

Use this example to make the point relevant.

Many Nazarene pastors are called upon in the course of their ministries to go to places where they would prefer not to go: taverns, beer joints, roadhouses. They go there to "rescue the perishing."

If we believe in the omnipresence of God, is He to be found in such places? Is God found in a different way in a tavern than in a cathedral? If so, what is that difference?

To say that God is immanent in the world is simply to say that God makes himself present throughout all of the realms of creation. The immanence of God is sometimes expressed as the "divine empathy" of God, which in recent years has become a favorite theme of many theologians. Empathy means that God truly experiences the world's pain. God is no disinterested bystander.

From Models of God: Theology for an Ecological, Nuclear Age (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), 71.

Theologian Sallie McFaque believes that in this day we should look upon the entire world as God's body. She believes that instead of viewing resurrection as the rising again of particular bodies, starting with Jesus of Nazareth, we should view resurrection "as God's promise to be with us always in God's body, our world." She points out that there is much "body language" in Christian tradition. Christians are comfortable speaking about the resurrection of the body, the body and blood of Christ as symbolized in the elements of the Lord's Supper, and the Church as the body of Christ. She suggests, though, that "there is a difference between the traditional uses of 'body' and seeing the world as God's body: when the world is viewed as God's body, that body includes more than just Christians and more than just human beings."

McFague's views are one example of taking immanence to an extreme most evangelical Christians would find unacceptable. Her motives may be good and kind—to call us to be conscientious about all parts of God's creation, not just those parts we find easy to love and care for—but in the process she seems seriously to blur the distinction between God and the world. In fact, she seems to want to obliterate *any* boundary between God and the world.

This view would then be an example of *pantheism*, in which God and the world are seen as one. This point of view in general is characteristic of many eastern religions and philosophies, notably Hinduism, where monism (another word for pantheism) is held to be the cure for all of the problems caused by separating the world from God. Most New Age spirituality is also heavily pantheistic.

Transcendence

If immanence sounds the note of God's closeness to the world, which in an extreme view can lead to pantheism, then transcendence moves in the opposite direction, shouting out that God is "das ganz Andere," a German expression meaning that God is "wholly other," or entirely unlike humanity.

The story is told that a man arose to speak at a conference. Behind him was a banner proclaiming the motto of the conference: "God Is Other People." This sounded fine to him, because he truly believed we are called upon to love, regard, and respect those among whom we live.

But he thought it was bad theology, and so he took out a felt marker and put a comma after "Other," which of course changed the entire meaning of the sentence. Now he was exhorting his fellow conference goers to contemplate the austere and foreboding strangeness and otherness of the divine. The transcendence of God is exactly about stressing that God and mortals are unlike. Karl Barth stressed the "absolute qualitative distinction" between the divine and the human, something he had learned from Søren Kierkegaard.

The transcendence of God should be remembered in the planning and execution of Christian worship. God should not be "thinned out" to where He is just "my buddy" or my Sunday morning convenience. Much is at stake here. We all should review the opening verses of Isaiah chapter 6. However, absolute transcendence leads to a God who cannot be known, a God who is so pure as to be beyond human knowing, a God who is in fact not even concerned with human beings.

Even as exaggerated immanence leads to the distortion of pantheism, so also exaggerated transcendence may lead to what is sometimes called *deism*. Deism has often been described as the religion of the founding fathers of the American democracy: George Washington, James Madison, Benjamin Franklin, and Thomas Jefferson are all said to have been deists.

Deists typically believe in a Creator God, but not a sustaining or a providential God. Having set the laws of nature in motion, God as deists see Him does not need to watch over the world process as the world continues. Creating a good world and implanting this world with reliable rules of natural process is the most we can expect out of a deistic God. He cannot intervene in the world process. To do so would be a violation of His own nature. Hence deists do not believe in miracles. For the deist, the highest expression of the Christian faith is to live a morally upright and respectable life. Deists tend to be horrified by such central teachings of the Christian faith as the crucified Jesus Christ, because they do not like their religion to be bloody. The Crucifixion could be seen as a vengeful God the Father victimizing a hapless God the Son, and the deist would want no part of that.

Theism: The Balance of Immanence and Transcendence

Much of Christian theology is trying to strike a meaningful balance between two extremes, keeping what may be of lasting value in the extreme positions, while not being seduced and overwhelmed by their dangers and distortions.

Theism balances immanence and transcendence. Following immanence, God is present in the world process and cares deeply for the world's suffering, yet is not absorbed by the world or swallowed by the world. Pantheists have sometimes been described as "drunk on the divine." The theist is mindful of God's real presence in the world and its circumstances, but is aware that the Creator God remains sovereign over His creation and cannot be reduced to anything observable by finite human senses.

Theism recognizes the real truth of those who preach God's transcendence, yet cannot believe God is aloof from and unconcerned with our everyday trials, as an extreme transcendence claims.

In Lesson 1, we spoke some of how we approach God via the way of analogy. The use of analogy may help us to understand theism. *Is the God of theism like a judge? a ruler? a warrior? a hunter? a fisher? a nurse? a mother? a father?*

One helpful comparison that illustrates much about how theism views God is to compare God to an artist. This could be a painter or could even be a novelist or conceivably a film director.

The painter is surely *transcendent* over his or her work. He or she sketches, imagines, ponders, figures, before he or she even begins to paint. We can only imagine if the Triune God planned the world prior to His creation of the world. The painter has some measure of control over how the painting will turn out. He or she can paint over, change colors, change perspective, change focus.

No painter succeeds without pouring his or her very soul into every work of art produced. This is *immanence* on display, the creative involvement of the painter *within his or her work*. We will have more to say about the God of theism in subsequent lessons.

Lesson Close

(10 minutes)

Review

If students have not fully comprehended the differences and similarities of immanence, transcendence, and theism, here is the time to be certain the students comprehend the material.

Let's look at Resource 5-5 and look at the responses you gave.

Look Ahead

Next lesson we will look more closely at evil, science, and religion.

Assign Homework

Direct students to the Homework Assignments in the Student Guide.

Hymn Study

- Find "This Is My Father's World" (p. 75 in *Sing to the Lord*) and "Stewards of God's Creation" (p. 76 in *Sing to the Lord*).
- Write a 2- to 3-page essay demonstrating how both God's immanence and transcendence can be found in these two selections.

Journal Prompt

- Reflect on the phrase or verse from one of the two hymns that stood out to you.
- How have events in your past influenced your understanding of God as Creator?

Punctuate the Finish

Share a copy of James Weldon Johnson's narrative poem-sermon "The Creation," listed in the 'Suggested Reading for Instructor' section.

This poem is available on the Internet at www.poets.org/poems.

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Lesson 6

What Kind of a World Is It?

Lesson Overview

Schedule

Start Time	Task or Topic	Learning Activity	Materials Needed
0:00	Introduction	Orient	Student Guide
0:05	A Perfectly Good God, Yet a Nagging Evil	Lecture/Discussion	Resources 6-1—6-10
1:05	Science and Religion	Lecture	Resource 6-11 Resource 6-12
1:25	Lesson Close	Review, Assign	Student Guide

Suggested Reading for Instructor

Birnbaum, David. *God and Evil: A Unified Theodicy/ Theology/Philosophy.* Hoboken, NJ: Ktav Publishing House, 1989. This is a Jewish theodicy. While it does not have the full benefits of Christian insight and proclamation, its statement of the problem of evil is valuable.

Grider, J. Kenneth. "The Mystery of Evil." Chapter 8 in A Wesleyan-Holiness Theology. Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1994, 184-229.

Hick, John. Evil and the God of Love. Revised edition, San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1977. Hick is today a more or less notorious liberal, but was not so liberal when writing this book. It proposes a theodicy for today after excellent summaries of what Hick identifies as the two main theodicies in the Christian past, Irenaeus and Augustine.

- Lewis, C. S. *The Problem of Pain*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996. Available in many different editions.
- Oden, Thomas C. "A Theodicy for Pastoral Practice." Chapter 15 in *Pastoral Theology: Essentials of Ministry*. San Francisco: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1983, 223-48.
- Truesdale, Al. *If God Is God, Then Why? Letters from New York City.* Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 2002.

_____. If God Is God, Then Why? Letters from Oklahoma City. Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1997. Highly recommended, especially because from a respected and familiar Nazarene author.

Lesson Introduction

(5 minutes)

Accountability

In pairs have the students read their partner's essay.

Return and collect all homework.

Motivator

The Eternal Goodness

I see the wrong that round me lies,
I feel the guilt within:
I hear, with groan and travail-cries,
The world confess its sin.

Yet in the maddening maze of things, And tossed by storm and flood, To one fixed trust my spirit clings: I know that God is good!

-John Greenleaf Whittier

From Poems of John Greenleaf Whittier (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company Publishers, 1893), p. 425.

Learner Objectives

Instruct students to locate objectives in the Student Guide.

Restating the objectives for the learners serves as an advanced organizer for the lesson and alerts learners to key information and concepts.

To help

- beginning students of Christian theology to understand further the problem of evil, which is one of the most serious barricades to authentic Christian faith
- give beginning pastors some practical suggestions they can employ in giving counsel to those asking for explanations and analyses regarding the continuing presence of evil in a world overseen by a good God
- give some introductory materials on the discussion of science and religion

Lesson Body

Lecture/Discussion: A Perfectly Good God, Yet a Nagging Evil

(60 minutes)

Refer to Resource 6-1 in the Student Guide.

From Oden, Pastoral Theology: : Essentials of Ministry (San Francisco: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1983), 223.

The Dilemma of God and Evil

In the biblical Book of Job, we are confronted by the problem of evil, which for many people is the most difficult and intractable problem of all. *Theodicy*, which derives from the Greek words for God (*theos*) and justice (*dike*), is the attempt to speak of the goodness and fairness of God while at the same time taking full account of evil.

Thomas C. Oden writes, "Theodicy means to speak justly of God amid the awesome fact of suffering. Its task is to vindicate the divine attributes, especially justice, mercy, and love, in relation to the continuing existence of evil."

There are three sides to what is commonly called "the problem of evil," as Oden understands it.

- God is unsurpassably good.
- God is incomparably powerful.
- Suffering and evil nonetheless exist. Why?

We might be tempted to settle upon three solutions, but Oden would warn us against accepting any of them.

- To say that evil is not really evil after all. Yet this is to ignore a plain fact of our lives, the persistence of evil.
- To deny the absolute goodness of God. Then God is no longer the God of the Judeo-Christian tradition, brimming over with unceasing care, love, and mercy.
- To claim that the nasty continuance of evil must indicate some limitation of God's power. If God is limited in power, this must be the best God is capable of. Evil then becomes part of finite existence and God becomes less than all-powerful.

In the 18th century a Scottish philosopher, David Hume, addressed the problem of evil. Hume was one

Ibid., 224-5.

of the group that later came to be called the British empiricists, and in general was skeptical of the claims of organized religion. Hume said evil is a dilemma that the classical Christian doctrine of God cannot escape. A hard-nosed look at evil seems to impale God on one horn or the other of this dilemma.

- If God sees evil in the world, but can do nothing about it, this God must be weak and impotent.
- If God sees evil in the world, but refuses to do anything about it, this God must be a monster.

Oden's summary statement is this:

The Almighty God, unsurpassable in benevolence, allows conditions and contingencies to occur that by the abuse of freedom result in real evil and suffering, yet God's incomparable love and power are not diminished. But how can all three be held together? The answer involves the patient reflection on Scripture and tradition and a careful examination of freedom abused.

There are, Oden believes and teaches, many "pastoral consolations" the pastor and theologian can draw upon in counseling parishioners and students who meet up with evil. He discusses these in his book *Pastoral Theology: Essentials of Ministry*.

Ibid., 225.

You are given a resource for each of the eight affirmations in the next section of the lesson. Five of the resources give examples that represent some pastoral struggles with the problem of evil. These five pastoral scenes correlate with the first five affirmations regarding the problem of evil.

For the remaining three affirmations about the problem of evil, it is suggested that the module instructor write some of his or her own pastoral scenes for the use of the class. **Or** it is also possible to divide the class into three groups and have them give a pastoral scene for their assigned resource.

Eight Affirmations Regarding the Problem of Evil

Affirmation One: God Does Not Directly Will Suffering

Refer to Resource 6-2 in the Student Guide.

God does not wish any ill to His creation or anything in it. The created order is good because it reflects the goodness God has planted within it. Yet because of sin and finitude, suffering and evil are very much a part of the everyday fabric of our lives. Suffering may be permitted and allowed by God, as in the case of Job, but is never *directly willed by God*.

Oden explains:

the natural order, with time, causality, and finitude, is the setting in which God's own goodness is to be received and experienced insofar as human finitude proportionally is able to experience it. However, in light of our personal and social sin, it happens that guilt, anxiety, and suffering enter into the otherwise good world.

Pastoral Theology, 227.

Pastoral Scene: What's Wrong—or Right—with this Picture?

Use the pastoral scene on Resource 6-2 for discussion. You can do this as one group or divide into small groups.

Meg Woodson, a pastor's wife, gave birth to two children.

They are both dead now.

Both died from cystic fibrosis—CF they call it. Joey died at age 12. Peggy lived to become a college student. She braced herself for her last trip to the hospital by taking a 3x5 card with a quotation from William Barclay on it: "Endurance is not just the ability to bear a hard thing, but to turn it into glory." How she had hoped to turn this hard thing—CF—into glory.

But she spent most of her last few days clutching her quote card and screaming prayers to God to stop the pain. Her mother said that God "decided to let her death top the horror charts."

"I will never forget," Meg Woodson said, "those shrill, piercing, primal screams."

Afterward she wrote to her friend Philip Yancey, "I tell you, Philip, it does not help to talk of . . . God almost always letting the physical process of a disease run its course. Because if He ever intervenes, then at every

From Wesley Tracy, et al. Reflecting God (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 2000), 135-6. point of human suffering He makes a decision to intervene or not, and in Peggy's case His choice was 'Let CF rip!' . . . How could God be in a situation like that and sit on His hands?"

If you were Meg's pastor, what would you think, say, and do?

Affirmation Two: The Abuse of Free Will Results in Evil

This is perhaps the most common and accepted

Refer to Resource 6-3 in the Student Guide.

approach to formulating any theodicy. It exonerates God and places the blame on the abuse of human freedom by creatures who are attempting to be God. We would all probably agree with Oden, that "God apparently would have done less than the best if God had created a whole world without any free beings capable of moral activity and therefore without some proportional capacity for communion with God himself."

From Pastoral Theology, 228.

Tertullian, an early Christian theologian of the late second and early third century, believed God knew humans would abuse the freedom He gave them, but that this could be prevented only by taking away from humankind those very attributes which most defined human nature: intelligence, accountability, responsibility, and freedom.

The free will defense admits, sadly, that human freedom has produced much evil in the world. But it claims, with justification, that human freedom has produced far more good than evil throughout history.

Use the pastoral scene on Resource 6-3 for discussion.

Pastoral Scene: What's Wrong—or Right—with this Picture?

I don't usually get ruffled at a funeral, but the pastor upset me at Doug's final rites. He proclaimed, "God has called Doug home." It was tragic enough. Doug had left a wife and two teenage sons behind. But how anyone could point to God's calling Doug home is quite beyond me.

Truth is, he worked himself to death at the age of fiftyone. He worked a full-time job and also maintained his own business on the side. He never took a vacation and got little rest. Friends tried to warn him, but Doug was supporting not only his family, but also every toy and gadget he could make a down payment on—boat, golf cart, Lexus, RV, and a vacation home. He played the stock market like a gambler. His love of money and things was all-consuming.

If you wanted to put his death in biblical or religious terms, I wouldn't say, "God called him home." I would say he was kicked to death by the golden calf.

Should we blame God for what our free choices do to us? What would you have said if you had to preach Doug's funeral?

Affirmation Three: God's Power Can Draw Good Out of Any Evil

Refer to Resource 6-4 in the Student Guide.

Pastoral Theology, 229.

Ibid.

Use the pastoral scene on Resource 6-4 for discussion.

From the long-range view of history, "the Fall" of Adam can be viewed as a "happy fall." Adam fell in order to lead to the possibility of redemption. "If Adam had not fallen," writes Oden, "God would not have had the occasion of this fall out of which to bring a far greater good, in fact history's greatest good, redemption in Jesus Christ."

The biblical and historical evidence for this claim is very impressive. Oden writes:

When the perversions of power or natural calamities lay human societies low, the human spirit is powerfully challenged to re-seed and re-root. The evidence is abundant: bondage in Egypt, the struggle for the promised land, Babylonian captivity, Job's calamities, the crucifixion of Jesus, Paul's thorn in the flesh, the blood of the martyrs, the fall of Rome, and so on—a song of many verses.

Many wise Christian theologians, including especially Augustine, have taught that God allows evil to exist so that in His sovereign will and timing, He can bring something much greater from evil.

Pastoral Scene: What's Wrong—or Right—with this Picture?

The preacher in Manila, The Philippines, shared with us the story of the thorn birds. It is a legend of the ancient peoples of the Australian outback. This ancient myth is about a bird that sings just once in its life. But it sings more sweetly than any other creature on the earth. From the moment it leaves its nest it searches for a thorn tree, and does not rest until it has found one.

Then, flying among the savage branches, it impales itself upon the longest and sharpest spine. And dying, it rises above its own agony to out-carol the lark and the nightingale.

One superlative song; its life is the price. But when the thorn bird sings, the world stops to listen, and God in His heaven smiles. For the best is only bought at the cost of great pain . . . or so goes the legend.

Then the preacher told us, "While this story does not exactly mirror the Christian faith, it does bring to mind the noble truth that in all probability—

The noblest song you will ever sing
The most redemptive service you will ever give
The most helpful hand you will ever lend
Will somehow be related to your deepest suffering."

As a pastor, would you counsel your people that even if they experience evil, God will redeem it and bring good out of it? Why? Are there any scriptures that relate to this?

Affirmation Four: Evil Does Not Limit God's Power

Refer to Resource 6-5 in the Student Guide.

Pastoral Theology, 230-31.

Use the pastoral scene on Resource 6-5 for discussion.

God is infinitely free, but this freedom is not threatened by the gift of freedom God gives to His creatures. It is not a "zero sum" game, where the universe is allotted only a finite supply of freedom, which God arbitrarily controls. Here is Oden's summary statement of this point: "Only God is so unsurpassably powerful that he is willing to take the 'risk' . . . of living in intimate dialogue and communion with a foreseeably fallen, sinful, self-alienating creature, and all this without any threat to God's own identity or holiness!"

Pastoral Scene: What's Wrong—or Right—with this Picture?

Everyone was enjoying a day at the lake. The temperature was moderate and the humidity virtually nonexistent. Fish were biting in the morning mist. A noontime picnic brought everyone together for a feast of chocolate cake, watermelon, and grilled hot dogs. People were looking forward to the evening devotional around the campfire. This annual family reunion was one not soon to be forgotten.

About 3:30 p.m., as the women were tidying around the cabin and the children water-skiing, someone wondered where two-year-old Samatha might be. Some thought she was taking a nap. Others thought

she might have ridden with the men into the nearby village to buy more provisions. Others were certain she was riding in the ski boat and having the time of her life.

None of these options proved to be true. A vague sense of "we will find her eventually" soured into a gripping panic. Frantic searches ensued. Darkness closed. The local county sheriff was called in to assist with the search.

After a fruitless all-night search, Samatha's bloated and waterlogged body washed up on the lakeshore five cabins away. Everyone was horrified. Fingers were pointed all the way around. How could people be so irresponsible as to believe that someone else was watching this toddler?

At the memorial service the pastor remarked more than once about how God had called one of His best little angels back home again. Some nodded in silent agreement with this sentiment; others fumed at the thought of making God somehow complicit in this horror.

Uncle Bill and Aunt Verna, who were marginal churchgoers at best, were moved by the memorial service. They were heard to say to other family members that they now realized just how valuable life is; how they were now ready to receive life as a gift from God as never before. The funeral was a kind of "conversion" for Uncle Bill and Aunt Verna.

Some good apparently came from this evil. Was the death of the toddler too high a price to pay for this good?

Affirmation Five: Suffering May Teach Us Many Valuable Lessons

Refer to Resource 6-6 in the Student Guide.

The true meaning of chastisement in the Bible, Oden instructs, is not vengeful and malicious punishment inflicted by God, but is rather aid, comfort, and help through cleansing. Hebrews 12:6 is an important verse to remember here: "The Lord disciplines those whom he loves, and chastises every child whom he accepts."

Growth happens through opposition and trial.

Use the pastoral scene on Resource 6-6 for discussion.

Pastoral Scene: What's Wrong—or Right—with this Picture?

M. Craig Barnes was called to pastor the National Presbyterian Church in Washington, D.C. The board members knew exactly what kind of pastor they wanted. Barnes had a fine résumé. He was a man of talent, achievement, vision, and most of all, hard work. He accepted the call and plunged into the work. Then there was this lump on his neck. Cancer in the thyroid gland.

Three surgeries later the doctors were optimistic about having cut away all of the cancer. He wrote in his recent book, *When God Interrupts*, "I had always cherished my capacity for hard work. I had long assumed I got *every* academic degree, *every* promotion, *every* position because I was willing to work harder than anyone else.

"But that was an offense against God's grace. It was idolatry, and God set out to save me from it.

"I was ready for the greatest professional challenge of my life. All I was missing was my thyroid—the gland that regulates energy."

What lessons did Pastor Barnes learn from this?

(Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 91.

Refer to Resource 6-7 in the Student Guide.

You will need to create the pastoral scene for this affirmation or have the class work on it.

Refer to Resource 6-8 in the Student Guide.

Affirmation Six: Individual Suffering Is Socially Rooted and Socially Redeemed

Here Oden encourages those who suffer to look beyond their own personal circumstances of suffering. Do we ever suffer strictly as individuals? Is it not more true to say that both suffering and the release from it are socially rooted?

Pastoral Scene: What's Wrong—or Right—with this Picture?

Affirmation Seven: Suffering May Highlight the Reality of Goodness

The shadows of life will help us appreciate ever more keenly the brilliance and promise life holds for us in Jesus Christ. We never know the mountaintops without first knowing the valleys and the climb to the summit. This line of thinking is sometimes called "the aesthetic argument." As a good example, consider black and white photography. The subtle shadings and variations present allow the viewer to appreciate fully the beauty of what is there. Likewise, for all of its manifold

You will need to create the pastoral scene for this affirmation or have the class work on it.

Refer to Resource 6-9 in the Student Guide.

ugliness, evil may yet help us to discern the good ever more clearly and truly.

Pastoral Scene: What's Wrong—or Right—with this Picture?

Affirmation Eight: Providence Yes, Fate No

What are we to understand by the reality of providence? Providence is God's continuing intention of good for all that He has made. Providence therefore begins with the reality of the divine action, to which we as humans are called to respond in faith and gratitude. The interplay of divine action and human reaction—which by definition can be fully comprehended only by God—is how providence works itself out in the real world.

The hymn listed in Resource 6-10 provides a poetic understanding of divine providence. In today's world, human freedom is highly valued, perhaps overly so. Many people would prefer to reverse the proper order, and speak instead of *human action* and *divine reaction*. We cannot squeeze God into our own convenient mold, but we should rather receive all of life from His hand as a gift.

Providence must be sharply contrasted with fate. Providence works to restore human freedom to its responsible potential, but fate intends to destroy human freedom. Reinhold Niebuhr was well known for asserting that the fall of humankind from original righteousness was "inevitable but not necessary." To say that Adam's fall was necessary is to say that Adam never had a chance *not to sin*. If we agree to that, fate has overwhelmed God-bestowed freedom.

In today's presumably "enlightened" and scientific Western world, it seems no one believes in fate any longer. Yet in much of the world fate is a very real force. For some it governs their everyday lives.

Christians must believe in the overall goodness of God, and so believing cancels out the power of fate. Life presents us with very real choices, and in the power of the Holy Spirit we can choose rightly, although Niebuhr is probably right to say that it is inevitable that at least some of the time we will make the wrong choices. Fate takes choice out of our hands and assigns it to a faceless, nameless, impersonal force that may sometimes wish us well, but not consistently so. The winds of fate blow treacherously as often as kindly.

You will need to create the pastoral scene for this affirmation or have the class work on it.

Pastoral Scene: What's Wrong—or Right—with this Picture?

Conclusion—Is There a Uniquely Christian Answer to the Problem of Evil?

When in the fullness of time the Christian faith arose on the historical scene, the world was ready for it. When God chose covenantal intimacy with Israel, God revealed himself to be slow to anger and abounding in mercy, in marked contrast to other deities in the ancient Near East.

Grace, love, and mercy came to conscious awareness and full enactment in Jesus Christ. Those who believed in the crucified, resurrected, and ascended Savior chose the way of the Nazarene over other current religious choices, options that too often centered on sub-Christian gods. Brutality, fatalism, and capriciousness were these gods' signatures. In one Roman drama contemporary with Jesus Christ, the plot demanded a fresh immolation nightly. A slave thrust his arm into an open flame until it consumed his flesh and his body. This garish and ghastly display not only satisfied Roman barbarism, but also certified the worthlessness of much human life in pagan eyes.

Christian eyes illumined by faith in Jesus Christ were eyes that were not only enlightened (Eph 1:18), but also whose field of vision was faith, hope, and love (1 Cor 13:13), whose particular hope was the crucified Christ and not supposed pagan wisdom. The God and Father of Jesus Christ had "made foolish the wisdom of the world" (1 Cor 1:20).

The entire problem of evil cannot be lightly dismissed as another example of sophisticated and worldly wisdom. Some of history's most daring and acute minds have strained after a truly adequate theodicy, the justification of the goodness of God while yet taking into full account the evil that dogs us all. No such theodicy has yet been crafted, but this failure does not mean the entire effort is worthless. Negatively, the construction of any theodicy may serve to reveal the final futility of the exercise; positively, the quest for theodicy may point to the true Christian response.

Every Christian thought and aspiration must be captive to the crucified and resurrected Christ. Therefore, a theodicy worthy of the designation "Christian" must **originate** under the shadow of the Cross and **culminate** with the glory of Easter morning.

From If God Is God Then Why? Letters from Oklahoma City (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1997), 107. No one has said this recently better than the Nazarene philosopher and ethicist, Al Truesdale. He urges all of us "to stand where Christians ought to stand: in the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ."

In the aftermath of the April 19, 1995 bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City, OK, Truesdale used a creative and engaging format in seeking for answers. His book *If God Is God Then Why? Letters from Oklahoma City* is philosophically astute and critically aware, but most of all it is biblically sound and theologically grounded.

Here is the format for Truesdale's exercise in Christian theodicy. Kara and Rachel are two young women provoked to tough questions by this catastrophe. Kara and her uncle Carl, a retired pastor, exchange letters allowing Kara to ask any question. Carl's learned responses cover the ground of traditional philosophical theodicies, finally showing all of them to fall far beneath a truly Christian vision.

Carl first offers a disclaimer: "The Christian faith has no adequate rational 'justification' or 'solution' for the problem of evil. But it does have a more-than-adequate response."

For Uncle Carl, a justification or a solution would lay all questions to rest for all times and all places. For every evil circumstance there would then be a more or less satisfying explanation. The "calculus" of theodicy would approach perfection. It would be foolproof.

Instead of an answer that silences all further and future questions, Christianity deepens the mystery of evil by exposing evil to the redemptive light of the Cross.

What Christianity offers—a **response**, in Carl's wise word—is God's final defeat of evil in the Cross of Christ.

Truesdale, speaking through Uncle Carl, has it exactly right:

For a response to the reality of evil, the Christian faith turns to the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ. . . . In the Cross, God answers forever all questions regarding His goodness. On Easter morning, God settles all questions regarding His sovereignty. No matter how troubling the questions regarding evil, Christians should look to the Cross and Resurrection.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid., 108.

Ibid.

You may not have time to look at this hymn in class. The students can look at it on their own and reflect on it in their journals.

Refer to Resource 6-10 in the Student Guide.

To agree that the Cross and Resurrection is the Christian answer to evil is to embrace the world's sorrows fully. Uncle Carl utilizes Jürgen Moltmann, profound theologian of the Cross, who writes, "The sting in the question 'Why is there suffering?' is God. And the sting in the question 'Is there a God?' is suffering."

Moltmann does not mean God takes a perverse delight in suffering, or that suffering immobilizes God and strips away the divine power. No, Moltmann points to God's dramatic solidarity with human suffering, His living alongside the suffering. This is the God-with-us of the incarnation of Jesus Christ.

Uncle Carl again cuts to the heart of the matter:

The Cross guarantees that God is present with us. He doesn't stand safely aloof. In Christ we meet eternal God, who so radically identifies with a suffering world that He takes the world's evil upon himself. Not just the sins of the world, but the unfathomable abyss of evil. In Christ, God radically identifies with human brokenness. He suffers the heinous death of His only begotten Son.

The combination of Al Truesdale and Uncle Carl remind the pastor and the theology student that the simple and efficacious presentation of the gospel of Jesus Christ, remembering especially His passion, death, and resurrection, is the only truly compelling and satisfying response to the ongoing puzzle of evil.

Invitation to Reflection

Much more could obviously be said about the problem of evil. Reflect on the hymn by William Cowper as we read through it.

God moves in a mysterious way His wonders to perform He plants his footsteps in the sea And rides upon the storm.

Deep in unfathomable mines
Of never-failing skill
He treasures up his bright designs
And works his sovereign will.

Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take The clouds ye so much dread Are big with mercy and shall break In blessings on your head. "God Moves in a Mysterious Way," From Sing to the Lord, 22. Words: William Cowper, 1774; appeared in the Olney Hymns (London: W. Oliver, 1779). Music: 'Dundee,' Scottish Psalter, 1615. Judge not the Lord by feeble sense But trust him for his grace Behind a frowning providence He hides a smiling face.

Blind unbelief is sure to err And scan his work in vain God is his own interpreter And he will make it plain.

Do you agree with the ideas put forth in the classic hymn, "God Moves in a Mysterious Way"?

What is the sense of this hymn?

Lecture: Science and Religion

(20 minutes)

The following material may be presented as a lecture, at the instructor's discretion. If there is someone in the local church who can facilitate this discussion, it is suggested that this person might be invited to attend part of the class and participate with discussion. There might be a high school or college or university science teacher in the congregation, or perhaps someone who works as a scientist in business and industry.

This topic can be very controversial but the position of the Church of the Nazarene is to keep an open mind and not exclude intelligent conversation and discussion.

Over the past two decades there has been a renewed interest in the intersection between two fields often thought to be hopelessly opposed—science and religion. This conflict, which dates back at least to the 16th century, is regularly played out in the media. Many, if not most Christians have an opinion on this issue, though often not an especially well-informed or thoughtful opinion. Pastors-in-training need to be better informed on these important issues. Some evangelical, Christian liberal arts colleges require a class about the interface between science and religion for their Christian ministry majors. Similar classes are also offered at some theological seminaries.

Much of the discussion surrounding this question focuses on the biblical account of creation in the opening chapters of Genesis. The past history of hopeless and bitter conflict between science and religion is well known, and need not be repeated here. It would seem there are three main opinions one might hold on this general question of the relationship between science and religion:

Refer to Resource 6-11 in the Student Guide.

- 1. Complete and total opposition, whether from the side of science or of religion. Here it seems that neither science nor religion is very much interested in appreciating what the other has to offer. The attitude is perpetually tense between the two, and conflict is expected and even desired.
- 2. Convergence between the two, so that science more or less "swallows up" religion, or the reverse.
- 3. Mutual respect between the two, recognizing that each discipline has valuable contributions to make as we try to make sense of the whole of reality. This recognizes that, to one degree or another, each of these is master over its own realm.

The third position suggests that scientific explanation may tell us one thing, whereas a theological or religious explanation may tell us something quite different. The alternative explanations are not necessarily incompatible. Each may offer something the other lacks, although we must say that only a theological explanation is designed and capable of providing an *ultimate explanation*, because science deals only with what can be observed and measured, and *ultimate causes* cannot be seen or measured.

It is important to keep in mind that science answers the questions of "how, when, and where." Theology is concerned with "who" and to some extent "why."

If we think about creation in the Old Testament, we get a good idea of how religious explanations might differ from scientific ones:

Refer to Resource 6-12 in the Student Guide.

• Difference in *process:* Genesis 1 presents creation as being rooted in the creative will of God. God wills that there should be a world, and that this world should be good according to how God implants goodness in the world. From first to last, Israel viewed creation as the product of one God, in contrast to the neighboring nations, who saw creation rising from a war between rival gods.

Israel's religious explanation is in keeping with its theology of belief in one God. It contrasts mightily with a modern scientific definition of creation, which sees creation not as the result of the will of a personal God, but a mere emergence of impersonal forces.

• Difference in what is produced: biblical religion sees that God produces a physical world, but the primary focus is not the world as such, but how God's creatures and children will act upon the world He has given to them. This moral responsibility is reported with great drama, as in the case of "The Fall" of Adam and Eve.

By contrast, modern science sees the created realm in an impersonal light. Creation is sustained by laws, not by the grace of God.

• Difference in the *criteria of truth:* In the words of Anne M. Clifford, "The criteria for truth in biblical texts are the plausibility of the story and what it illumines about the God-human relationship." By contrast, "The scientific-minded expect a creation theory that has empirical reference and that can explain all the data. A complete explanation that is compatible with other verifiable theories is of utmost importance. Failure to do so makes the hypothesis suspect."

From "Creation," 207.

For the Christian, the certainties of the opening verses of the Bible may be enough:

In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters (Genesis 1:1, NRSV).

Discussion Opportunity

To me the tension between science and religion is very important, somewhat important, or not important at all. And here is why I think that way.

One good thing that has come out of the science and religion battle is . . .

Lesson Close

(5 minutes)

Review

Instruct students to locate objectives in the Student Guide.

Have we accomplished our intended outcomes?

To help

- beginning students of Christian theology to understand further the problem of evil, which is one of the most serious barricades to authentic Christian faith
- give beginning pastors some practical suggestions they can employ in giving counsel to those asking for explanations and analyses regarding the continuing presence of evil in a world overseen by a good God
- give some introductory materials on the discussion of science and religion

Look Ahead

Next session we will begin the study of the attributes or traits of God. Power and wisdom will be the focus for consideration.

Assign Homework

Direct students to the Homework Assignments in the Student Guide.

(Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1997) and (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 2002). You have the choice of doing one of the following two assignments, but not both:

- Write a three-page book review of Al Truesdale's If God Is God, Then Why? Letters from Oklahoma City or If God Is God, Then Why? Letters from New York City (available from Nazarene Publishing House.) A skilled book review should accomplish two things at a minimum:
 - an "unpacking" of the contents of the book. The reader of your review should be given enough information about the book's arguments and flow of thought to know that you have studied the book thoroughly.
 - some of your personal responses to the book, including especially how it affected you personally. Will anyone be reading this book twenty years from now? Would you recommend it to a friend? If you could have coffee with the author, what are two or three questions you would ask him?

2. Collect a media file of articles dealing with the controversy surrounding the relationship between science and religion. The media file should contain at least ten entries. Articles should be from both secular and religious publications. You may use the Internet but limit Internet collection to five articles. Do not collect articles only from Christian publications or secular publications.

Visit a large shopping area and observe the word "power" in the general public arena. Write down 6-8 uses of the word "power" and then compare these to the Christian use of the power of God.

Journal Prompts

How has evil affected my personal life? As I reflect on the incursion of evil into my life, am I able to define evil and the problem of evil with greater care and relevance?

As a supplemental learning experience, the following idea could be added as work outside of class. It would add to the discussions in the next lesson on "power."

If the students have access to videos, you might suggest they watch the first twenty-five or thirty minutes of the film "The Apostle," with Robert Duvall in the title role. In the film Duvall plays a Pentecostal preacher who is not all that he should be, who yet is used of the Lord in significant ways. It is obvious from watching this film that he knows something about Holiness churches.

The instructor should view this film prior to suggesting that the students watch the video.

Punctuate the Finish

Yet I will rejoice in the Lord; I will exult in the God of my Salvation.

Habbakuk 3:18

Lesson 7

Some Classic Approaches to Thinking about God's Power and Wisdom

Lesson Overview

Schedule

Start Time	Task or Topic	Learning Activity	Materials Needed
0:00	Introduction	Orient	Student Guide
0:10	Who Is God, and How May We Approach Him?	Lecture/Discussion	Resource 7-1 Resource 7-2
0:25	The Classic Attributes of God: Power and Wisdom	Lecture/Discussion	Resource 7-3 Resource 7-4
0:55	Hymn Search	Small-Group Activity	Resource 7-5 Sing to the Lord or other hymnals
1:20	Lesson Close	Review, Assign	Student Guide

Suggested Reading for Instructor

- Bloesch, Donald G. *Essentials of Evangelical Theology, Volume 1: God, Authority, and Salvation.* San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1982, 1978, ch. III.
- ______. Christian Foundations. Book 3, God the Almighty: Power, Wisdom, Holiness, Love. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1995, chs. 4-6.
- Dunning, H. Ray. "The Nature and Attributes of God." Chapter 6 in *Grace, Faith, and Holiness: A Wesleyan Systematic Theology.* Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1988, 183-207.
- Grider, J. Kenneth. "God's Existence and Nature." Chapter 5 in *A Wesleyan-Holiness Theology*. Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1994, 101-22.
- Johnson, Paul. *The Quest for God: A Personal Pilgrimage*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1996 (there is a USA edition available). Paul Johnson is a British historian and intellectual. He is Roman Catholic and evangelical in tone and spirit.
- Schmidt, Frederick W., ed. *The Changing Face of God.* Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse Publishing, 2000. This small book originated as five lectures. While none of the lecturers is an evangelical, and some may not even be Christian, they yet provide a very good overview of the current cultural scene regarding God. There are also five companion videos available, each of them 15-18 minutes long.
- Staples, Rob L. "God." In Words of Faith: An Easy Reference to Theological Terms.. Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 2001, 23-4.

Lesson Introduction

(10 minutes)

Accountability

Have one student, who did the book review, give a brief report (one minute) on the book.

Have one student, who did the media collection, share one of the articles he or she was most impressed with (one minute).

Return and collect all homework.

Have the students keep their examples of the word "power" to be used later in the lesson.

Motivator

In the United States we are in a period of religious ferment, if not downright religious revival. The signs are everywhere. The "angel craze" of the mid- to late-1990s was one of the more obvious symptoms of the renewed quest for God. The word "spirituality" appears in odd places and at odd times. It seems everyone is a theologian these days.

How has God fared throughout the upheaval of this revival? Badly, we fear. Although it is good that people are once again thinking about God, not all thoughts about God are thoughts worth having. One recent, popular song, entitled "One of Us" (by singer Joan Osborne), sought to bring God down from heaven into the whirl and bustle of the everyday. Yet how far down can God go before God ceases to be God, and instead becomes a creation of our own convenience? Joan Osborne envisioned a God who rode the bus, who was "a slob like one of us."

Surely we can find other ways of testifying to God's relevance that will at the same time leave His majesty and power and truth intact.

What other ways have God and other spiritual themes been represented in our popular culture, in television, songs, films, consumer goods, and advertising?

Orientation

This is a class in Christian theology, not just religiosity in general. Hence we are most of all interested in learning how the Christian tradition has thought about God, emphasizing the consensus of what Christians have more or less agreed upon, as opposed to the side issues that have divided them.

The Christian doctrine of God is, then, our fixed point. With that firmly in mind, we are free to consider other approaches to the divine, remembering our standard for judgment and comparison.

While atheism remains rare in the United States, and indeed around the world, not every declaration of "Lord, Lord" is a true and vital witness to the Triune God of Christian proclamation. We perpetually invite the Holy Spirit to help us to discern the One, True God from various gods and "godlings" that may be partly true, but at the same time are partly wrong. The differences can be devastating.

Learner Objectives

Instruct students to locate objectives in the Student Guide.

Restating the objectives for the learners serves as an advanced organizer for the lesson and alerts learners to key information and concepts.

To help students

- survey briefly some of the classic approaches to thinking about God and in so doing, to become increasingly aware of the power and wisdom of God
- begin to see the relevance of these two traits for Christian ministry and worship
- appreciate how these qualities of God affect the rest of our theological thinking
- contrast a theological view of the power of God with the ways in which the general culture uses the concept of power

Lesson Body

Lecture/Discussion: Who Is God, and How May We Approach Him?

(15 minutes)

If possible, bring to class some art books that depict classic or modern paintings with religious themes. Give each student some time to find a painting or other work of art in the book, and then tell the rest of the class what attributes (or lack of attributes) may be seen in the painting chosen.

We have stressed already that when approaching God it is far better to cling to the side of caution, discretion, honor, and respect than to race madly to presumption, familiarity, rudeness, and expedience.

The greatest theologians of the church have always understood the imperative, to Moses from God, of Exodus 3:5, "Come no closer! Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground."

Refer to Resource 7-1 in the Student Guide.

From Karen Armstrong, "The God of Imaginative Compassion," in The Changing Face of God, ed. Frederick W. Schmidt (Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse Publishing, 2000), 18. Some Jewish mystics have referred to God as *En Sof* or "without end." One such mystic even believed *En Sof* is mentioned in the Bible. We have in the Bible only fleeting and fallible glimpses of God, never a true knowledge of the essence of God. While the teaching of divine revelation is meant to *deepen* and not *dispel* the mystery of God's essence, we can say with confidence that God has elected to make himself known to us. But Karen Armstrong is correct when she writes, "we must not confuse our ideas and doctrines about God with the ultimate reality itself" (or we might prefer to say "himself" instead).

Many realities set God apart from humankind and other creatures, but the root of all of these is the acknowledgment that God is "a se," meaning "of or from itself," which is also known as the divine "aseity." This simply means that God, and only God, can be and is the source of His own being. No one really is "self-made" in the final analysis. Everyone depends, at least, on two parents for entry into the world. But this is all different with God. Thomas C. Oden says this about aseity, "To affirm that God is independent or necessary means that God depends on no cause

From Oden, The Living God, 55.

Ibid., 44-47.

Refer to Resource 7-2 in the Student Guide.

From Sing to the Lord, 65.

From The Living God, 47.

external to God. God's life is contingent upon nothing else." Oden explains that aseity points to "self-existence, or underived existence. To say that God is uncreated or self-existent (or self-subsistent) means simply that God is without origin, that God is the only ground of God's being, and that there is no cause prior to God."

Historically, there have been two strategies one might adopt when beginning the task of thinking about God.

Via negativa

One way was the way of negativity, often called the *via negativa*. It arrives at a kind of knowledge of God by emphasizing what God "is not." One negotiates this path, says Oden, "by constantly saying no." God is *not* finite, limited in any way, bound by time, subject to death and corruption, and so forth. The older hymn "Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise" expresses this insight poetically.

Immortal, invisible, God only wise
In light inaccessible hid from our eyes
Most blessed, most glorious, the Ancient of Days,
Almighty, victorious, thy great name we praise.

Here we see that God is not mortal, not visible, and not accessible to our senses. God is also immaterial, incorporeal (having no body), immutable (not subject to change), indivisible (cannot be divided into parts), immeasurable, and as mentioned above, infinite.

Via eminentiae

The strategy of the second way is the opposite, that is, to look at the finite world around us and to magnify its qualities until they are fit to be associated with God. This is the way of eminence or *via eminentiae*. It arrives at a kind of knowledge of God by observing God's presence in the world and in humankind. To construct a scale of "degrees of excellence" is Oden's way of teaching the way of eminence. It looks like this:

Better than the best we know The best we know Good Not so good Lacking good altogether

Of these two classic ways, Oden believes the first, the way of negation, has been more widely used theologically.

Discussion Interlude

Share with the students your own thoughts about both the way of negation and the way of eminence.

Can any of you provide examples of either negation or eminence?

When we pray, which way are we the most likely to employ?

Lecture: The Classic Attributes of God: Power and Wisdom

(30 minutes)

Have the students share the uses of the word "power" they found.

In the Christian faith, we believe we know God most completely and correctly in Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God (Jn 14:8-11). In Him, God became incarnate in His fullness. All language regarding God must be judged according to Christ (1 Cor 1:18-31; Col 1:15-20). This we know through the witness of the Holy Spirit and the witness of Scripture. With this standard in place, we will move ahead to brief discussions of two classic attributes of God: power and wisdom (we will deal with holiness and love in the next lesson).

We may speak with confidence based on the biblical record, the witness of Jesus Christ, and the enablement of the Holy Spirit. At the same time, there is a measure of truth in what Frederick Schmidt writes, "Our pictures of God are and should be forever provisional, shifting to meet both narrower and larger needs, grasping more of the nature of God on some level, while at the same time acknowledging that they are less than can ever be known."

From "The Changing Face of God," in The Changing Face of God, 9.

The Power of God

"Of the eight years I lived in the Philippines," writes Dr. Leupp, "the first was arguably the most trying and difficult in terms of personal comfort, although life there was often arduous. During that first year, in the spring especially, the supply of electricity was frequently inadequate for the demand. So-called brownouts became an oppressive fact of daily life. Only on Sundays could one be relatively certain of an uninterrupted power supply. During those years the seminary had a generator, but it was not powerful enough to do much more than to keep the fans spinning, which was a losing battle against the tropical heat. Sweat-stained bed pillows were sometimes the

order of the night as one struggled to find some cooling sleep.

"In front of the seminary chapel, posted on a high wooden pole, was a street light from the national electric company. During brownouts this light was out, but its return always marked the return of power. Sometimes in the early evening the students could even be heard to emit small cheers for the return of electricity, for then they could move ahead with their evening studies and other activities."

How should we think of God's power? Should the Christian uphold the received conventional view that God is "all-powerful," which in traditional language is of course God's omnipotence?

Among recent theological issues, perhaps none has been as divisive as this one. We alluded to the control God exerts over history in another lesson. To speak of God's influence upon historical events is yet another way to ask the question of the divine power.

Christian theology is never done in a vacuum of cultural, social, or political isolation. We all know that the United States and the rest of the Western world was "rocked" by attitudinal changes fostered by the 1960s and 1970s. The right and redemptive way to think of and use power distinguished this era. "Power to the People" was in the air, as was "Black Power." Today's ready talk of "empowerment" probably owes a great deal to the social revolution started in the 1960s.

What should Christian theology make of all this? Should we, to adopt a phrase made popular by the first President George Bush, now believe in a "kinder, gentler" God?

We have all made jokes about the Lord God "zapping" someone when he or she strays from the straight and narrow. Toward the end of the film, *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, we see a cinematic display of the raw and unharnessed power of God, as the Spirit of God rushes out of the ark that plunderers were attempting to steal, and quite literally zaps and melts them.

Is this a realistic depiction of divine power?

Whenever theologians speak of the traits of God, they are careful to state that all of God's many and varied traits are needed to balance out each other.

Discussion Interlude

Before moving ahead with a discussion of God's power, ask the students to list as many traits of God as they can think of on a sheet of paper.

Possible answers: God is loving, merciful, trustworthy, infinite, immeasurable, gracious, slow to anger, and so forth.

Ask the students to name what for them is the most important or chief attribute of God.

Quoted in Donald G. Bloesch, Christian Foundations, Book 3, God the Almighty: Power, Wisdom, Holiness, Love. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1995), 103.

See his clarifying chapter on "Power and Wisdom" in God the Almighty.

God's power, responsible theologians agree, is not simply the "naked" power of brute force. Make no mistake, God possesses this sort of power. Were God not in possession of all power (a literal meaning of omnipotent), then God would not be God. A classic statement that expresses this well comes from John of Damascus, an eighth-century theologian often called the last of the great Eastern Orthodox thinkers. He asserted, "God can do all that He wills, even though He does *not* will all things that He can do—for He can destroy creation, but He does not will to do so." John simply means there are some things God *chooses* not to do, even though it remains within His sovereign *power* to will to do them. And what God can will, God can perform.

Donald Bloesch admits that in some cases the classical tradition of Christian theology has in fact subsumed God's love under His power. Some have gone so far as to claim that the Bible teaches that God *must be* the ultimate author of sin, because to deny this would be to limit God's power.

Today, however, the trend is very much in the opposite direction. Responsible, twentieth-century theologians such as Karl Barth, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, and Jürgen Moltmann teach that God's power is always in service to His love. Power that disregards love might be called "naked power," which stresses God's "almightiness." Barth believed "almightiness" was heresy, because it left no room for God to extend himself in love toward the wounded creature. "Needy power," wherein to one degree or another God needs human love in order to be completed in His own person, might be contrasted with "naked power." Although Bloesch believes God will stop at nothing to redeem us, he discounts "needy power," saying that God "does not need our love, but he loves us."

Discussion Interlude

What sort of power is displayed in the incarnation of Jesus Christ? Is it "naked power" or "needy power"?

What about the Resurrection?

What type of power was exhibited when God the Father raised God the Son to life again, in the power of God the Spirit?

Refer to Resource 7-3 in the Student Guide.

As we close our brief discussion of the power of God, let us hear from these classic theologians.

From Church Dogmatics, trans. T. H. L. Parker, et al., ed. G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1957), 2(1), 602, 544.

Barth said the Bible "is not interested in God's power over everything," but rather in how God directs His power toward the rescue of sinful humanity. God's power is not 'naked,' but rather has 'a definite direction and content.' It is both His power to will and His power not to will."

From The Crucified God, trans. R. A. Wilson and John Bowden (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1974),

Moltmann said if omnipotence is applied categorically and literally to God, this God would not be the God of the Bible but rather a philosophical abstraction. God willingly imposes limits on His power precisely so there will be *no limits* to His vulnerability. A God of naked power cannot be a God who experiences "helplessness and powerlessness."

From Letters and Papers from Prison (New York: Macmillan, 1953), 219-20.

Bonhoeffer wrote poetically and some would say prophetically about God's powerlessness that is the exact scope and definition of His power. "God allows himself to be edged out of the world and on to the cross. God is weak and powerless in the world, and that is exactly the way, the only way, in which he can be with us and help us."

All three of these theologians have obviously taken the Apostle Paul's words with great seriousness: "For God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God's weakness is stronger than human strength" (1 Cor 1:25, NRSV).

The Wisdom of God

Share from your own personal experience.

Share with the rest of the class about the wisest person you have ever known.

What qualities mark this person apart from others as being wise?

To speak of the *wisdom* of God may well be a test case for the method we mentioned earlier—the way of

eminence—wherein one reflects upon an observed good in human society and culture, and then deepens and broadens it to divine dimensions.

If we take this approach, we take *finite* wisdom and then expand it to *infinite* wisdom.

Are there any believable examples of even finite wisdom currently available? (Talk show hosts? Advice columnists? Gray and wrinkled relatives at family gatherings?)

What do we mean by wisdom? Are such words as understanding, knowledge, discernment, and awareness suitable synonyms? Is wisdom something that comes only with age, or might we expect it sooner?

You can substitute your own personal experiences in place of the author's stories.

The author of this module shares these two experiences:

One of the great lessons I learned from eight years of living in the Philippines is the value of family and community. There are few, if any, "old folk's homes" in the Philippines, because the elderly are not put out to pasture in their presumed "golden years," but rather come to occupy the moral and even intellectual center of their respective families.

I was a few days past the age of forty when I finally married, and nearly forty-two when I became a father for the first time. Was I a better father for having waited so long? There were some days when I wondered. Two or three times I caught myself striking out irresponsibly at our oldest child. And yet, wisdom seemed to "kick in" at just the right moment. Perhaps that is one small window into how the wisdom of God works. God's power is such as to annihilate us easily. Yet, as we discussed above, God willfully restrains His power, and uses it only in the service of His redeeming love. This voluntary restraint of power is one of the evidences of God's wisdom. If God always acts wisely, we must agree with Bloesch when he writes, "wisdom is not a separate being carrying out the commands of God but God himself in action imprinting his plan upon the whole of creation."

From God the Almighty, 120.

Proverbs 8 is one of the great wisdom texts in all of Scripture. Much controversy has attended the proper way to interpret this passage. Some see wisdom, Greek *Sophia*, as almost a God-alongside-God or even a God-in-addition-to-God. Some feminists, both Christian and otherwise, prize this passage as pointing

Ibid., 123.

Refer to Resource 7-4 in the Student Guide.

Ibid., 122.

to the necessary feminine aspect of God. Bloesch agrees in part with seeing wisdom as a feminine quality in the divine. "Wisdom is our mother who nurtures and sustains us; Wisdom is our sister who accompanies us on our spiritual journey; Wisdom is our providential provider who cares for us and assists us."

Does all of this mean we are permitted to address God as "Mother" if we so choose? Wisdom helps us to appreciate the nurturing and even consoling aspects of God, but will not allow us to introduce gender into God. If we call God "Our Father" we are *not* thereby giving to God male hormones and characteristics. And if we call God "Mother" we are not saying God is a woman. Father and Mother are both *relational* terms, pointing to two ways we commonly use to relate to God, and God to us.

Bloesch wisely reminds us that when thinking of God's wisdom we must always keep before us the Person of Jesus Christ, for He is the very embodiment of the wisdom of God. He is "the power of God and the wisdom of God" (1 Cor 1:24).

Because Jesus Christ is the true incarnation of wisdom, He offers wisdom to those who worship Him. Wisdom is a gift for the living of the Christian life. The summary statement of Bloesch, tying together some of our emphases, is admirable:

Wisdom is an attribute of God, to be sure, but it is more than an attribute in the wider biblical witness: it is God himself in the person of Jesus Christ. It is the Spirit of God empowering Christians from within to believe, to rejoice, to bear public witness to the faith once delivered to the saints.

Small Groups: Hymn Study

(25 minutes)

Divide the class into groups of three. Each group should have a copy of Sing to the Lord or other hymnal.

Refer to Resource 7-5 in the Student Guide.

Look in the back of the book, in the "topical index of hymns and readings." Find all of the headings under "God Our Father." Pick any dozen hymns and readings and examine what they say about the nature, quality, and character of God. Be careful to note how these hymns and readings *agree* with each other as to their fundamental outlook and theology. Also note carefully any slight *differences* of interpretation that seem to appear. The information found and gleaned should be saved, as it will tie in directly with the assignment given for this lesson.

Lesson Close

(10 minutes)

Review

The ideas stated will give you a good idea of how well the students grasped the concepts of this lesson.

The prayers will be used for Punctuate the Finish.

Read Proverbs 8.

Write a short prayer using some of the ideas from today's lesson and found in this proverb.

Look Ahead

Next session we will continue our discussion of some of the attributes of God, this time looking especially at God's holiness and love.

Assign Homework

Direct students to the Homework Assignments in the Student Guide. Using the information gathered in the hymn search activity, prepare a four-page paper summarizing the results of what you discovered. It will probably not be possible to survey rigorously all of the dozen hymns and readings selected. It is advisable to choose about six to eight, and conduct the analysis based on that selection.

Journal Prompt

Return to the wisest person you have ever known. Reflect in your journal *why* you found this person to be especially wise, and how this wisdom has molded and guided your own personal life.

Punctuate the Finish

As time permits, ask each student to read his or her prayer to the rest of the class.

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Lesson 8

Some Classic Approaches to Thinking about God's Holiness and Love

Lesson Overview

Schedule

Start Time	Task or Topic	Learning Activity	Materials Needed
0:00	Introduction	Orient	Student Guide
0:10	The Holiness of God	Lecture/Writing	Resource 8-1
			Resource 8-2
0:30	The Love of God	Lecture/Writing	Resource 8-3
			Resource 8-4
0:45	The Classic Attributes of God: Seen Through a Christological Prism	Lecture	
0:50	Creation of a Worship Service that Focuses on the Holiness and Love of God	Small Groups	Resource 8-5
1:15	Poetic Ending	Guided Discussion	
1:25	Lesson Close	Review, Assign	Student Guide

Suggested Reading for Instructor

- Greathouse, William M. Wholeness in Christ: Toward a Biblical Theology of Holiness. Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1998, especially ch. 1.
- Oden, Thomas C. *Systematic Theology.* Vol. 1, *The Living God.* San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1987, 99-110.
- Otto, Rudolf. *The Idea of the Holy*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1958, especially 1-40.
- Purkiser, W. T., Richard S. Taylor, and Willard H. Taylor. "The God of the Prophets." Chapter 9 in *God, Man, and Salvation: A Biblical Theology,* Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1977 of Kansas City, 145-70.
- Taylor, Richard S. *Exploring Christian Holiness*. Vol. 3, *The Theological Formulation*. Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1985, opening two or three chapters.
- Wynkoop, Mildred Bangs. *A Theology of Love: The Dynamic of Wesleyanism.* Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1972, especially chs. 2, 9.

Lesson Introduction

(10 minutes)

Accountability

Call on two students to report briefly on their hymn summary.

Return and collect all homework.

Motivator

Have the class sing two verses of "Holiness Forevermore" or "Holiness unto the Lord." Also, two verses of "Holy, Holy, Holy! Lord God Almighty." These can be found in Sing to the Lord, 502, 503, and 2 respectively.

The first song, which might almost be called "a gospel song," seems to focus more on holiness as a gift God gives to us, rather than on the holy quality of the God who gives us life. By contrast, "Holy, Holy, Holy!" is centered on the intrinsic holiness of the Triune God.

We certainly need both of these messages in our preaching and teaching and living of Christian holiness. But which comes first? The holiness of God or the capacity of humanity to receive God's holiness, and hence to live the holy life?

Orientation

In this lesson we continue the discussion about the classic attributes of God, this time looking especially at God's holiness and God's love.

Learner Objectives

Instruct students to locate objectives in the Student Guide.

Restating the objectives for the learners serves as an advanced organizer for the lesson and alerts learners to key information and concepts.

To help students

- appreciate more fully the theological heritage of the Church of the Nazarene as a Holiness denomination
- compare and contrast Nazarene views with select views from other theologians
- consider the relation between God's intrinsic holiness and humanity's derived, dependent holiness
- reflect once again on God's great love for the creation and for humankind

Lesson Body

Lecture/Writing: The Holiness of God

(20 minutes)

Refer to Resource 8-1 in the Student Guide.

From Christian Theology, Vol. 1 (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1940), 370.

For obvious reasons, chief among them that the Church of the Nazarene is probably the world's leading Holiness denomination in terms of heritage and numbers, the holiness of God has been of particular interest to Nazarene theologians. Holiness has typically been viewed not as merely one more in a catalogue of God's attributes, but as in some sense a "primal attribute." For example, H. Orton Wiley has said, "We may say then, that holiness belongs to the essential nature of God in a deeper and more profound sense than merely as one attribute among others."

This "primal attribute" in some way organizes the other elements into a coherent whole. The organizing principle is a moral one, so the holiness of God stands above all for His faithfulness, righteousness, and unfailing goodness. To the old moral puzzle—"Does God will something because it is good, or is it good because God wills it?"—the typical Holiness theologian would have to give the second alternative: something is good simply because God declares it to be so by His willing it to be so. However, because the holy nature of God is always good, true, righteous, and fair, whatever God wills must necessarily be good.

J. Kenneth Grider agrees with this general line of thinking, claiming that the holiness of God "is the summation of what He is. . . . God's holiness is a synonym of His deity, of himself." Grider sees one implication of God's holiness as being His separateness from all that is defiled, profane, and impure. When *qodesh*, the Hebrew word for holiness, is applied to God, it suggests that God is unapproachable. Grider's study of this centering concept leads him to claim that God "is separated from and elevated above all other so-called deities."

From A Wesleyan-Holiness Theology, 109-11.

Relatedly, consider H. Ray Dunning's helpful categorization. There are three basic choices for how God's holiness might be related to the rest of the divine attributes:

• One is to view holiness merely as one attribute among all of the others. But this is to trivialize God's holiness.

From Grace, Faith, and Holiness,

- A second is to say that holiness is somehow the "sum total" of all of God's attributes, but this is to say too much, although at times it appears that both Grider and Taylor may want to say this.
- The third option, "that holiness is the background for all the other attributes," is the right choice to make.

The great German theologian Wolfhart Pannenberg agrees with Grider, but radicalizes the idea of holiness as separation. Pannenberg believes separation from everything judged profane is the essential meaning of holiness. The arrival of the holy God is an arrival of judgment and separation, a judgment that may even annihilate those who handle the divine with fast, loose, and dirty hands. Contact with that which is holy may lead to death (Exodus 19:12).

Define the word "profane" as used

The holiness of God threatens the profane world not just for the sake of threatening it, but ultimately for the sake of saving and redeeming that which is profane and separate from God, bringing it into fellowship with the Holy One. Hence Pannenberg can write:

Refer to Resource 8-2 in the Student Guide.

here.

Beyond every threat of judgment the holiness of God also means hope of new and definitive salvation. In spite of human sin God is faithful to his election. His holiness finds expression here, the difference between his attitude and ours: 'For I am God and not man, the Holy One in your midst, and I will not come to destroy' (Hos 11:9).

From Systematic Theology, Vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 398-99.

> Theologian Langdon Gilkey dissents from the Nazarene position that locates most of the meaning of the holiness of God in what is moral and relational; in other words, how a holy God relates to, and offers salvation to, unholy humankind. Here Gilkey agrees more with Pannenberg than with Grider and Taylor, although the Nazarene theologians do agree to one degree or another with holiness as the otherness of God. It is a disagreement of emphasis, not of substance. Gilkey writes:

Holiness is not primarily a moral attribute, as if it meant merely the perfect goodness of some superbeing with a white beard. Rather it refers to that absolute "otherness" which distinguishes the divine from all that is creaturely, and so characterized every aspect of God. Holiness is the word that refers to the divine aspect of any attribute asserted of deity, the quality which makes any attribute essentially different in God than in other things, the quality that raises anything, be it

From Maker of Heaven and Earth

(Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1959), 89.

power or love or anger, to the nth degree when it is applied to God.

From "The God Who Is Spirit," in The Changing Face of God, 37, 48.

Although he is not sympathetic to the claims of the holiness movement, we agree with the distinction Marcus Borg makes, when he speaks of moving from a God of requirements to a God of relationships. The older view of God's holiness stressed what God required of us, and did so in a way that stressed God's judgment over us rather than of His love within us. Borg writes that if we see God as the One Who Loves, "we are the beloved in relationship to God as lover. It is a radically different image from God the finger-shaker calling us to account in earnest repentance."

Clearly, the distinction Borg makes between a God of requirements and a God of relationships must be a relative and not an absolute distinction. No relationship can thrive, or is even possible, without some sense of duty and obligation—what we might call requirements—between the two parties in the relationship. The call to be holy is not a mere suggestion—it is a divine command. Yet what God commands He also enables us to accomplish, so that the drive toward holiness is always nurtured by divine grace. The call to be holy necessarily involves sincere repentance on our part, not just at the beginning of entire sanctification, but at every point of the Christian walk. Borg seems to have little or no appreciation for good, old-fashioned repentance.

Albert C. Outler once described John Wesley's spiritual state prior to Aldersgate as being one in quest of "the gospel of moral rectitude." In other words, before the assurance of salvation that came to Wesley on May 24, 1738, he tended to see God primarily, if not exclusively, as only the God of requirements. But after Aldersgate it was possible for Wesley to know God with "the faith of a son," whereas before his faith was only that of a servant.

Thomas C. Oden has some personal Nazarene roots and wrote the forward to Grider's A Wesleyan-Holiness Theology.

United Methodist theologian Thomas C. Oden more or less agrees with the Nazarene insistence that the holiness of God chiefly reflects God's moral qualities. Oden writes, "the moral quality that best points to God's incomparably good character, as one incomparable in power, is holiness, for holiness implies that every excellence fitting to the Supreme Being is found in God without blemish or limit." Likewise Oden thinks God's holiness and God's perfection are mirror images of each other: "It is best not to draw too firm or absolute a distinction between God's holiness and

From The Living God, 99.

God's perfection. It is more fitting to view God's perfection precisely as God's holiness."

Writing Opportunity

At the end of three minutes call on several students to read their response.

You have the next three minutes to write on the general subject of the holiness of God. What are your thoughts, your understanding?

Lecture/Discussion: The Love of God

(15 minutes)

Refer to Resource 8-3 in the Student Guide.

From A Wesleyan-Holiness Theology, 110.

From Grace, Faith, and Holiness, 196-97.

John Wesley believed that so far as the Christian life was concerned, love was "the heaven of heavens." When we are in heaven, there will be no more need for faith, because we will then see God directly, "face to face." No longer will it be necessary to walk by faith and not by sight, for we shall behold the Triune God as He is.

What is true of the Christian life must also be in some sense true of God. That is, *God is love* (1 Jn 4:8, 16). Grider asserts, "God is never called the Loving One, but He is called the Holy One." But surely 1 John 4:8, 16 must mean God is the Loving One. We should not, as mere mortals, introduce within God a conflict between the divine love and the divine holiness, because no such conflict exists in God.

Dunning wisely identifies love with prevenient grace, indicating the centrality of love for the Wesleyan understanding of God:

The Wesleyan holds that God's love is a manifestation of His nature, and consequently it is universal rather than selective. He extends His "arm" in mercy and reconciliation to all without discrimination. None is excluded, for this would involve a violation of God's own nature. God, being who He is, "loves each one of us as if there were only one of us to love" (Augustine). It is this aspect of the doctrine of God that provides the theological grounding for the Wesleyan doctrine of prevenient grace. That this love is "holy love" guards this fundamental truth against a perversion into actual rather than potential universalism.

Donald Bloesch does an excellent job in reminding us that we cannot separate God's love from His holiness.

His holiness is infused by His incomparable love and is therefore a source of comfort as well as fear, of confidence as well as dread. God's loving holiness From God the Almighty, 145.

uplifts us in the midst of divine affliction; it consoles us in the depths of gnawing despair. But all of these things remain incomprehensible apart from God's self-revelation in Jesus Christ, for only there do we come to understand the unity of His mercy and holiness, the inseparability of His love and wrath.

Discussion Interlude

In the quotation just given Donald Bloesch makes passing reference to the wrath or anger of God.

What is the relationship between the divine anger and the divine love?

Do we get a clue as to their relationship from Isaiah 54:8? "In overflowing wrath for a moment I hid my face from you, but with everlasting love I will have compassion on you, says the Lord, your Redeemer."

Karl Barth sought to hold God's love and grace together with His holiness. He said, "The holiness of God consists in the unity of His judgment with His grace. God is holy because His grace judges and His judgment is gracious."

How are these three concepts related to one another within God, and what are the implications of this relationship for the Christian life: love, holiness, wrath?

Can we any longer speak meaningfully of the judgment of God? If so, how, and in what specific way?

In the days following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, Pat Robertson and Jerry Falwell met with much public ridicule when they dared to suggest that the attacks might possibly represent God's judgment of America.

Dr. Leupp writes, "The roof collapsed in a Nazarene church I attended, with the falling center beam striking the pulpit. During those days the senior pastor was being unfaithful to his wife, eventually divorcing her and marrying the wife of the church youth pastor. Would anyone dare to say that the collapse of the church roof was evidence of the *judgment of God?*"

Do you have other personal stories about the judgment of God?

Returning to our too brief discussion of the love of God, it may be helpful to draw a contrast between the divine *agape* and another form of love, *eros* love. For some

writers, there is not that much difference between *eros* and *agape*, because one of the meanings of *eros* is "desire and yearning," and in a certain sense God does yearn for His creatures to know Him.

Refer to Resource 8-4 in the Student Guide.

The Swedish theologian Anders Nygren believed there is a dramatic and marked contrast between *agape* and *eros*. In his famous book by that title Nygren provides the following tabulation of the respective differences between these two forms of love.

Eros is acquisitive desire	Agape is sacrificial giving.	
and longing.		
Eros is an upward	Agape comes down.	
movement.		
Eros is man's way to God.	Agape is God's way to	
_	man.	
Eros is man's effort: it	Agape is God's grace:	
assumes that man's	salvation is the work of	
salvation is his own work.	divine love.	
Eros is egocentric love, a	Agape is unselfish love, it	
form of self-assertion of	"seeketh not its own," it	
the highest, noblest,	gives itself away.	
sublimest kind.	gives itself away.	
Eros seeks to gain its life	Agape lives the life of	
divine, immortalized.	God, therefore dares to	
divine, immortanzea.	"lose it."	
Eros is the will to get and	Agape is fredom in giving,	
possess, which depends	which depends on wealth	
on want and need.	•	
	and plenty.	
Eros is primarily <i>man's</i>	Agape is primarily God's	
love. God is the object of	love: "God is agape."	
eros. Even when it is	Even when it is attributed	
attributed to God, eros is	to man, agape is	
patterned on human love.	patterned on divine love.	
Eros is determined by the	Agape is sovereign in	
quality, the beauty, and	relation to its object, and	
worth of its object; it is	is directed to both "the	
not spontaneous but	evil and the good"; it is	
"evoked," "motivated."	spontaneous,	
	"overflowing,	
	unmotivated."	
Eros <i>recognizes value</i> in	Agape loves—and creates	
its object—and loves it.	value in its object.	

From Eros (University of Chicago Press, 1982), 210.

Lecture: The Classic Attributes of God: Seen Through a Christological Prism

(5 minutes)

In Lessons 7 and 8 we have considered some of the classic qualities that define and give substance to our concept of God. Others could be added to this short list

of power, wisdom, holiness, and love. Every theological instructor and student may be inspired to make relevant additions.

Where are, for example, righteousness, beauty, and truth? Paul's recounting of the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22-23 is of a single cluster with nine blossoms, pieces, or segments. Of these nine, only love has been explicitly applied to God in Lessons 7 and 8. But surely God, who is perfect Spirit and complete integrity, can be the *only* full flowering of the fruit of the Spirit.

It is therefore the very *profusion* of God's attributes, and how fairly to conceptualize, arrange, and apply these, that defines the theologian's task. Power, wisdom, holiness, and love may be the most obvious, and may be the most representative also, but come nowhere close to saying all that might be said. The nature of God is the most expansive subject of them all.

Let us try now a little analogy, or what might be called "an experiment in thought": My only brother was, for his young age, a prolific mountain climber. He was a near prodigy in his early teen years, climbing as a man among the men who also belonged to his climbing club, most of whom were old enough to be his father. After his prodigious early summits, his climbing slackened for some years, interrupted by college, graduate school, and employment. Then he returned and finished the sixteen peaks award his club gave to honor its greatest climbers. From northern California, through Oregon's volcanic peaks, to Washington's fearsome North Cascades approaching the Canadian border, Tim tamed the sixteen peaks defining this high terrain.

The commemorative plaque he received he probably prizes above his master's degree diploma. For *he* was the one who negotiated sixteen summits. He was not a disinterested bystander, watching someone else's home movies. He was the climber; the climbing reality was his, brought to life by his plodding and sometimes inspired steps. His fellow climbers were clearly instrumental in his success, yet none but Tim can look at the sixteen peaks plaque and fully comprehend the achievement.

Let us now apply this analogy to Jesus Christ. Let us assume that the attributes of God might number sixteen, as an approximate and agreed upon number. The exact number of attributes is not of great

consequence. The principle of the analogy does not rise or fall with any particular number. Just as my brother, the climber, is the only one who can really integrate those sixteen peaks into one mountain-climbing life, because he and none other climbed those peaks as he scaled them, so also *only* Jesus Christ can perfectly distill, articulate, express, and convey the attributes of God the Father. This is only a poetic way of saying what the Gospel writer said much more fluidly: "The Word became flesh and lived for a while among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth" (Jn 1:14).

We must go further and insist that there are not three sets of divine attributes, one for each of the three divine Persons, but only one, although the Father, Son, and Spirit may choose different forms and means of expressing these attributes. Orthodox trinitarian doctrine provides that all three are coequal, sharing perfectly and fully in divinity. Whatever qualities the Father owns and knows are at the same time fully the Son's and completely the Spirit's.

My brother Tim is clearly not to be mistaken for the Savior of the world, and at that juncture our analogy fails and grows cold. Other climbers have mounted those sixteen peaks, but the Father's Eternal Word was made known *exclusively* in Jesus Christ His only begotten Son. We may still, though, apply the point of one life integrating multiple aspects and horizons into a fully integrated and perfectly realized stream.

The life of Jesus Christ is that one life through whom we can best know God. God's ways may be known in history (especially the history of Israel), culture, and politics, in art, philosophy, and literature, and perhaps particularly in the lives of the everyday people God saw fit to create in such abundance.

But all of these knowings are preliminary, fragmentary, halting, and unfinished. All of them cry out for finality and completion. This day has dawned in Jesus Christ. As Paul wrote to the Galatians, "When the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under the law, that we might receive the full rights of sons" (Gal 4:4-5). And perhaps more to the point is Hebrews 1:3, "The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word."

To say that the Son represents the Father's being *exactly* is to say that Jesus Christ is the fullness of the Father's power, wisdom, holiness, and love. These traits of the divine life should never be defined as abstract essences or mere philosophical qualities or principles.

First and foremost they must be seen in the light of the life and death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. God's revelation in Jesus Christ is not one more revelation among many others, but one that stands alone, shining in its own light.

Power, wisdom, holiness, and love as displayed in Jesus Christ frequently contradict the world's expression of these qualities. "Where is the wise man? Where is the scholar? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe" (1 Cor 1:20-21).

There will always be arguments as to the world's greatest city or the country's most beautiful national park. The criteria used to define greatness are always shifting. Is it a city's athletic teams, museums, parks, and restaurants that set it apart? Its commitment to the arts, financial muscle, quality of neighborhood life, or political influence? Is a national park to be evaluated for the height of its waterfalls or biodiversity? Its sense of tradition, time, and place?

By faith given to us by the Holy Spirit, we claim Jesus Christ as the Father's definitive and perfect revelation. It is the task of Christian theology to demonstrate the truth and validity of this claim. Module Two will address these questions further.

Can God Change? Does God Change?

It is an old question in the philosophy of religion and in Christian theology as to whether or not God changes. *Is God really immutable, as Christian tradition has long believed?*

Consider the following great hymn:

Great is Thy faithfulness, O God, my Father;
There is no shadow of turning with Thee
Thou changest not; Thy compassions, they fail not
As Thou hast been Thou forever wilt be.

From Sing to the Lord, 44.

Does Thomas O. Chisholm, who wrote these words in 1923, believe God changes? Obviously not. In the strongest language he affirms several times that God does not change. He believes "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever" (Heb 13:8). And yet the word compassion, which means to suffer with and alongside of, is in some ways the most important word in the entire verse.

"His compassions never fail. They are new every morning" (Lam 3:22-23). This scripture teaches us that one thing that never changes is God's willingness to seek out and to save the lost. It might be said that God's concern for and love of His world and all that is in it never changes, but the particular ways God chooses to express this love may change as He sees best.

Small Groups: Creation of a Worship Service That Focuses on the Holiness and Love of God

(25 minutes)

Since it is assumed that the instructor of this lesson is a practicing Christian minister, it is assumed that he or she is capable of giving form, structure, and substance to this learning activity.

Have the students work in pairs to outline a worship service.

Refer to Resource 8-5 in the Student Guide.

The end product of this learning activity should be an order of worship that might be used in a local Church of the Nazarene. Coordinate the call to worship, invocation, hymns, gospel songs, reading of the creed, responsive reading, Scripture reading(s), special music, sermon, and any other features around these two great related themes: God's love and God's holiness.

Guided Discussion: Poetic Ending

See "God Our Father: Grace, Love, and Mercy" and "Jesus Our Savior: Grace, Love, and Mercy" in the topical index of Sing to the Lord for suggestions.

Elsewhere in this module we quoted Charles Wesley's magnificent hymn about the love of God, "Love Divine, All Loves Excelling."

Name three other favorite hymns about the love of God.

There is a good chance that the following hymn, "The Love of God," will be on many lists:

The love of God is greater far
Than tongue or pen can ever tell;
It goes beyond the highest star,
And reaches to the lowest hell.
The guilty pair, bowed down with care,
God gave His son to win;
His erring child He reconciled,
And pardoned from his sin.

Could we with ink the ocean fill,
And were the skies of parchment made,
Were ev'ry stalk on earth a quill,
And ev'ry man a scribe by trade,
To write the love of God above
Would drain the ocean dry
Nor could the scroll contain the whole,
Tho' stretched from sky to sky.

-Frederick M. Lehman

From Sing to the Lord, 86. Words: Frederick M. Lehman, published in Songs That are Different, Volume 2, 1919. Music: Frederick M. Lehman; arranged by his daughter, Claudia L. Mays.

Lesson Close

(5 minutes)

Review

Instruct students to locate objectives in the Student Guide.

Look at the learner objectives for this lesson. Did you

- appreciate more fully the theological heritage of the Church of the Nazarene as a Holiness denomination?
- compare and contrast Nazarene views with select views from other theologians?
- consider the relation between God's intrinsic holiness and humanity's derived, dependent holiness?
- reflect once again on God's great love for the creation and for humankind?

Look Ahead

In the next two sessions, we will study four contemporary ways of viewing God. Specifically, we will be taking brief looks at the following four ways of conceptualizing theology. We will be certain to highlight how each of these ways thinks about God, while also touching on other important features of each. The four are: *liberation theology, ethnic theology* (specifically African-American and Asian), *feminist theology*, and *process theology*.

Assign Homework

Direct students to the Homework Assignments in the Student Guide. Interview eight people. At least half of them should not be from the Church of the Nazarene. Ask the following questions, and prepare a four-page essay summarizing the answers, indicating where necessary, your personal agreement or disagreement with the answers.

- What, for you, is the meaning of holy?
- Do sacred and holy mean the same thing to you?
- What is the meaning of profane?
- What for you is the holiest place on earth?
- When you contemplate what for you is the holiest place on earth, does your definition of holy or of holiness change at all? Why or why not?

Journal Prompts

- Reflect a time when the holiness of God penetrated to your innermost being.
- Reflect a time when the love of God surrounded you.

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Lesson 9

Recent Ways of Speaking of God and Thinking Theologically

Lesson Overview

Schedule

Start Time	Task or Topic	Learning Activity	Materials Needed
0:00	Introduction	Orient	Student Guide
			Video clip
0:20	Liberation Theology	Lecture/Discussion	Resource 9-1
			Resource 9-2
			Resource 9-3
			Resource 9-4
			Resource 9-5
1:00	Ethnic Theology	Lecture/Discussion	Resource 9-6
			Resource 9-7
1:20	Lesson Close	Review, Assign	Student Guide

Suggested Reading for Instructor

Overall: A helpful text detailing many theological developments in the 20th century is Stanley J. Grenz and Roger E. Olson, 20th Century Theology: God and the World in a Transitional Age. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992. This will be excellent background reading on such 20th-century theological "giants" as Karl Barth, Paul Tillich, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Reinhold Niebuhr, Emil Brunner, Jürgen Moltmann, and Wolfhart Pannenberg.

- On Liberation Theology: The literature of liberation theology is immense and growing every month. The main publisher identified with the movement is Orbis Books of Maryknoll, NY. Browsing through the Orbis catalog or website will be helpful.
- Berryman, Phillip. *Liberation Theology*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1987. This is a standard work in this field with lots of good information.
- Boff, Leonardo, and Clodovis Boff. "Key Themes of Liberation Theology." In From Christ to the World: Introductory Readings in Christian Ethics. Edited by Wayne G. Boulton, Thomas D. Kennedy, and Allen Verhey. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994, 474-82. The Boff brothers are Brazilian priests. This selection is originally from their book Introducing Liberation Theology (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1986), which is worth consulting.
- Brown, Robert McAfee. *Theology in a New Key:* Responding to Liberation Themes. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1978. Written by a well-known liberal American Protestant, giving a sympathetic treatment of liberation theology, largely written for a North American audience.
- Gutierrez, Gustavo. *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics, and Salvation.* Revised edition with a new introduction, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1988. The book that started a theological movement.
- Hundley, Raymond G. *Radical Liberation Theology: An Evangelical Response.* Wilmore, KY: Bristol Books, 1987. A criticism of liberation impulses from an evangelical standpoint.
- Nash, Ronald, ed. *Liberation Theology*. Milford, MI: Mott Media, 1984. A collection of ten essays, most of them critical of liberation theology.
- Novak, Michael. Will It Liberate? Questions About Liberation Theology. New York: Paulist Press, 1986. Most of the chapters in this book first appeared elsewhere as journal articles or speeches. Michael Novak is Roman Catholic, a first-rate intellect, and a decided opponent of much of what liberation theology stands for.

On Ethnic Theology

African-American

James H. Cone is the outstanding figure here. Virtually anything he has written will be instructive. His short essay, "God Is the Color of Suffering," in *The Changing Face of God*, edited by Frederick W. Schmidt (Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse Publishing, 2000), is a good place to begin.

His two best-known books may be *A Black Theology of Liberation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1986) and *Black Theology and Black Power* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1997). Along with Gayraud S. Wilmore, Cone edited a helpful collection called *Black Theology: A Documentary History, 1966-1979* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1993).

<u>Asian</u>

Park, Andrew Sung. "The God Who Needs Our Salvation." In *The Changing Face of God.* Edited by Frederick W. Schmidt. Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse Publishing, 2000.

______. The Wounded Heart of God: The Asian Concept of Han and the Christian Doctrine of Sin.

Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1993. Western theology has nothing quite like the Korean idea of han, which means unrelieved suffering. This book will help to clarify the doctrine of sin.

Lesson Introduction

(20 minutes)

Accountability

In pairs have the students share the results of their interviews.

Return and collect all homework.

Motivator

If possible, show the class a segment from the video Romero (Paulist Pictures, 1989), which teaches well about liberation themes. The instructor could view the entire film and decide which parts are appropriate for the students to watch.

If the video is not available, you might show a video clip showing a typical African-American worship service.

Orientation

Wherever we live, the whole world is coming to our doorstep. Pluralism and multiculturalism are no longer realities that happen "out there," for they are happening daily in our cities, towns, villages, and neighborhoods.

With cultural complexity comes theological complexity, since theological work always mirrors its surrounding culture.

In this lesson we study two fairly recent theological movements: (1) liberation theology and (2) what we are calling "ethnic theology," using as examples African-American theology and Asian theology.

Learner Objectives

Instruct students to locate objectives in the Student Guide.

Restating the objectives for the learners serves as an advanced organizer for the lesson and alerts learners to key information and concepts.

To help students

- survey some theological trends of the past 35 or 40 years, so our theological education is contemporary and up-to-date
- sharpen and develop our critical theological skills
- become more aware of current thought trends that impact theological thinking

Lesson Body

Lecture/Discussion: Liberation Theology

(40 minutes)

Introduction to Liberation Theology

Refer to Resource 9-1 in the Student Guide.

When the history of 20th-century Christian theology is written, liberation theology will be remembered as one of the major developments of the last half of the century. It started as a movement in the late 1960s in South America, although proponents of liberation theology would say their way of looking at theological questions goes back to the beginning, to the Bible. Liberationist thought, according to its advocates, revives and rescues a neglected theme prominent in the biblical record, namely, that the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ, is a God who favors the poor, marginalized, and oppressed of the world. While biblical religion is obviously for all people, to reconcile all to God, it is among the poor where God especially can be found.

Biblical Foundations

Liberationists claim their theology is biblical. They do not necessarily say the Bible contains *nothing but* liberation themes, but they believe the liberation message is a privileged message, one that should be used to interpret all of the other biblical messages.

Through Abraham God chose a people, the covenant people. But through Moses God gathered together and formed a nation, the children of Israel. God brought them safely from their captivity in Egypt, persevered with them through many long and tedious years of wilderness wandering, and finally established them in a land filled with milk and honey. God chose the Israelites because of their poverty, and in their being chosen they found spiritual and indeed material wealth.

What God did for the Israelites then, God desires to do for all people. The redemption of all people will start with the poor, but will extend to the entire created realm. The whole population of the world tends to be divided by liberationists into two groups: *the oppressed* and *the oppressors*. In the Bible, God consistently sides with the oppressed. We see this dynamic especially in the pronouncements of the Old Testament prophets, with their relentless quest for justice, equity,

and fairness. Biblical ideas such as *Shalom* and *The Year of the Jubilee* are often adapted for liberation purposes.

Although redemption may start among the poor of the world, in the end no one is excluded. By and by those who are oppressors realize their sin, and repent of it.

The career of Jesus Christ is also seen as proving that God loves the poor most of all. In Matthew 2 we see that the holy family is a refugee family, fleeing King Herod under cover of night to Egypt. The crucifixion of Jesus Christ is seen as a political event. Jesus is crucified by the Roman government because He has no political standing. He is almost a martyr for the people.

Obviously, theories of the Atonement that emphasize that "Jesus died to save me from my sins" are seen as far too individualistic to satisfy liberation theology. Jesus died and rose again to give new hope to those engaged in political (and even military) struggle to make the world a better place to live, which means above all peace and justice for all. Along with that, there is mandated a dramatic redistribution of the wealth of the world to benefit those who are currently numbered among the "have nots."

Most liberation theologians are opposed to free market capitalism as an economic system, saying it is responsible for most of the world's problems. Instead, they favor some form of socialism or communism. Some of them are fond of quoting passages such as Acts 2:44-45 and 4:34-35, where some of the early Christians practiced what seems to be a form of communal living. Whereas most Christians would probably claim this practice was only temporary, liberationists would claim it should be normative for all Christians at all times.

Biblical Meditation

One of the key texts for liberation theology is Luke 4:18-19, which is part of Jesus' first public ministry in this Gospel. Try to set the tone in a dramatic way: Jesus Christ enters the synagogue in His hometown of Nazareth. He is skilled enough with the Hebrew Scriptures that He unrolls the scroll to Isaiah 61. He reads from the prophet and then says that today, in the hearing of His listeners, this scripture has been fulfilled.

Refer to Resource 9-2 in the Student Guide.

Jesus makes very explicit claims about himself and His ministry in these two verses. They are:

- The Spirit of the Lord is upon me
- He has anointed me
- To bring good news to the poor
- He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives
- Recovery of sight to the blind
- To let the oppressed go free
- To proclaim the year of the Lord's favor

Invite the students to meditate on this scripture prayerfully for several moments.

Then ask them to respond to it in writing for about three-five minutes.

Call on one or two students to share what they have written.

Refer to Resource 9-3 in the Student Guide.

Who Are the Poor, Anyway?

As liberation theology was being established as a new approach to Christian theology, two phrases were often spoken. Both of these underscore what we have already said, that the poor are the starting place for "doing" theology in a liberationist way. For one, there is the *preferential option for the poor*. That means exactly what it says. The poor are God's preferred, and they should be our preferred option also.

The second phrase said that the poor are more insightful and better able to see reality as it really is. This is the *epistemological privilege of the poor*, with epistemology here referring to how we know what in fact we know.

To some degree John Wesley agreed with this last idea, suggesting that the poor have relatively fewer obstacles between them and the Lord. Recall that Jesus said, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick" (Matt 9:12). The non-poor of the world are like the well in Jesus' utterance. They have no idea of the spiritual poverty that infects them amid their material abundance.

Remember, too, that Mother Teresa of Calcutta sometimes claimed the people of the United States were actually the world's *poorest people*, because material wealth had blinded them to what really mattered in life. It has also been said that the entire Christology of German theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer was based on Matthew 8:16-17:

That evening they brought to [Jesus] many who were possessed with demons; and he cast out the spirits with a word, and cured all who were sick. This was to fulfill what had been spoken through

the prophet Isaiah, "He took our infirmities and bore our diseases."

These cannot be only *spiritual* diseases Jesus is committed to healing, because in the final analysis there can be no hard and fast distinction between the *physical* and the *spiritual*.

Liberation theology stresses that spiritual problems often are caused by the physical circumstances of poverty, hunger, homelessness, and so forth. Karl Marx believed *material* causes were responsible for all of the world's ills, and liberation theology agrees with this diagnosis, if not always with Marxian solutions of class warfare and revolution.

Refer to Resource 9-4 in the Student Guide.

From The Bible, the Church, and the Poor (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1989).

Clodovis Boff and George V. Pixley help us understand further just whom the poor are today. "They are those who suffer from basic economic need, those who are deprived of the material goods necessary to live with any dignity."

Collective, conflictive, and alternative are three adjectives that today may be used to describe the poor.

- Collective means, "Poverty today is a social, structural, massive problem. The poor make up whole classes, masses and peoples. They are found above all in the urban areas of the Third World."
- Conflictive suggests that the poor have become poor through no choices of their own, but rather are victims of a plundering system. "The poor are poor because they are exploited or rejected by a perverse economic system." Numbered among these poor are the truly wretched of the earth: beggars, abandoned children, outcasts, prostitutes, etc.
- Alternative urges that these poor need a better future to inherit.

Discussion Interlude

It should be clear by now that the place of the poor in history is very important for liberationist perspectives.

What personal experiences have you had with the poor?

To make this point in a biblical way, contrast Matthew 5:3, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven," with Luke 6:20, "Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God."

Does Jesus mean the same thing with these two "Beatitudes"? If not, why not?

Basic Beliefs of Liberation Theology

Refer to Resource 9-5 in the Student Guide.

From Leonardo Boff and Clodovis Boff, "Key Themes of Liberation Theology," in From Christ to the World: Introductory Readings in Christian Ethics, ed. Wayne G. Boulton, Thomas D. Kennedy, and Allen Verhey (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 476.

It is important for the instructor to show how the eight qualities mentioned here agree and disagree with Nazarene beliefs. Since liberation theology originated in South America, most of its practitioners are Roman Catholics, if by no means all. *Praxis* and *Orthopraxis* are important concepts for all liberationists. These words mean "committed action." Advocates of liberation theology could never rest content to stay in book-lined studies and libraries. They must be out there on the front lines, with their people. They must be involved in pastoral activity. Some of them live among the poor, in what are called "base communities."

Theologically, the brothers Leonardo Boff and Clodovis Boff explain the basic commitments all liberationists hold. They would agree with the definitions just given about poverty, but add the further idea of "the evangelically poor," meaning that some people will volunteer to become poor to live in solidarity with the poor. The Boffs write, "those who, without being socioeconomically poor, make themselves poor—out of love for and solidarity with the poor—in order to struggle against unjust poverty with them and together seek liberation and justice, are evangelically poor."

The Boff brothers list the following as important teachings of liberation theology:

- 1. Faith that is true and living will be faith that practices liberation. In Matthew 25:31-46, for example, we see how and why faith must be put into action.
- 2. The living God takes sides. He favors the oppressed in their struggles against the pharaohs of this world. One of the foundational documents of liberation theology, from 1968, suggested the following:

Just as formerly the first people, Israel, experienced the saving presence of God when he set them free from slavery to Egypt, so we too, the new people of God, cannot fail to feel his saving deliverance when there is real development—that is, deliverance for each and every one from less human to more human conditions of life.

- 3. The reign or kingdom of God is something God intends to accomplish in history and eternity. There is no separate and isolated track of history that is only for the sacred. Liberation theology views all of history as one. Whenever justice and truth prevail, it is *there* that God's kingdom can be found.
- 4. The Son of God, Jesus Christ, fully participates in the liberative work of God. He willingly took on oppression so the captives of the world might be set free.
- 5. The Holy Spirit is the "Father of the poor" and is present in all of the struggles of the poor.
- 6. The Virgin Mary is uniquely positioned to be the "prophetic and liberating woman of the people."

 This theme may not be as important to Protestants.
- 7. The church of Jesus Christ is the "advance guard" of liberation, and is the signpost pointing toward full liberation.
- 8. Since God is fully present in the poor, whatever rights the poor have are at the same time the rights of God.

Evaluative Comment

There is much of value in liberation theology. Many will be tempted to dismiss it as merely a "replay" of the Social Gospel (1890-1930), which was often criticized by Nazarene preachers, but it is more than that. It is a new way of understanding and viewing the very task of theology.

Along with the new starting point of the poor working toward their own history, liberation theology has a new methodology (using the tools of social scientific analysis like demographics, economics, political science, and sociology), and new sources of religious knowing, especially the everyday experiences of the poor. Secular history is one source of knowledge, and the social sciences may be more important to Christian theology than the classic sources we discussed in the first lesson: reason, revelation, the Bible, etc.

Liberation theology also emphasizes the close connection between theology and ethics. In fact, many would say it is not really a fully developed theology at all, but is rather a system of ethics with some theological "window dressing."

One important insight liberation theology can give to the doctrine of holiness is that *sin is systemic;* that is, sin gets into social and even churchly systems. So much of Nazarene holiness theology is individualistic, stressing an individual's personal relationship with God. Sin is seen as occurring only between the individual and God, with little or no thought of sin's social and cultural implications. Liberation theology can help us to develop a more mature—and biblical—doctrine of sin.

Our final comment regarding liberation theology would be that while much about the liberationist outlook is true, it is incomplete. Perhaps no theology is fully complete, or completely biblical. We must admit that liberation theology is only selectively biblical. While the social element of concern for the poor is certainly in the Bible, it may be questioned whether *liberation* (as understood by liberation theologians) is the primary way the Bible understands salvation. The liberation motif needs to be balanced out with redemption, justification, regeneration, sanctification, the new birth, and other biblical ways of expressing the reconciliation Jesus Christ came to bring between God and humanity.

Lecture/Discussion: Ethnic Theology

(20 minutes)

Consider inviting a black clergyperson and an Asian clergyperson to visit the class and present some of the basic ideas of black and Asian theology.

The largest Nazarene university in the world will soon be Korea Nazarene University, although many of the students are not Nazarenes and perhaps not even Christians.

African-American

The author writes: "During my eight years of teaching in the Philippines, we were often privileged to have guest choirs from South Korea, where the Church of the Nazarene has a significant presence. On at least one of these occasions the visiting choir sang one or two Negro spirituals. They performed admirably, if not totally convincingly to an American who had at times heard 'the real thing.'

"The question that stuck with me when listening to Koreans singing black spirituals was simple: *If you haven't shared the history, can you still sing the songs?* I realize, of course, that the Korean people have suffered tremendously during the 20th century, from Japanese colonization early in the century to a country-dividing war in the mid-century, and conflicts endured the rest of the century. And yet those Koreans had not suffered in *exactly the same way* as had African-Americans."

Discussion Interlude

At many times in this first module of Christian Theology we have discussed the problem of sin, evil, and suffering. Yet for the most part our discussion has assumed a more or less *individualistic* perspective on suffering. But with African-Americans there can be no question that *as a people* they have suffered tremendously.

What difference would it make if we viewed the problem of suffering not exclusively in individualistic terms, but also in terms of group suffering?

Much in Common with Liberation Themes

African-American or black theology has much in common with liberation theology. God still favors the poor and still works to better the lot of the poor in history. The biblical Exodus is still the central interpretive key for the Old Testament, if not for the entire Bible.

Over the past forty years, James H. Cone has emerged as the leading advocate for black theology. Notice the similarities between black and liberation theologies in his following statement:

To explicate the theological significance of the

the Bible through the eyes of their slave

liberation motif, black theologians began to reread

Refer to Resource 9-6 in the Student Guide.

grandparents and started to speak of God's solidarity with the wretched of the earth. As the political liberation of the poor emerged as the dominant motif, justice, love, and hope were reinterpreted in its light. For the biblical meaning of liberation, black theologians turned to the Exodus, while the message of the prophets provided the theological content for the theme of justice. The gospel story of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus served as the biblical foundation for a reinterpretation of love, suffering, and hope in the

From "God Is the Color of Suffering," in The Changing Face of God, 60.

Liberation theology will typically view Jesus as one of them, as brown. Black theology obviously views Jesus Christ, and indeed God himself, as black. The point is that each of these important theological thrusts begins with the experience of a downtrodden people. African-American theology may be more narrowly focused in that it is especially concerned with aiding the American black, whereas liberation theology speaks in more

context of the black struggle for liberation and

justice.

general terms of the poor around the world. But this is perhaps not a significant difference.

Whereas liberation theology probably cannot point to any one human being as its founder, African-American theology often points to Martin Luther King, Jr. King's perspectives, as James Cone analyzes it, came from three sources.

- Initially, King fused the American ideal of democratic freedom with the Old Testament prophetic impulse for justice, fairness, and liberation.
- He then joined both of these traditions with the New Testament ethic of love and hope as exemplified in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.
- This eventuated in King's belief in nonviolent protest, which was influenced by the Indian leader Gandhi.

Liberation theology believes true liberation will free *both* the oppressed and their oppressors. This happens through a positive identification with the sufferings of Jesus Christ. Cone believes the same thing can happen for blacks and the whites who continue to mistreat them:

As a Christian whose faith derived from the cross of Jesus, Martin King believed that there could be no true liberation without suffering. Through nonviolent suffering, he contended, blacks would not only liberate themselves from the necessity of bitterness and feeling of inferiority toward whites, but would also prick the conscience of whites and liberate them from a feeling of superiority. The mutual liberation of blacks and whites lays the foundation for both to work together toward the creation of an entirely new world.

Cone, "God is the Color of Suffering," 56.

Refer again to Resource 9-6.

Asian

Much contemporary theology rejects the God of classical theism. The one recurring complaint raised against the theistic God is that He is not capable of suffering or change. Traditional theological language describes God as beyond change (immutable) and oblivious to suffering (impassible). We will discuss this further when considering the doctrine of the Trinity. We note it here because Asian theology has stressed that God must suffer for us. An impassible God may well serve as the center for an elaborate system of philosophy, but He will never do for a faith that stresses the need for salvation.

The Korean theologian Andrew Sung Park uses the idea of *han* to convey the importance of the suffering of God. Han is a Korean concept for which there is no real Western equivalent. Park compares it to the black hole phenomenon, suggesting that, similar to a black hole:

When a victim's pain expands beyond his or her

Refer to Resource 9-7 in the Student Guide.

capacity for perseverance, the soul collapses into a deep, dark abyss. That abysmal core of pain is *han*, and the collapsed, inner core swallows everything, dominating the victim's life-agenda. The hope that is the very foundation of our existence is frustrated, turning into psychosomatic writhing. Sadness, despair, resentment, and helplessness dominate. The gravitational pull of the wound that is created takes with it our sense of dignity and self-worth.

From "The God Who Needs Our Salvation," in The Changing Face of God, 82.

Han sides with the victim. Park believes the history of Christian theology has been strangely silent on the plight of the victim. There is much about how sinners may be forgiven, but virtually nothing about how those who are sinned against may find relief. Han is the root of bitterness that never quite goes away completely, because there is always suffering in the world, always one level of victimization or another.

Classical Christian theology may have within itself the resources to remedy this oversight of those who are the sinned against. But to do so it must stress that God is himself a victim on the Cross. Park's analysis is helpful at this point:

But there is little in Christian theology that is addressed to the plight of the victim. The implications for our understanding of God are significant. We think of the cross of Jesus as the emblem of forgiveness and redemption, but we scarcely acknowledge its significance as the piercing suffering of God as victim. The cross in turn becomes the critical turning point in the salvific relation between God and humankind.

Ibid., 83.

Park does not exactly say how Jesus Christ is victim, or perhaps more to the point, who victimizes Jesus Christ. No one wants to turn the cross of Jesus Christ into an event of "divine child abuse" where God the Father victimizes His own Son. It is true that Jesus Christ felt abandoned and forsaken by God while He hung on the Cross (Mark 15:34). But, as Jürgen Moltmann (who believes God must suffer and be vulnerable to save us) has pointed out, this is the only time in the Gospel record where Jesus Christ uses the impersonal 'God' and not the personal 'Father.' While on the Cross Jesus

Christ may have ceased to experience God as Father, which was His sense of being abandoned.

Elsewhere in this module we gave passing attention to the omnipotence of God. Most important currents of contemporary theology reject the omnipotence of God, at least as it was formulated classically. It is much more important that the God of today readily identify with the sufferings of all of His creation. A God who identifies is better than a God who stands off to one side. In a sense God's being there with those who suffer is itself salvation.

What if *han* is seriously applied to the divine nature? What then? How does this affect the customary view of God as all-powerful? Park explains:

The God of *han* might not be all-powerful but is surely all-truthful. It is that characterization of God, not the characterization of God as almighty that should shape our theology. In spite of mockery, contempt, beatings, and death threats, Jesus was truthful. The confession that God was wounded in history reflects God's strength. The *han* of God includes Jesus' sorrowful, unbearable life. The God of *han* in the life of Jesus is anguished yet truthful, gentle yet strong, broken yet whole, and wounded yet healing. The truthfulness of God is much more meaningful than the traditional understanding of all-powerfulness or finite power in dealing with evil and suffering, because it speaks to our experience, exposing the power of injustice and evil.

Ibid., 88.

Discussion Interlude

Park suggests within God there is an opposition between God's power and God's truth.

Can we allow this?

In our brief discussion of the wisdom of God we suggested that wisdom is what guides God's use of power. The wise God uses His infinite power in wise, redemptive, and proportional ways.

But is not wisdom the same as truth?

One criticism commonly raised against the sort of theology Park advocates is that a God who is not all-powerful (whether or not God chooses to use all of His power) is not a God who can really intervene on our behalf. This God may visit us in the hospital room, hold our hands in a consoling manner, and be there with us

while we die. But this God is by definition incapable of healing us of our illness and sending us home to family and loved ones. Admittedly, God does not always heal when we ask Him, but to suggest God is incapable of healing us somehow seems not to be right.

Lesson Close

(10 minutes)

Review

Who would like to give us a one- to two-sentence summary of liberation theology?

If you have invited guests to share about ethnic theologies, you could invite the class to ask questions at this time.

African-American theology?

Asian theology?

Look Ahead

For the next lesson we will continue to study contemporary theology and some of its claims about God. We will examine process theology and feminist theology.

Assign Homework

Direct students to the Homework Assignments in the Student Guide. Complete one of the following two assignments:

- Interview one or two black pastors, and ask them to discuss their knowledge and understanding of black theology. Then write a three-page paper discussing your findings.
- 2. Do some research into early Nazarene concern for the poor, or John Wesley's work with the poor.
 - Carl Bangs' recent biography of Nazarene patriarch, Phineas Bresee, contains some relevant information. *Phineas F. Bresee: His Life* in Methodism, the Holiness Movement, and the Church of the Nazarene. Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1995.
 - For John Wesley, see Theodore W. Jennings, Jr. Good News to the Poor: John Wesley's Evangelical Economics. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1990.
 - Write a three- to four-page paper discussing what you have learned.

Visit an ethnic congregation for one of their services. We looked only at African-American and Asian but there are many others also. Enter into the service with an attitude of worship and participation, not an attitude of criticism.

Journal Prompts

All of the theological impulses discussed in this lesson might be described as being "from the

outside" or "from the margins." Think of your own life in those terms: Are you an insider or an outsider? Probably you are some of both. But in what particular senses?

Punctuate the Finish

The instructor may wish to find an African-American poem or song of deliverance. The poem by Maya Angelou, "I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings," is a good one. An excerpt from one of the speeches given by Martin Luther King, Jr. would also be appropriate.

Lesson 10

Continuing the Conversation about Contemporary Theology

Lesson Overview

Schedule

Start Time	Task or Topic	Learning Activity	Materials Needed
0:00	Introduction	Orient	Student Guide
			Video
0:15	Feminist Theology	Lecture/Discussion	Resource 10-1
			Resource 10-2
0:35	Process Theology	Lecture/Discussion	Resource 10-3
			Resource 10-4
			Resource 10-5
			Resource 10-6
0:55	Evaluation	Lecture/Discussion	
1:15	Lesson Close	Review, Assign	Student Guide

Suggested Reading for Instructor

Feminist Theology

- Carr, Anne E. *Transforming Grace: Christian Tradition and Women's Experience*. New York: Continuum, 1996.
- Johnson, Elizabeth A. *She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse.* New York: Crossroad, 1992.
- Laird, Rebecca. *Ordained Women in the Church of the Nazarene: The First Generation.* Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1993.
- Martin, Francis. *The Feminist Question: Feminist Theology in the Light of Christian Tradition.* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994.
- Ruether, Rosemary Radford. *Sexism and God-Talk: Toward a Feminist Theology*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1983.

Process Theology

- Cobb, John B., Jr., and David Ray Griffin. *Process Theology: An Introductory Exposition.* Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1976.
- Cousins, Ewert H., ed. *Process Theology: Basic Writings*. New York: Newman Press, 1971.
- Hartshorne, Charles. *Omnipotence and Other Theological Mistakes*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1984.
- Nash, Ronald H., ed. *Process Theology*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1987.
- Williams, Daniel Day. *The Spirit and the Forms of Love.* New York: Harper and Row, 1968.

Lesson Introduction

(15-20 minutes)

Accountability

Have one student from each of the two report options briefly tell what they learned.

Have one student share his or her experience with visiting an ethnic congregation.

Return and collect all homework.

Motivator

Have the class watch a segment of the video, Ablaze with Love: The Living Legacy of Our Nazarene Foremothers. Kansas City: Nazarene Publishing House, 2001. This video documentary about women in ministry in the Church of the Nazarene was produced by Janine Metcalf, and is available from Nazarene Publishing House.

Orientation

This lesson continues the tone and tenor of Lesson 9. How feminist and process theologies speak of God will be our particular interest in this lesson.

Learner Objectives

Instruct students to locate objectives in the Student Guide.

Restating the objectives for the learners serves as an advanced organizer for the lesson and alerts learners to key information and concepts.

To help students

- survey some theological trends of the past 35 or 40 years, so our theological education is contemporary and up-to-date
- sharpen and develop our critical theological skills
- become more aware of current thought trends that impact theological thinking

Lesson Body

Lecture/Discussion: Feminist Theology

(20 minutes)

For the materials regarding feminist theology, consider inviting a local clergywoman to class as a guest speaker. If a Nazarene woman cannot be located, the United Methodist Church, which shares much common theological perspective with the Church of the Nazarene, has many women in ministry.

Be aware that there are many different "stripes" of feminist persuasion, from the radical to the fairly moderate.

Refer to Resource 10-1 in the Student Guide.

Introduction to Feminist Theology

One definite convergence between Asian theology and feminist theology is that both are very much opposed to hierarchies. Why is this? One Korean feminist theologian once referred to the Trinity as the "Old Boys' Club." Feminism wishes to present us with a new vision of God as fair, open, and compassionate. In place of the perceived hierarchy of the Trinity, with its perceived "chain of command" from God the Father to God the Son and then on to God the Spirit, feminism would present us with a God characterized by "interrelationality" or a "symbiotic web." This God may still be triune, but should be known rather as God the Creator (in place of Father), God the Redeemer (instead of Son), and God the Sustainer (instead of Spirit). Sallie McFaque, in her well-known book, *Models* of God, describes God as Mother, Lover, and Friend, though she does not necessarily say this is her new "Trinity."

What is a hierarchy? Andrew Sung Park sees it this way:

In this religious system [where God is viewed as sovereign and impassable] God is at the top of the totem pole. Below God there are angels; below angels, white men; below white men, white women and children; below white women and children, ethnic minority men; below ethnic minority men, ethnic minority women and children; below ethnic

From "The God Who Needs Our Salvation," 81-2.

minority women and children, animals; below animals, plants; below plants, dirt.

Discussion Interlude

The concerns of liberation, African-American, and Asian theologies may seem distant and remote to us because, after all, we do not see a great mixture of such people in North American congregations. Yet our congregations are often heavily female.

Knowing women make up more than half of our congregations, is this charge of a hierarchical world true?

If it is true, would God have us take steps to be more open and fair toward the women in our congregations? How can we do this?

Understanding Feminist Claims

Respected feminist theologian Anne E. Carr speaks of three related moments for contemporary feminist theology. We will survey each of these now.

Refer to Resource 10-2 in the Student Guide.

Protest and Critique

The hierarchy we mentioned before not only positions God on top, but sees this God as endowed with male qualities and attributes. Christian theology has consistently asserted that God transcends gender, but this belief is often conveniently forgotten when it comes to the treatment of womankind. To keep women in their place, the male God grants to husbands, fathers, and even brothers power over their wives, daughters, and sisters. And the men are never bashful about using what they consider to be their "God-given" power.

This pattern of male dominance is evident not only within families, but is a pervasive pattern across the whole world. Anne Carr writes:

Christian feminist thought argues that theology has legitimated patterns of domination in relations between God and humankind, Christ and the church, men and women, adults and children, clergy and laity, rich nations and poor, whites and people of color, humankind and the earth."

Thus "God as dominator" is viewed by feminist theologians as responsible for very nearly *all* of the earth's problems.

From "Feminism," in Dictionary of Fundamental Theology, ed. Rene Latourelle (New York: Crossroad, 1995), 315-6.

In common with liberation theology, feminist theology believes that sin and evil infest systems, structures, and social institutions. The intertwined realities of racism, classism, elitism, and clericalism prove again and again how enmeshed each of these systems is within the others. And all of them are supported and allowed to continue because the dominator God stands over all.

We have also mentioned solidarity among the poor in liberation and African-American theologies. Many feminists, claiming rightly that women are neither a statistical minority nor a self-contained caste, say the oppression of womankind is in fact the original oppression, which has given rise to all subsequent oppressions.

Historical Revision

It is often said that history is written by winners and not losers. Some feminists point to the very word 'history' and say it disallows, excludes, or marginalizes contributions women have made to culture and society. Historical concerns, they say, are all too often wrapped up in war and politics, two areas where men exert control, with little interest in the domestic concerns of childbearing and the education of the young.

Carr is asking us to look back again at the many contributions women have made to the ongoing history, spirituality, and theology of the Christian movement. For those with eyes to see and ears to hear, women will emerge from the pages of history as powerful witnesses to the grace of God in Jesus Christ.

Three resources will help us to retrieve female contributions to the Wesleyan and holiness heritage:

Rebecca Laird, *Ordained Women in the Church of the Nazarene: The First Generation*. Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1993; \$12.99, available from the Nazarene Publishing House.

Palmer, Pheobe. *Phoebe Palmer: Selected Writings*. Edited by Thomas C. Oden. Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1988; \$24.95.

Wesley, Susanna. *Susanna Wesley: The Complete Writings.* Edited by Charles Wallace, Jr. New York: Oxford University Press, 1997; \$65.00.

These were the prices in 2002.

Theological Reconstruction

As we have repeatedly seen throughout our discussion of Christian theology, human experience is often the preferred launching point for theological reflection. The Wesleyan Quadrilateral values experience, to be sure, as one of the three secondary sources of theology (reason and tradition being the other two which support the Bible as the primary source).

Specifically, feminist theology starts with the experience of women. For many women, to call God "Father" or "Lord" is painful and to be avoided. Instead, deity may be referred to as God or Goddess, with religious images such as "birthing," "creative suffering," and "dancer" expressing the full range of feminine religious experience. In worship, symbols such as the egg, blood, water, wind, and fire may be employed.

Some women desire to balance out "Father" with "Father and Mother," while others may be opposed to all references to God as a parent, because the image of parent refuses to allow anyone to "grow up" in relation to God.

Evaluation

There are many different varieties of feminism. Some more radical feminists want nothing at all to do with Christianity, dismissing it as hopelessly patriarchal. Mary Daly is one such woman, with her belief in the "unholy trinity" of rape, war, and genocide, all of these caused and perpetuated by men.

Many feminists are more interested in fairness than in anything else. For some, the issue of fairness may focus on how properly to address God in prayer, or on hymn lyrics that seem excessively male-oriented.

There may be few radical feminists in Nazarene congregations around the world. Yet there will be many who have a hard time calling God "Father." They may have been abused as children, emotionally, physically, even sexually. They may be in damaging relationships with men at the current moment. They need help! One way of helping such women is to point out again that Christian theology does not assign any gender to God. An abusive husband does not disqualify us from calling God "Our Father." Along with this, try with your congregation to rediscover some of the female images for God present in the Bible. Do not wait until Mother's

Day to focus on the importance of women in the local church.

Robert W. Jenson challenges us to consider our true source of freedom. He quotes a recent Supreme Court decision that defined the extent of human freedom:

The heart of liberty is the right to define one's own concept of existence, of meaning, of the universe, and of the mystery of human life.

Is this too much freedom, or perhaps the wrong kind of freedom? Jenson believes it is. He writes:

Those with any knowledge of Jewish or Islamic or Christian theology will instantly recognize this supposed liberty to define existence, meaning, the universe, and human life as the freedom these theologies ascribe uniquely to their God. It is in fact a freedom of which no one ever dreamed apart from the influence of these theologies. According to the Abrahamic religions, there is indeed one whose personhood is defined by such liberty—and only one. Jews and Christians and Muslims stipulate the difference between God and what is not God by recognizing a particular mode of freedom in God and denying it to all else.

From "The God-Wars" in Either/Or: The Gospel or Neopaganism, ed. Carl E. Braaten and Robert W. Jenson (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 31-32.

Discussion Interlude

Do liberation, black, and feminist theologies demonstrate that we should not start our theological thinking with human experience?

How then shall we respond to the issues raised by these theologies? To the damaging experiences of the poor, black, and female in our congregations?

Lecture: Process Theology

(20 minutes)

If you know a scientist or philosopher, consider asking that person to come to class to share about some process themes. Some mainline clergy in your community (United Methodist, Presbyterian, Episcopal, American Baptist, United Church of Christ) may have studied process theology in seminary.

See Tillich's small book of lectures entitled Biblical Religion and the Search for Ultimate Reality (Chicago: University of Chicago Process theology is very much a *philosophical theology*, and many are not comfortable with that, preferring instead a *biblical theology*. Karl Barth was

Press, 1955). Volume One of his Systematic Theology (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1951) also contains some materials about the connection between philosophy and theology, although it is not easy reading.

very critical of attempts to align philosophy with Christian theology. Paul Tillich thought Christian theology inevitably needs to be supported by some sort of philosophical framework.

The study of process theology is an excellent occasion for an inquiry into the value or danger of aligning philosophy with Christian theology.

A Natural Theology

Process theology is also, to one degree or another, launched from the perspective of human experience; that is, the experience of a world that grows, is moving toward something, and is dynamic. This theology relies upon philosophy more heavily than do any of the three broad movements we have discussed up until now.

It develops not so much from any claim put forth by divine revelation or any other special appeal to faith, miracle, or religious authority, but from the sheer fact that the world as we know it, as science has described it, is a world in process. The ancient Greeks argued philosophically about the reality of change. For them, a world that does not change, and perhaps even cannot change, was a much more reliable and trustworthy world than one always in flux. Heraclitus, who famously said it was not possible to step in the same river twice (because the river was always moving), held to the minority perspective, with Parmenides presenting the case for a changeless world.

For most of Western civilization, the views of Parmenides held sway. A changeless universe was definitely a reliable universe, and a changeless God was the "glue" holding this universe together. But in the mid-19th century, this consensus began to unravel. Numerous currents of thought from then until now have merely underscored the general consensus that ours is a dynamic world. This is sometimes called the philosophy of organism, following the teachings of the French thinker Henri Bergson. Albert Einstein's theories pushed the conversation further.

Process theology is known as a natural theology. The Bible itself contains some passages that can only be described as promoting a natural theology, chief among them Romans 1:19-20, which says God has left clear and compelling evidence of himself in the world He has created. Here there is not necessarily any appeal to divine revelation. Even those blinded by sin and perversion can still understand that there is a God and He has created this world to show His true nature.

Refer to Resource 10-3 in the Student Guide.

Whitehead was a brilliant English philosopher and mathematician who taught for some years at Harvard University. His admittedly complicated philosophy provides much of the intellectual underpinnings of process philosophy and theology. John B. Cobb, Jr., is perhaps Whitehead's best American interpreter, and his book, Process Theology: An Introductory Exposition (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1976), written with David Ray Griffin is an excellent, nontechnical introduction to the subject.

(Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1984).

Refer to Resource 10-4 in the Student Guide.

Process theology seldom if ever makes an appeal to divine revelation, as Christians have understood this classically. Instead, the appeal is to human experience of the dynamism of the world. Process theology stakes its case on radical freedom as evidenced in the world, in enjoyment for both God and His creatures, for "the creative advance into novelty," as Alfred North Whitehead (1861—1947) put it.

The complexities of Whitehead's views need not concern us here. It is sufficient to report that process theology believes nothing is stable in the conventional sense, not even God. God is himself the leader of the "creative advance into novelty" mentioned before. God is also "the poet of the world" for Whitehead, and "the fellow sufferer who understands."

Process theology flatly denies the traditional view of God as being all-powerful. David Ray Griffin can even say that if God has literally all power, there is none left over for humans to have. Charles Hartshorne (another famous process thinker, 1897—2000) wrote a brief (and readable) book called *Omnipotence and Other Theological Mistakes*, where he makes his case against omnipotence. At the most, Hartshorne believes God always intends to do good to His children and His creation. We can rely upon God to "do the right thing," but we cannot say He is a static and changeless being.

Hartshorne believes God cannot be surpassed—except by himself! Hartshorne also thinks that along with God, humans create not only the future of the world, but even the future of God. The traditional idea of the divine aseity (that God's being comes only from God, and no one else) is discarded. Along with that, there never was a time when there was not a world. God and the world have coexisted together from time immemorial. It is simply not possible even to conceive of a divinity without a world.

At the beginning of their book, John B. Cobb and David Ray Griffin mention five qualities of God that process theology opposes. They are:

- God as a Cosmic Moralist (the God who is arbitrary in the moral rules and laws He establishes)
- God as the Unchanging and Passionless Absolute (as suggested before, process theology thinks a changeless God is not really the biblical God, but is rather a God "imported" into biblical religion from Greek philosophy)
- God as the Controlling Power

Process Theology, 8-10.

- God as the Sanctioner of the Status Quo
- God as Male

Panentheism

From our earlier lessons we have become familiar with three words used to describe the divine nature and activity. They are: deism, pantheism, and theism.

Refer to Resource 10-5 in the Student Guide.

Process theology advocates what is known as panentheism. Unlike pantheism, where God and the world are more or less identical, where everything *is* God, panentheism teaches that everything is *in* God. Panentheism, explains Marcus Borg, "looks at God not as a being separate from the universe but sees the universe and everything that is as being in God. God is the encompassing spirit in which everything that is, is. And that means that God is all around us and not somewhere else."

From "The God Who Is Spirit," 41.

Borg believes Psalm 139 illustrates the general principle that it is not possible to separate God from the world He has created.

You may wish to have students reflect on this psalm in light of this idea.

Evaluation

Refer to Resource 10-6 in the Student Guide.

Process theology has many detractors. Among the common complaints raised against it are these:

- 1. No real appreciation for the doctrine of the Trinity. In Whitehead's doctrine of God, God has two main natures:
 - the primordial nature (God in himself, more or less)
 - the consequent nature (God in His creation, related to the world)

Since the Trinity is not central for process theology, Jesus Christ as the Incarnate Word of God the Father is likewise not of great importance, or the idea of Incarnation is defined to meet the expectations of process theology.

- 2. A God of limited power, who therefore is not really "in control" of the world in any meaningful way.
- 3. The God of process theology may be sound in philosophical terms, but people have often asked, Would anyone want to worship this God? He seems to be very much "religiously unavailable."

4. Process theology has been accused of being "too sunny," that is, too optimistic, with no serious doctrine of sin and evil.

Many people admire the achievements of process theology, and the panentheistic view of God shows up all across the landscape of contemporary theology, not just in specifically process theology.

Lecture: Capsule Summaries

(20 minutes)

Instead of a lecture you might call on different students to give summaries of the four theologies.

Liberation Theology

Begins to think theologically with the poor, and says that God chooses the poor. Emphasizes those biblical passages that support this general idea, notably the Exodus and Luke 4:18-19, where Jesus proclaims good news to the poor, release to captives, and so forth. The goal of liberation theology is the "integral liberation" of the poor in history.

Ethnic Theology

African-American theology is similar to liberation theology, although it begins with the experience of people of color, especially black people in the USA. Believes both God and Jesus are black.

Asian theology contributes the special idea of han, which sees the world from the perspective of the victim, or the "sinned against."

Asian theology also promotes cosmic healing and harmony, rather than the more individualistic outlook so common in American evangelical Christianity.

Feminist Theology

We once again begin to think theologically from the standpoint of human experience, this time women's experience. Women are neither a race nor a minority, but in fact make up more than half of humankind. Feminism does not wish simply to perpetuate the existing social structures and theological formulations created by men and patriarchy. They want to create new structures and formulations. They believe the way we talk about God influences everything else we do, so to change social structures we must first change "God language." No longer should we refer to God *only* as "Father" and "Lord." New ways are needed. Feminist theology challenges us to be very careful about how we refer to God in sermons, liturgy, prayers, and hymns.

It insists that we must recover the lost feminine side of God, which is found surprisingly often in the Bible.

Process Theology

This is a philosophical theology, based on the visionary thinking of Alfred North Whitehead. Although it is far from orthodox, it seems to make sense to many people who believe the world is a dynamic and evolving place. The French Jesuit theologian, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin (1881—1955), is another example of a thinker convinced of the process view of things. He was a noted geologist and paleontologist who researched in China from 1923 to 1945.

As an interesting side note, Mildred Bangs Wynkoop and H. Ray Dunning sometimes incorporate process themes into their work, in a limited and qualified way.

On a markerboard or overhead write the names of the four theologies and have the students name the most significant criticism of each and the most significant praise of each.

Lesson Close

(10-15 minutes)

Review

Allow the students to write for six or eight minutes, using the "prompts."

Ask several of the students to share their ideas.

"One caution I learned from studying contemporary theologies is . . ."

"One positive thing I can incorporate into my own theological thinking is . . ."

Look Ahead

For the next several lessons we will be studying the doctrine of the Trinity.

Assign Homework

Direct students to the Homework Assignments in the Student Guide. Feminine Response/Reaction

- Take the following three hymns, from Sing to the Lord:
 - "Come, Thou Almighty King," No. 3
 - "God of Our Fathers," No. 758
 - "Faith of Our Fathers," No. 639
- Show these lyrics to five women in your local Nazarene church. Try to pick a representative sample of women in terms of age, employment, level of education, etc.
- Ask the women if the lyrics in these hymns are an accurate expression and reflection of their experiences of God. Why or why not?
- Tabulate the results in a three-page essay.

Journal Prompt

Christian theology resolutely claims God is beyond all gender. God has no sexual identity. And yet so much of our theological talk addresses God as "Father." How can God be a Father to us, and yet not at the same time male?

Punctuate the Finish

I am your servant; give me discernment that I may understand your statutes.

-Psalm 119:125

Lesson 11

The Doctrine of the Trinity: Vital Center or Antique Relic?

Lesson Overview

Schedule

Start Time	Task or Topic	Learning Activity	Materials Needed
0:00	Introduction	Orient	Student Guide
			Resource 11-1
0:10	Why Is an Emphasis on the Doctrine of the Trinity Re-emerging Today?	Lecture/Discussion	Resource 11-2
0:30	What Practical Difference Does the Doctrine of the Trinity Make?	Lecture/Writing	Resource 11-3 Resource 11-4 Resource 11-5
0:55	The Trinity and Christian Worship	Lecture	Resource 11-6
1:05	Lesson Close	Review, Assign	Student Guide

Suggested Reading for Instructor

- Bloesch, Donald G. *Christian Foundations*. Book 3, *God the Almighty: Power, Wisdom, Holiness, Love*.

 Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1995, 166-204.
- Dunning, H. Ray. "The Trinity." Chapter 7 in *Grace, Faith, and Holiness: A Wesleyan Systematic Theology.* Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1988, 208-33.
- Grider, J. Kenneth. "The Triune God." In *A Contemporary Wesleyan Theology*. Edited by Charles W. Carter. Wilmore, KY: Francis Asbury Press, 1983, 375-409.
- ______. "The Tripersonal God." Chapter 6 in *A Wesleyan-Holiness Theology*. Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1994, 123-59.
- Leupp, Roderick T. *Knowing the Name of God: A Trinitarian Tapestry of Grace, Faith, and Community.* Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996.
- _____. *Preacher's Magazine* 72 (December-February 1996-97): 30-1.
- Staples, Rob L. "Trinity." In Words of Faith: An Easy Reference to Theological Terms. Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 2001, 25-6.
- Torrance, James B. Worship, Community, and the Triune God of Grace. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997. Torrance is a Reformed and not a Wesleyan theologian, but this small book of lectures is very helpful in centering our worship on the Triune God.

Lesson Introduction

(10 minutes)

Accountability

Have two to three students give brief summaries of their reports.

Return and collect all homework.

Motivator

Refer to Resource 11-1 in the Student Guide. Have a student read the creed.

Give a mini presentation on the theology behind the creed, and if possible some of the history associated with the creed as well.

J. N. D. Kelly, Early Christian Doctrines (Revised ed., San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1978), chs. 4, 5, 9, 10 give much of the historical background. The same author's book, Early Christian Creeds (New York: Longmans, Green, 1950), is the best single-volume book on the creeds.

A newer work with some information on the Nicene Creed is Ted A. Campbell, Christian Confessions: A Historical Introduction (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996).

What is the relevance of this creed for your Christian life?

Do you use creeds when you plan and conduct public worship? Why or why not?

Orientation

If it is perceived that the doctrine of the Trinity is not relevant, the reasons for this irrelevance need to be addressed. The main intent of this lesson is to ask if, why, and how the doctrine of the Trinity is relevant to the living of our Christian lives, both within the church and in our homes and among our family members.

Learner Objectives

Instruct students to locate objectives in the Student Guide.

Restating the objectives for the learners serves as an advanced organizer for the lesson and alerts learners to key information and concepts.

To help students

- become aware as to why the doctrine of the Trinity is important for Christian theology
- consider the practical nature of this central Christian teaching, thinking of the difference it makes in our Christian lives

 understand some of the reasons why the doctrine of the Trinity has returned to theological prominence

Lesson Body

Lecture/Discussion: Why Is an Emphasis on the Doctrine of the Trinity Reemerging Today?

(20 minutes)

Ed. H. R. Mackintosh and J. S. Stewart (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976).

For historical interest, see Wesley's "Sermon 55: On the Trinity," in Works, Volume 2.

Over the past thirty or thirty-five years the doctrine of the Trinity, that God is one nature who exists in three persons, has come once again to theological prominence. The newer names identified with this resurgence include Jürgen Moltmann and Wolfhart Pannenberg, following the lead of Karl Barth earlier in the 20th century.

Barth featured the doctrine of the Trinity at the beginning of his massive *Church Dogmatics*, whereas Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768—1834), often called "The Father of Modern Liberal Theology," relegated the Trinity to the closing pages of his work of systematic theology, *The Christian Faith*.

For many decades, and even centuries, not very much creative thinking surrounded this classic Christian way of speaking of the nature and qualities of God. The ancient doctrine of the Trinity, which was more or less established by the fifth century, and elaborated upon by Thomas Aquinas in the thirteenth century, was passed along without much question, but without much interest either.

Gradually the original intent of the doctrine of the Trinity—that it is a mystery of salvation, that it conclusively demonstrates God's interest in sharing His very divine life with humankind—was lost. The centrality of the Trinity for worship and devotion was also forfeited. Instead, the doctrine became a kind of theological curiosity or museum piece. The average Christian might on occasion enter into this museum, where a guided tour might be given by a professional theologian. The tour and the museum were both beautiful, but largely removed from the everyday problems of living the Christian life.

The reemergence of the doctrine of the Trinity is maybe a little bit like one day stumbling upon some old, cracked, and forgotten family photographs in the attic or storage room. One picks up the photos gingerly, examines them lovingly and with great respect, hoping to remember why someone thought it

important enough in the first place to capture these historic moments.

Likewise, to become even slightly familiar with the early history of Christian theology that led up to the doctrine of the Trinity is to appreciate more and more our rich heritage as Christians. As we said in the first lesson, there are perhaps only three doctrines all Christians everywhere and at all times hold together in common, and the doctrine of the Trinity must be first on that list. The other two are the Person of Jesus Christ—fully divine and fully human—and the reality of sin, grace, and salvation. Both of these other central doctrines depend for their theological coherence and vitality on the Christian understanding of God, which is of course the Trinity. The humanity of Jesus Christ may not depend on the Trinity, but His divinity surely does. Jesus Christ is divine as the Eternal Word of the Father, the Only-Begotten Son of God the Father.

Return to the family photos in the attic. Imagine that as you were carefully returning the photos to where you found them, the people in the pictures come to life. They join you in the attic and explain everything you desire to know about the historical circumstances and family significance of the photos. What could be better than that? Nothing! The revival of trinitarian theology in our time is a bit like that.

Some Reasons for the Contemporary Revival of Trinitarian Theology

Refer to Resource 11-2 in the Student Guide.

- To return to the riches of Christian antiquity and recover again the connection between Christian theology and Christian devotion/spirituality at the heart of trinitarian theology.
- To stress what all Christians have in common. The ecumenical power of the doctrine of the Trinity.
- To discern how the doctrine of the Trinity separates Christian doctrine and proclamation from the other religions of the world. For some, however, this conversation will also lead them to explore "points of contact" between the Christian Trinity and trinity-like features of other world religions.
- To ask how the Trinity influences and shapes our Christian ethics, or how this teaching ought to shape our ethics, our social organizations, and our politics.

Discussion Interlude

You may need to do a little pushing or prodding to get the students to think about the answer to this question.

Where has the doctrine of the Trinity intersected with your own personal life?

Lecture/Writing: What Practical Difference Does the Doctrine of the Trinity Make? Or, How to Pray and Sing the Trinity

(25 minutes)

From The Trinity (Tunbridge Wells, Kent: Burnes and Oates, 1970), 10-11.

The noted Roman Catholic theologian Karl Rahner claimed, "despite their orthodox confession of the Trinity, Christians are, in their practical life, almost 'mere monotheists.' We must be willing to admit that, should the doctrine of the Trinity have to be dropped as false, the major part of religious literature could well remain virtually unchanged."

In this section we inquire into the practicality of the doctrine of the Trinity. If this central Christian teaching holds no real promise for the living of the Christian life, what good is it? We will consider singing and praying as a place of intersection.

Singing

Refer to Resource 11-3 in the Student Guide.

These can be sung together as a class or have someone read the songs as a poem.

We are going to examine closely two great trinitarian hymns of the church. They are "Holy, Holy, Holy!" and "Come, Thou Almighty King."

One of these hymns is nearly 250 years old and the other is 175 years old.

Do they still speak to us today? Are the terms for God used in these hymns still relevant today?

The older of these hymns names God as "Almighty King," "Incarnate Word," and "Holy Comforter." These are not the same as God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit, but there is no mistaking the meaning.

Do we need new names for the Triune God today? One set of names frequently suggested is "Creator, Redeemer, Sustainer." People who do not think we should refer to God using gender-specific words (father and son) applaud this move as being fair. One theological problem with Creator, Redeemer, Sustainer is that all three Persons of the Trinity are involved in the work of creation, whereas this new formula suggests it is only the Father who creates. Clearly, the

words we use to *name* our God reveal how we *perceive* our God.

Praying

Refer to Resource 11-4 in the Student Guide.

Origen (c. 185-c. 254), an important early theologian for the Eastern church, was the first Christian to write a systematic theology. He believed all prayer should be directed *to* God the Father, *through* God the Son (for He is after all, the only Mediator between God and humanity), *in the power* of God the Holy Spirit.

Does God grade and judge the quality of our prayers? We hope not, for we should all fail. God looks on the heart that prays more than on the correctness of the words spoken or the theologies expressed.

But even so, should we not avoid erroneous theology in our prayers, especially our public prayers, if at all possible? It often happens that in their prayers, Nazarene pastors are not careful to pray in a trinitarian way, at Christmas and Easter especially. It often happens that someone will address a prayer to God the Father, and then midway through the prayer will thank "You" (meaning, still, God the Father) or sometimes even "You, Father" for either coming to live on earth in the Incarnation, or even dying on the Cross.

But it is false, and for some even heresy, to say that God the Father died on the Cross for our sins. It was *not* God the Father, but God the Son who died on the Cross. To claim it was God the Father on the Cross is the heresy known as patripassianism, the passion of the Father (we will say more on the subject of "The Triune Cross" later). Similarly, it was *not* God the Father who became Incarnate, but rather the *Word* of God the Father who came to live among us.

Word of the Father,
Now in flesh appearing
O come, let us adore Him!
O come, let us adore Him!
O come, let us adore Him—
Christ the Lord!
From "O Come, All Ye Faithful"

To take an elementary example, if God the Father became incarnate, then to whom was Jesus Christ praying while He was on earth? If the Father came into flesh, then Jesus was praying not to the Father, but to himself.

However, the doctrine of the Trinity asserts *time and time again* that Father, Son, and Holy Spirit all share the same essence and nature. To say that it was the Word of the Father who came to live among us is indeed to say that nothing other than the fullness of God was in the flesh in Jesus Christ.

Refer to Resource 11-5 in the Student Guide.

As he does so often, C. S. Lewis artfully and powerfully explains how God as triune is present in the humble act of prayer:

An ordinary simple Christian kneels down to say his prayers. He is trying to get into touch with God. But if he is a Christian he knows that what is prompting him to pray is also God: God, so to speak, inside him. But he also knows that all his real knowledge of God comes through Christ, the Man who was God—that Christ is standing beside him, helping him to pray, praying for him. You see what is happening. God is the thing to which he is praying—the goal he is trying to reach. God is also the thing inside him which is pushing him on—the motive power. God is also the road or bridge along which he is being pushed to that goal. So that the whole threefold life of the three-personal Being is actually going on in that ordinary little bedroom where an ordinary man is saying his prayers.

From Mere Christianity (New York: Collier Books, 1960), 127.

C. S. Lewis does not mention the Holy Spirit by name, although the Spirit of Christ standing alongside the praying man is present as the Holy Spirit of God. Lewis does give the "three-personal Being" three inseparable, and yet distinguishable, roles: the goal the man is trying to reach, the power helping him reach the goal, and the road by which he can travel to his goal.

Writing Interlude

Allow time for the students to write in class.

You might ask some to share their prayers with the class.

Write a prayer using the form of prayer *to* God the Father, *through* God the Son, *in* God the Spirit. This might be a prayer that could be used during Sunday morning worship or a very personal prayer.

Why is such a prayer to the One True God and not to three Gods?

Lecture/Discussion: The Trinity and Christian Worship

(10 minutes)

Worship

Is Christian worship merely a *subjective* response of *sincerity* made by a willing worshiper? That element of

Refer to Resource 11-6 in the Student Guide.

From Persons in Communion: Trinitarian Description and Human Participation (Edinburgh, Scotland: T. & T. Clark, 1996), 311.

Ibid., 313.

a heart turned toward God must be present, but Alan J. Torrance insists the *grace* of the Triune God is ultimately responsible for turning our hearts toward God. He fears that worship which overestimates the human and underestimates God's enabling grace is necessarily *Pelagian*.

A better definition of worship is this one given by Torrance: "Our worship is the gift of participating, through the Spirit, in what Christ has done and is doing for us in his intercessions and communion with the Father."

If we understand worship within the doctrine of the Trinity, we escape human ritual, and instead worship in spirit and truth. Torrance writes:

It is precisely the theological insight that God's grace actually includes the provision of the very response demanded by it that distinguishes Christian worship from religious ritual. Christian worship becomes thus the free participation by the Spirit in something that God perfects on our behalf, whereas worship as religious ritual is a human task, namely one that ultimately can be little more than the vain attempt on the part of finite creatures to approach the "Transcendent."

Torrance is a Reformed and not a Wesleyan theologian, but should be listened to. Wesleyan theology is a theology of grace grounded in the love of the Triune God for His creatures. Nazarene theology has frequently been accused of being *Semi-Pelagian*, meaning there is too much emphasis on an *unaided human response* to God's mercies, rather than the humble human admission that God has acted in Jesus Christ, and we as humans are *reacting* to this provision of salvation through the invitation and the power of the Holy Spirit.

If worship is truly Christian, it does not seek to *add something* to the divine life, but rather humbly and joyfully *receives* what God has to offer. Again Torrance says:

Christian worship shares in a human-Godward movement that belongs to God and which takes place *within* the divine life. It is precisely into and within *this* that we are brought by the Spirit to participate as a gift of grace. . . . Worship is not some valiant subjective response, therefore. It is a gift of grace which is realized vicariously in Christ

Ibid., 314.

and which is received and participated in by the Spirit.

Present and Yet Hidden

If you have a more culturally relevant example, use it here.

Some may remember the old Palmolive dish detergent commercial featuring a beautician giving a manicure to one of her customers. The beautician is extolling the virtues of the product, saying again and again how easy and gentle on hands it is. The customer wonders where she can find this marvelous product, and then the "punch line" hits: *You're Soaking in It!*

We could never compare the Triune God to dish soap. However, the general principle of the Trinity's being present without our conscious awareness is true. In baptism, in prayer, in many of the great hymns of the church and some newer choruses, the doctrine of the Trinity is present, sometimes dramatically evident and obvious, in other cases secretly and unobtrusively.

In some ways, then, the doctrine of the Trinity might be compared with the skeleton of a body or the foundation of a building. These are not typically out in the open for public display, and yet the body or the building cannot stand without them.

As *doctrine*, the Trinity *is* interesting, even infinitely interesting. However, people do not *worship* doctrines, do not *know doctrines personally*, and are not *saved* by doctrines. They are saved by Jesus Christ!

However, Jesus is truly the Christ only within the framework of trinitarian theology. The doctrine of the Triune God truly is where the church stands or falls, but the *doctrine* must point beyond itself to the *reality of the Triune God*. Otherwise, the doctrine functions rather like a menu in a fancy foreign restaurant. It is interesting, but does not bring food to the table, since the patrons do not speak the language and cannot discern the menu choices.

Lesson Close

(25 minutes)

Review

Write for the next five minutes on the following topic:

Ask two to three to share their response.

Does the Church of Jesus Christ preach the doctrine of the Trinity? Or preach Jesus Christ? Explain your answer.

Look Ahead

During the next lesson we will continue to study the doctrine of the Trinity.

Assign Homework

Direct students to the Homework Assignments in the Student Guide.

Allow the students to group together to accommodate schedules and locations of where they live or work.

Give them the remaining time to begin this assignment.

Worship Service

- Working with one or two other classmates, plan an order of worship that takes full cognizance of the importance of centering Christian worship in the doctrine of the Trinity.
- The finished product should be an order of worship that could be followed on a Sunday morning in a local Church of the Nazarene.
- It should include all parts of the service from the opening comments to the closing blessing.

Journal Prompt

The doctrine of the Trinity is the Christian answer to the old problem in philosophy of "the one and the many." Think of your own family. How does your family structure reflect and even answer "the one and the many"? Think of other parts of your life where this dynamic of "the one and the many" is evident.

Punctuate the Finish

Lead the class in singing the Doxology (Sing to the Lord, 7).

Lesson 12

Biblical Foundations of the Trinity

Lesson Overview

Schedule

Start Time	Task or Topic	Learning Activity	Materials Needed
0:00	Introduction	Orient	Student Guide
0:10	Biblical Foundations of the Trinity	Lecture	Resource 12-1
0:20	Furthering the Biblical Evidence	Small Groups	Resource 12-2
0:50	The Triune God: The Original Family of God	Lecture/Discussion	Resource 12-3 Resource 12-4
1:05	The Nazarene Article of Faith	Writing/Reflection	Resource 12-5
1:15	Lesson Close	Review, Assign	Student Guide

Suggested Reading for Instructor

Johnson, Elizabeth A. *She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse.* New York: Crossroad, 1992. A noteworthy work of feminist theology.

LaCugna, Catherine Mowry. *God for Us: The Trinity and Christian Life.* San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1993. A great work of trinitarian theology by a Roman Catholic theologian. Especially strong on why the Trinity is important for soteriology, or the doctrine of salvation.

Oden, Thomas C. "Whether God Is Triune." Chapter 5 in *The Living God: Systematic Theology, Volume One.* San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1987, 181-224. This chapter contains solid information on the biblical foundations of the doctrine of the Trinity.

Lesson Introduction

(10 minutes)

Accountability

Return and collect all homework.

Motivator

See chapter 5 in Roderick T. Leupp, Knowing the Name of God: A Trinitarian Tapestry of Grace, Faith, and Community (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), for information pertaining to this general discussion. Some philosophers, notably Immanuel Kant, believe the Trinity is worthless as far as teaching us anything about morality, or how to live our lives. Thomas Jefferson agreed with Kant on this point.

I want you to ponder the moral/ethical meaning and weight of the doctrine of the Trinity.

Is this doctrine really of no consequence for morality, as Kant and Jefferson believed it to be?

Orientation

In this lesson we will continue our study of the Trinity. Whereas in the last lesson we asked in particular about the practical value of the Trinity, in this lesson we consider the biblical evidence for the teaching, as well as some of the traditional analogies used to describe God as triune.

Learner Objectives

Instruct students to locate objectives in the Student Guide.

Restating the objectives for the learners serves as an advanced organizer for the lesson and alerts learners to key information and concepts.

To help students

- explore the biblical rootedness of the doctrine of the Trinity
- begin to comprehend some of the typical analogies for understanding the Trinity

Lesson Body

Lecture: Biblical Foundations of the Trinity

(10 minutes)

A Classic Doctrine Biblically Rooted

It is sometimes claimed that the doctrine of the Trinity is *not* really a biblical doctrine after all. Instead, it is a doctrine that grew and developed in the first five centuries of Christian history. Because it is not truly scriptural, so this argument goes, Christians are free to disregard it. In fact, Christians are much the wiser for doing so, because the doctrine of the Trinity is at best a kind of theological trickery. It detracts from the simple power of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

This line of thinking is partly correct, but mostly wrong. It is true that the full-blown doctrine of the Trinity does not appear in the New Testament. It is a product of the development of doctrine. Yet there are certainly more than enough hints and foreshadowing. It is best to say that the New Testament provides the necessary building blocks out of which the later mature understanding can be developed.

There are a number of New Testament passages where all three Persons of the Triune God are mentioned, some of which will be discussed in a few minutes.

The doctrine of the Trinity does not merely set forth God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit, as three cars on a railroad track. That is a crucial difference between a *triad* and a *trinity*. Three of anything—U.S. presidents, baseball players, or Nazarene general superintendents—could conceivably be a triad. But a trinity assumes a oneness of essence and purpose not found in a triad.

The Gospel of John appreciates and develops the triunity of God more than any other New Testament book. Jesus' declaration in John 10:30, "The Father and I are one," is really the *headwaters* and *point of origin* of the doctrine of the Trinity. Jesus' discourses in John 14-17 are often highly trinitarian. The Holy Spirit is not always explicitly present. Yet whenever the Father and the Son are in intimate relations, the Holy Spirit is present even if not explicitly mentioned. Recall that Augustine believed the Holy Spirit to be the "bond of love" between Father and Son. For Augustine God

You might want to take a minute and have the students look briefly at these scriptures.

For more information, see Royce Gordon Gruenler, The Trinity in the Gospel of John: A Thematic Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1986). the Father is the Lover, God the Son the Beloved, God the Spirit the Love Itself.

The first Christians were devout monotheists, as would naturally be expected from those trained in the Jewish faith. Given that fact, it is all the more remarkable, and a proof of the divinity of Jesus Christ, that these Jews would come to believe the fullness of God indeed did dwell, by the power of the Holy Spirit, in Jesus Christ. We appreciate what Jaroslav Pelikan writes on this point:

Refer to Resource 12-1 in the Student Guide.

From its roots in the faith of Zion, the church received an unwavering commitment to monotheism, which nothing could be allowed to compromise or contradict. But regardless of how early we look, we also find the church using language about Jesus Christ that did appear to compromise or even contradict that monotheistic faith. Jesus at His death had said, "Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit" (Luke 23:46); but the first Christian martyr, Stephen, cried out, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit" (Acts 7:59).

From The Melody of Theology, 257.

The God and Father of Jesus Christ, even in the Old Testament, was not necessarily a "solitary God" who kept to himself. While the Old Testament does not develop a doctrine of the Trinity, we can observe that God in the Old Testament is often accompanied by His Word, His Wisdom, and His Spirit. The principle of multiplicity-in-unity that we see fully developed in the Triune God was present in the former testament in a suggestive way.

From Arthur W. Wainwright, The Trinity in the New Testament (London: S.P.C.K., 1962), 30-40.

It is not possible to "prove" the Trinity from the Old Testament, but some scriptures seem to anticipate the doctrine. The "thrice-blessed Name" of God is to be found, and the plural "we" and "us" also, suggesting multiplicity within God. See Gen 1:1-2, 26; Nu 6:23-26; Isa 6:2-3, 48:16.

Call on three students to read these three passages.

The three clearest New Testament testimonies to the doctrine of the Triune God are probably:

- 2 Corinthians 13:13, "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with all of you."
- Hebrews 9:14, "How much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to worship the living God!" The Hebrews passage shows the necessary mutual relations among Father, Son, and Spirit. It

- speaks powerfully to the Trinity as a mystery of salvation.
- Matthew 28:19, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."

Some versions of the New Testament, notably the King James, expand 1 John 5:7 to read, "There are three that testify in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit, and these three are one." This passage is not in the oldest manuscripts and therefore does not represent the thought of the original writer. It is often called the "Johannine comma."

Small Groups: Furthering the Biblical Evidence

(30 minutes)

Refer to Resource 12-2 in the Student Guide.

Divide the class into three groups and assign each group one of the sections to study.

Allow the groups to work for about 15 minutes and then have each group report to the class during the last 15 minutes of this section.

Group 1

These passages make the point of God's *oneness*. Remember, the Trinity does not teach three Gods but rather One God *in Three Persons*. So the message of the unity of God is one we keep always in view. The belief in three gods is called the heresy of *tritheism*, picturing three thrones in heaven. People who pray *first* to God the Father, and *then* to God the Son, if the first prayer is unavailing, and *finally* to the Holy Spirit, may be engaging in a form of tritheism.

Study: Dt 6:4; Mt 23:9; Mk 10:18; 12:29; Rom 3:30; 1 Cor 8:4, 6; Gal 3:20; Eph 4:6; 1 Tim 1:17, 2:5; James 2:19, 4:12.

Group 2

Some passages are *dyadic* in nature, linking the Father and the Son, or the Son and the Holy Spirit. As mentioned before, whenever two of the three Persons are present, it can confidently be said the third is there.

Study: Rom 1:4, 6:4, 8:11; 1 Cor 6:14; 2 Cor 4:14; Gal 1:1; Eph 1:20; 1 Tim 1:2, 3:16; 1 Pet 1:21.

Group 3

Triadic passages include: Acts 2:32-33; 1 Cor 6:11, 12:4-5; 2 Cor 1:21-22; Gal 3:11-14; Eph 3:1-6, 4:4-6; 1 Thes 5:18-19; 2 Thes 2:13-14; Heb 10:29; 1 Pet 1:2, 3:18.

Lecture/Discussion: The Triune God: The Original Family of God

(15 minutes)

The doctrine of the Trinity would suggest that Christian doctrine does indeed develop. In the 19th century John Henry Newman, former Anglican become Roman Catholic, advanced seven criteria by which the development of doctrine could be measured and evaluated. Most Protestants would reject many of these as being too "friendly" to the Roman way.

Refer to Resource 12-3 in the Student Guide.

In the history of trinitarian theology much discussion has revolved around whether or not it is legitimate to represent the Trinity using symbols and analogies from the experienced world. This controversy has sometimes been referred to as the *vestigium trinitatis*, which means the "vestiges of the Trinity." Keep in mind that "vestiges" has the meaning of "footprints." Has the Triune God left footprints of himself in the natural and social worlds?

Great theologians answered this question differently. Augustine was in favor of the idea of vestiges of the Trinity, whereas Karl Barth was not. Barth believed all thinking about the Triune God had to begin with the Word of God, which was unique and unparalleled. He thought the Word of God manifested itself in three related, if distinguishable, ways. The *Incarnate Word* was of course Jesus Christ. The *Written Word* was the Bible. The *Spoken Word* was the sermon.

Among the Early Church fathers there were many clever ways of referring to the Triune God.

- A root that sends forth a branch, which in turn sends forth a shoot, would do nicely. There are three—root, branch, shoot—and yet these three function obviously as one.
- The sun, with its body or essence, its heat, and its light, might be another, although this word picture was in danger of falling into modalism, meaning there was insufficient distinction from Father to Son to Spirit.

If the Trinity is pictured as a family, who would be the originating source of this family? Recalling that the first Christians were monotheists, the unquestioned was

God the Father. However, the Father did not "lord it over" the Son and the Spirit, but was rather to be thought of as the "first among equals." Some used the analogy of the three torches to establish this point. God the Father was the originating flame, and passed his flame on to the Son, who passed it to the Holy Spirit. But remember that throughout it is the same flame, and therefore the same divine essence shared from Father to Son to Spirit.

Today, we may hear clever analogies as water existing in three states—liquid, gas, frozen—and an egg with its white, its yolk, and its shell. Even a pie with its filling, its top crust, its bottom crust, has sometimes been thought to illustrate the Trinity.

At times in the development of trinitarian doctrine, there was undoubtedly some *subordinationism* in play, where God the Father was subtly, and sometimes not so subtly, thought to be better than the Son or the Spirit. The early theologian Irenaeus (c. 130 - c. 200) spoke of the Son and the Spirit as the "two hands" of God, which at least has the potential to place the Son and Spirit on a less plane than God the Father. The tendency toward subordinationism had to be resisted.

The instructor may wish to review the teachings of Arius, and why and how the Early Church fought against this heresy. For the Arian controversy, see J. N. D. Kelly, Early Christian Doctrines, ch. 9.

Refer to Resource 12-3 in the Student Guide.

You may want to re-read the creed, Resource 11-1.

The Council of Nicea, the first ecumenical council (AD 325), staunchly opposed the heresy Arianism, which taught that the Son or Logos was a creature, and hence not "coessential" with God the Father. Historically, the divinity of the Holy Spirit was the last to be established. It was not until the end of the fourth century that Christian orthodoxy firmly taught the divinity of the Holy Spirit. Prior to this the Spirit was often depicted as the mouthpiece of the Old Testament prophets, the one by whom the Bible was inspired, but not always as *fully divine* in the same sense as the Father and the Son.

Two Famous Trinitarian Analogies

Refer to Resource 12-4 in the Student Guide.

Psychological Analogy

Augustine developed what is often referred to as the "psychological" analogy of the Trinity. Augustine stressed more what the three Persons had in common than what distinguished them. He believed the three differed from one another only in terms of their relations. In other words, the Father is *not* the Father in relation to himself. The Father is not His own Father! Similarly with the Son. He is Son in relation to the Father, but God in relation to himself. Regarding the three Persons, Augustine famously declared that *each*

is in each, all are in each, each is in all, all are in all, and all are one.

Augustine believed much evidence of the triunity of God existed within each person. That was the point of the psychological analogy. By reflecting on one's own mind or consciousness, one could learn something about the operations of the Triune God. Every human mind is characterized by *memory*, *understanding*, and *will*. These three cannot function to fullest capacity without constant reliance upon the other two. That was Augustine's point, and it must be stretched to the Triune God also. Each of Father, Son, and Spirit depends on the other two for the unity that characterizes the Triune God.

Social Analogy

The Cappadocian Fathers, three Greek-speaking theologians of the fourth-century Eastern Church (Basil the Great, Gregory of Nazianzus, Gregory of Nyssa), advanced what has come to be known sometimes as the "social" analogy of the Trinity.

In contrast to Augustine, who began his thinking about the Triune God by attempting to grasp the *whole* of God, the Cappadocian Fathers more typically started their thinking with *God the Father*, and from there moved to the Son and the Holy Spirit. *Subordinationism* was a danger largely avoided by these theologians. One of them said, famously, that whenever he contemplated the Three, he was driven to behold the One, and whenever he thought of the Three, he was compelled to welcome the One. Trinitarian theology must never sacrifice the One for the sake of the Three, or the Three for the sake of the One.

The social analogy fills out and completes the psychological analogy. One writer has written that "the social analogy of the Trinity is needed to correct and complement the psychological analogy. In distinction from the psychological analogy, which focuses on the dynamic unity of psychic activities, the social analogy looks to the phenomenon of persons in relationship for a clue to the mystery of the divine life."

Gregory of Nyssa spoke of Peter, Paul, and Barnabas. Each of these men has his own distinct identity, and yet all of them share in the common essence of humanity. That is the easiest way to state the social analogy.

Discussion Interlude

Do you know any additional analogies for the Trinity not mentioned here?

You may need to give some careful guidance to the appropriateness of some of the suggestions.

What determines the "fitness" or "rightness" for an analogy of the Trinity?

Writing/Reflection: The Nazarene Article of Faith

(10 minutes)

Refer to Resource 12-5 in the Student Guide.

From The Manual (Kansas City: Nazarene Publishing House, 2005), 30

It would also be good for you to write out your thoughts to share with the class.

For the next five minutes I want you to interact with this Article 1 from the *Manual*, in writing.

We will then share our thoughts with each other.

Lesson Close

(15 minutes)

Review

God for Us: The Trinity and Christian Life (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1993).

Catherine Mowry LaCugna, in her book *God for Us*, believes Ephesians 1:3-14 is a great trinitarian text. In some versions the word "predestined" appears in this passage, and it is probable that Nazarene theologians have focused on that word when they have thought of this text, because "predestined" seems to support some of the doctrines of Calvinism.

Set aside the controversy over "predestined" and now look at this text as a trinitarian text, because of what it teaches of the mystery and glory of salvation.

Have one of the students read this passage of scripture.

Why is this a great biblical and trinitarian text regarding salvation?

Look Ahead

We will continue our study of the doctrine of the Trinity in the next lesson.

Assign Homework

Direct students to the Homework Assignments in the Student Guide. During these two lessons on the Trinity it has been our constant refrain that the Trinity must be relevant for the average Christian. This assignment is designed to test that hypothesis.

- Select some of the classic trinitarian hymns, and some of the leading scriptures that teach the Trinity. (Two of each would be sufficient.)
- Show them to four or five laypeople in your Nazarene congregation.
- Ask for reactions. How does the doctrine of the Trinity intersect with their lives?
- Ask about their prayer pattern. Whom do they
 usually address in their prayers? Does anyone
 engage in the practice of praying first to God the
 Father, and if that prayer seems not to work, then
 to God the Son, and finally ending with God the
 Spirit in desperation?
- If someone in the group you interview comes from a Pentecostal background, ask if the Pentecostal focus on the Holy Spirit pays attention to the Father and the Son.

• When you have compiled the data/evidence from these interviews, present the results in a four-page paper.

Journal Prompt

Reflect on three or four scriptures, which have meant the most to you personally, that we have studied in these lessons on the Trinity.

Punctuate the Finish

Close this lesson in prayer.

Lesson 13

Who Is the Christian God?

Lesson Overview

Schedule

Start Time	Task or Topic	Learning Activity	Materials Needed
0:00	Introduction	Orient	Student Guide
			Resource 13-1
0:10	The Return of the	Lecture/Discussion	Resource 13-2
	Biblical God		
0:35	One Plus One Equals	Lecture/Discussion	Resource 13-3
	One		Resource 13-4
1:00	Review	Small Groups	Resource 13-5
1:20	Lesson Close	Review, Assign	Student Guide

Suggested Reading for Instructor

LaCugna, Catherine Mowry. *God for Us: The Trinity and Christian Life.* San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1991, especially chap. 7.

______. "The Practical Trinity." *The Christian Century* (July 15-22, 1992): 678-82.

Leupp, Roderick T. *Knowing the Name of God: A Trinitarian Tapestry of Grace, Faith, and Community.* Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996, ch. 1.

McGrath, Alister E. *Understanding the Trinity*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988.

Peters, Ted. *God as Trinity: Relationality and Temporality in Divine Life.* Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1993.

Pinnock, Clark. Flame of Love: A Theology of the Holy Spirit. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996, ch. 1.

_____. "Systematic Theology." In *The Openness of God: A Biblical Challenge to the Traditional Understanding of God.* Clark Pinnock, et al. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994.

Lesson Introduction

(10 minutes)

Accountability

Call on one or two students to briefly share the results of their interviews.

Return and collect all homework.

Motivator

Refer to Resource 13-1 in the Student Guide.

Share this poem about the Trinity written by John Donne (1572-1631), "Holy Sonnet 10," in Selections from Divine Poems, Devotions, and Prayers, ed. John Booty (New York: Paulist Press, 1990), 81.

Holy Sonnet 10

Batter my heart, three-person'd God, for you As yet but knock, breathe, shine, and seek to mend; That I may rise and stand, o'erthrow me and bend Your force to break, blow, burn, and make me new. I, like a usurped town, to another due, Labour to admit you, but O, to no end. Reason, your viceroy in me, me should defend. But is captived and proves weak or untrue. Yet dearly I love you and would be loved fain, But am betrothed unto your enemy. Divorce me, untie, or break that knot again, Take me to you, imprison me, for I, Except you enthrall me, never shall be free, Nor ever chaste, except you ravish me.

Orientation

In this lesson we continue our discussion of the Trinity. The specific focus for this lesson is to compare and contrast the Triune God with the God of Theism. We will also consider two traditional ways of speaking of the Triune God: the Immanent Trinity and the Economic Trinity.

Learner Objectives

Instruct students to locate objectives in the Student Guide.

Restating the objectives for the learners serves as an advanced organizer for the lesson and alerts learners to key information and concepts.

To help students

- reconsider the God of theism, as contrasted with the Triune God
- ask in what the power of God truly consists
- become acquainted with the idea of the immanent Trinity and the economic Trinity

Lesson Body

Lecture/Discussion: The Return of the Biblical God

(25 minutes)

Review the definitions of the three ways of speaking of God. You might call on students to give definitions.

The Openness of God: A Biblical Challenge to the Traditional Understanding of God IDowners Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994). Basic familiarity with the ideas presented in this book will aid in instructing this class, especially this lesson. There have also been articles about "open theism" in recent issues of the magazine Christianity Today. (2001—2002).

Refer to Resource 13-2 in the Student Guide.

The God of Theism or the Triune God?

Much of the resurgence of the doctrine of the Trinity in recent decades has been due to the perceived inadequacy of the God of traditional theism. Elsewhere in this module we have discussed three different ways of speaking of God: pantheism, deism, and theism. At that time we noted that theism was thought to combine the best qualities of pantheism and deism, while avoiding their errors.

Some of the qualities that mark the God of theism have been judged to be departures from the God of the Bible. Those traits which seem to remove God from the arenas of history, risk, empathy, unconditional love, forgiveness, and radical identification with humankind have been weighed and found wanting.

The God who in former times was comfortably referred to as timeless, infinite, changeless, all-powerful, all-knowing, and immaterial has increasingly been seen as *not* the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God and Father of Jesus Christ. Instead, the God known by those philosophical abstractions just mentioned is really "the God of the philosophers" and not the biblical God.

Sometimes these newer ideas of God are referred to as "open theism" or even "freewill theism," since these new ideas stress God's total availability for His creatures and His creation. In evangelical circles, at least, the one book that started this conversation moving is *The Openness of God*, written by Clark Pinnock and four others.

One of the writers of this book, John Sanders, later wrote a related book, *The God Who Risks: A Theology of Providence*. In this book Sanders explains the basic difference between the Triune God and the God of theism, whom he calls the Neoplatonic God:

A trinitarian metaphysic is illuminating in this regard. Beginning with a trinitarian God of love who enters into loving personal relations with his creatures gives some direction to the doctrine of providence. The Father, Son and Holy Spirit love

one another. They are involved in a tripersonal community in which each member of the triune being gives and receives love from the others. Relationality is an essential aspect of God. The tripersonal God is the perfection of love and communion—the very antithesis of aloofness, isolation and domination. God is no solitary potentate forcing his will on others. The members of the Trinity mutually share and relate to one another. In this view personhood is the ultimate ontological category. Personhood, relationality and community-not power, independence, and control—become the center for understanding the nature of God. Whereas the main motif of the Neoplatonic God concept is that of distance and unrelatedness, the Christian doctrine of the Trinity asserts that to be God is to be related in love.

(Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998), 175-6.

Review the definition of panentheism in Lesson 10.

Careful students will note a profound similarity between the "open God" and the God described by the term *panentheism*. Some advocates of open theism would likely embrace the label panentheist, while others would not want to be too closely identified with it, because of its perceived closeness to process theology.

Criticizing Open or Freewill Theism

Donald Bloesch is critical of freewill theism. He believes that proponents of this view have overestimated how much creaturely freedom we really possess. "Freewill theism errs by positing a freedom that cannot be reconciled with God's sovereignty over human affairs," writes Bloesch. He doubts freedom really means the capacity to realize our own human potential. That is a humanistic and not a Christian definition of freedom. On the contrary, "Freedom as delineated in the New Testament is the subordination of human will and desire to God's will and plan. We are most free when we are in complete conformity to what God wills and desires."

From God the Almighty, 254-60.

Bloesch also faults freewill theism with shortchanging the power of God. He thinks this new view rightly rejects the God of naked and unrestrained power, but Bloesch wishes to hold the door open for God to use coercive power as He sees fit, according to the divine wisdom. Bloesch believes freewill theists "too readily divorce the biblical concept of power from coercion. They fail to do justice to the biblical claim that an all-merciful God may sometimes employ coercive power to accomplish his purposes."

Ibid., 257-58.

This debate took place at the 1989 Indianapolis General Assembly. Article VII of the Manual was renamed "Prevenient Grace" by action of the 2001 General Assembly.

Refer to Manual Article VII and read it to the class.

Free Will or Free Grace?

The writer shares this story: "The following incident was reported to me. I was not there to verify its truth, and yet it sounds very plausible. At a recent General Assembly of the Church of the Nazarene, some debate centered around which concept is, or should be, more true for Nazarene theology: free will or free grace? These two ideas are clearly not mutually contradictory. It is a matter of emphasis. Should free will be stressed over free grace? Those Nazarenes feared free grace sounded 'too Calvinistic' and chose free will instead."

John Wesley probably would have chosen free grace, since our free will was lost in the Fall of Adam and Eve. Prevenient grace restores to us a measure of free will, such that we can respond positively to the overtures of the Holy Spirit. But it is free grace that enlivens our wills.

It seems to be Bloesch's opinion that the new "open theism" overestimates our free will. Has this ever been true of Nazarene perspectives? Have we said too much about *our ability* to respond, and not enough about God's *enabling grace?*

Discussion Interlude

What difference does the relative stress on free will or free grace make for evangelism?

For Christian living?

How Is God Powerful?

As we have seen, Donald Bloesch believes freewill theism robs God of His rightful power and majesty. This is a major bone of contention he wishes to pick with advocates of freewill theism. Two scriptures that aid his argument are:

We proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God's weakness is stronger than human strength.

-1 Cor 1:23-25, NRSV

I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation as you come to know him, so that, with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power for us who believe, according to the working of his great power. God put this power to work in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the age to come. And he has put all things under his feet and has made him the head over all things for the church, which is his body the fullness of him who fills all in all.

-Eph 1:17-23, NRSV

Lecture/Discussion: One Plus One Equals One

(25 minutes)

The Immanent Trinity and The Economic Trinity

Refer to Resource 13-3 in the Student Guide.

The Triune God has often been discussed under two aspects. These are the *immanent* Trinity and the *economic* Trinity. We earlier used the word "immanent" to mean God's presence *within* the world, as contrasted with "transcendent," or God "over against the world." But here the meaning of "immanent" is dramatically different from the earlier usage. Here it means "God-within-himself," not "God-within-theworld." The immanent Trinity has also sometimes been called the *essential* or the *ontological* Trinity, because the investigation into the immanent Trinity seeks to know the true inner nature of God, although it is readily admitted that no one can really understand everything about God.

In the past, to explore the immanent Trinity has been thought the highest and greatest challenge any Christian theologian could possibly undertake. At one point in the church's history, this task was considered the defining criterion of any theological work. To succeed in understanding the "inner workings" of the Godhead was to succeed in the most important of all theological tasks, a success that carried over into all other areas of theology.

Roughly speaking, the immanent Trinity is "who God is," whereas the economic Trinity is "what God does," because God flows out of himself into the economy of creation, grace, and redemption. We will return to this later.

The 5-4-3-2-1 God: The Aquinas Formula

Refer to Resource 13-4 in the Student Guide.

With Thomas Aquinas, following Augustine, the theology of the inner dynamism of God reached a kind of finality. A memory device of a 5-4-3-2-1 formula was used to teach seminarians:

God Is Five Notions

A notion is what distinguishes each divine Person from the other two. Here are the five notions:

- Innascibility or ingenerateness, referring to God the Father, who is the Source of His own being, hence ingenerate.
- Paternity, referring also to God the Father, how He fathers or generates the Word from all eternity. The Word does not come into existence in time, but is eternally generated. If this is not true, He would be a creature.
- Filiation, referring to the reality of the Son's being eternally generated from the Father.
- Spiration, referring to the reality of the Holy Spirit's being breathed out or spirated by God the Father and God the Son. This spiration is from the standpoint of the Father and the Son.
- Procession, referring to the Holy Spirit's perspective of being breathed forth by Father and Son.

God Is Four Relations

All of the five mentioned above, except for ingenerateness, describe relations. They are hence the four relations within the Godhead.

Begetter to Begotten Fatherhood (Father to Son)

Begotten to Begetter Sonship (Son to Father)

Spirator to Spirated Spiration (Father and Son to Holy Spirit)

Spirated to Spirator Procession (Holy Spirit to Father and Son)

God Is Three Persons

Three of these four relations constitute persons. They are paternity (the Father), filiation (the Son), and spiration (the Holy Spirit).

God Is Two Processions

The two processions are being begotten (Jesus said in John 8:42, "I came from God") and being spirated, the Holy Spirit being breathed forth by the Father and the Son.

Some critics of the doctrine of the Trinity say that there is after all no difference between the Son and the Holy Spirit. At the most, they say, the Christian doctrine of God should be called a "binity" (God is two-in-one), but not a Trinity.

See Clark H. Pinnock, Flame of Love: A Theology of the Holy Spirit (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), ch. 1. There is undoubtedly a very close relation between the Incarnate Word, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit. While He ministered on earth, Jesus accomplished everything through the Holy Spirit.

In the terms of the immanent Trinity, the difference between the Son and the Spirit is that the Son *is begotten* while the Holy Spirit *is breathed or spirated or proceeds.*

<u>Technical Term:</u> In the early Middle Ages the Latin term *filioque* was added to the Nicene Creed, and remains to this day. It was added by a Western pope, without adequately consulting the Eastern Church. Theologically, the *filioque* means the Holy Spirit proceeds from *both* the Father and the Son. Filioque means "from the Son."

To this day Eastern Orthodoxy opposes the filioque. There are two main reasons for this opposition. For one, it seems to suggest there are two "principles of origination" within the Godhead, instead of just one, the Father. Eastern Orthodoxy does not elevate God the Father above God the Son and God the Spirit, because Son and Holy Spirit are coequal and coessential with the Father. However, the Eastern approach does consider the Father to be "first among equals" in relation to the other two Persons and the "fountain of divinity" within the Godhead.

The second reason is that the filioque ties the Holy Spirit to Jesus Christ in an exclusive way. The Holy Spirit cannot be present or do His work without being directly linked or yoked to Jesus Christ. As we

suggested above, the work of Jesus Christ on earth was always undergirded by the Holy Spirit. Jesus needed the Spirit in His life. But must the Spirit *always* be tied to the Person of Jesus Christ in an explicit and identifiable way?

If the Spirit cannot be conceived of apart from Jesus Christ, does this blunt the missionary effectiveness of the Holy Spirit? Does the Spirit go into countries and lands *before* missionaries arrive and start preaching about Jesus Christ? The Wesleyan principle of prevenient grace suggests the Spirit does go before and plant seeds.

Today, sometimes a compromise formula is used. Instead of "proceeds from the Father and the Son" it may be said "proceeds from the Father *through* the Son."

God Is One Nature

We have stated many times that Christian theology is monotheistic, testifying to the oneness of God. But monotheism must be seen in the light of the triune premise, such that God is one nature with three identities or in three Persons.

This is perhaps the closest theology can come to describing and defining the inner workings of God. In some ways it is a beautiful accomplishment, but the question immediately arises as to its practical usefulness for living the Christian life. In her challenging but rewarding book, the late Roman Catholic theologian Catherine LaCugna argued that for God to be truly *for us*, we must stress what she calls the *oikonomia* (the economy of God *for us* in creation and redemption) over against *theologia* or the immanent Trinity of God-in-himself.

Elsewhere, LaCugna expresses her basic thesis in these words:

It used to be that a new doctrine of the Trinity meant a new way to explain "God's inner life," that is, the relationship of Father, Son and Holy Spirit to one another (what tradition refers to as the immanent Trinity). But now both Catholic and Protestant theologians who are working to revitalize the doctrine of the Trinity have shifted "inner life." Instead, by returning to the more concrete images and concepts of the Bible, liturgy and creeds, it has become clear that the original purpose of the doctrine was to explain the place of Christ in our

See LaCugna, God for Us, 154, 167, 168, and 179-80 n. 133.

From Catherine Mowry LaCugna, "The Practical Trinity," The Christian Century (July 15-22, 1992), 678.

salvation, the place of the Spirit in our sanctification or deification, and in so doing to say something about the mystery of God's eternal being. By concentrating more on the mystery of *God with us, God for us,* and less on the nature of God by Godself, it is becoming possible once again for the doctrine of the Trinity to stand at the center of faith—as our rhetoric has always claimed.

Finding the Balance: The Immanent Trinity *Is* the Economic Trinity, and Vice Versa

What is likely the most famous utterance in all of 20th century trinitarian theology comes from Karl Rahner. The idea that one plus one still equals one, which we used for the title of this section, derives from this. Rahner said that "the economic Trinity is the immanent Trinity and the immanent Trinity is the economic Trinity."

This statement has come to be called "Rahner's Rule." It simply means the Triune God cannot be divided into two. Today, virtually all theologians *begin* with the economic Trinity, because that is the aspect of the Triune God that most readily intersects with our lives. We might even call it the "work" of the Triune God, analogous perhaps to the work of Jesus Christ. And yet the work of Jesus Christ means little, if anything, if not founded everlastingly on His person as the onlybegotten Son of God. The same is true with the Triune God.

Although the trend today is not to begin with the immanent Trinity of God-in-himself, it is the immanent Trinity that stands behind the economic Trinity. For as Rahner rightly claims, these two are finally one.

Discussion Interlude

How is the Triune God involved in the mystery of salvation?

LaCugna rightly says that not every scriptural passage must make constant and explicit reference to *all* of Father, Son, and Spirit for that passage to show in a profound way how the Triune God is the centerpiece in the drama of salvation. She invites us to consider Ephesians 1:3-14 in that light. Look within these dozen verses for signs that our salvation is *from* God the Father, *through* God the Son, *in* God the Spirit.

From The Trinity, 22.

Small Groups: Review

(20 minutes)

Divide the class into groups of two.

Refer to Resource 13-5 in the Student Guide.

Have each group complete the matching exercise.

Go over any items with which the students had difficulty.

Lesson Close

(10 minutes)

Review

Instruct students to locate objectives in the Student Guide.

How are the doctrines of salvation and the Trinity related?

Look Ahead

The next lesson will be the final lesson over the Trinity.

Assign Homework

Direct students to the Homework Assignments in the Student Guide. Choose one of the following two assignments:

- 1. Write a two-page interpretive essay about the poem by John Donne on Resource 13-1.
- If you know a follower of Jehovah's Witnesses, this person could be interviewed, with the views of the Jehovah's Witness explained and then refuted. This group does not affirm the doctrine of the Trinity.

Journal Prompt

Reflect on how your perspective of God has grown during the time spent studying the Trinity.

Punctuate the Finish

I want their hearts to be encouraged and united in love, so that they may have all the riches of assured understanding and have the knowledge of God's mystery, that is, Christ himself, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

-Col 2:2-3

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Lesson 14

The Christian Life and the Trinity

Lesson Overview

Schedule

Start Time	Task or Topic	Learning Activity	Materials Needed
0:00	Introduction	Orient	Student Guide
			Resource 14-1
0:10	To Be Is to Be Related	Lecture/Discussion	Resource 14-2
			Resource 14-3
0:35	One Plus One Plus	Lecture/Discussion	Resource 14-4
	One STILL Equals One		Resource 14-5
1:00	Trinitarian Life from	Small Groups	Resource 14-6
	God, Through Us, to		
	Others		
1:20	Lesson Close	Review, Assign	Student Guide
			Resource 14-7

Suggested Reading for Instructor

Grenz, Stanley J. *The Matrix of Christian Theology.* Vol. 1, *The Social God and the Relational Self: A Trinitarian Theology of the Imago Dei.* Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001.

LaCugna, Catherine Mowry. *God for Us: The Trinity and Christian Life.* San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1993, especially ch. 8.

Leupp, Roderick T. *Knowing the Name of God: A Trinitarian Tapestry of Grace, Faith, and Community.* Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996, ch. 5.

Peters, Ted. *God as Trinity: Relationality and Temporality in Divine Life.* Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1993.

Lesson Introduction

(10 minutes)

Accountability

Have a student who did the interview as homework give a brief report.

Return and collect all homework.

Motivator

This definition is on Resource 14-1.

The classic definition of a person is given by Boethius:

 a person is an individual substance of a rational nature.

Where do Christians get their views as to what constitutes and makes up human nature? From the Bible? From the wider culture? From the popular media? From psychological theory? From science and medicine?

Orientation

This lesson will be our final lesson about the Trinity, although in Christian Theology 2 we will discuss the Trinity and the doctrine of salvation.

The focus of this lesson is on viewing humankind in a triune light, and also on the connections between Christian ethics and the Trinity.

Learner Objectives

Instruct students to locate objectives in the Student Guide.

Restating the objectives for the learners serves as an advanced organizer for the lesson and alerts learners to key information and concepts.

To help students

- appreciate the importance of viewing human nature in the light of the doctrine of the Trinity
- see the connections between Christian ethics and Trinity, and living the Christian life

Lesson Body

Lecture/Discussion: To Be Is to Be Related, or Rethinking "My Personal Relationship with Jesus Christ"

(25 minutes)

Refer to Resource 14-2 in the Student Guide.

Since this section is about what it means to be a person in the light of the Triune God, the students should be eager to discuss these issues of "theological anthropology," since all of them carry within themselves views of what it means to be human.

Allow for as much interaction as possible.

Who Is a Person?

For many centuries, the definition of a person given by the early medieval philosopher Boethius was widely accepted and rarely questioned. He believed a person is "an individual substance of a rational nature," substance here not meaning something solid, as a block of wood, but that which essentially characterizes something, and in which its reality coheres and "hangs together."

This definition stresses individuality, uniqueness, singularity, all of which are proven by our rational capacities.

Can this definition of what constitutes a person be transposed onto the Trinity? In other words, is the Triune God three "individual substances of a rational nature"?

The classic language about the Triune God holds that the three Persons are *distinguishable*, *yet inseparable*. The modern definition of a person as "an individual substance of a rational nature" does not fit the Triune God, because God has *only one* mind and not three minds. If God had three minds, we would be stuck with three gods, or tritheism.

Much good can be said for Boethius' definition of what constitutes a person. We rightly value both our individuality and our uniqueness. However, we can easily be carried away with our own importance and our own identity. The church of Jesus Christ is known as the *Body of Christ* for a reason: that every part might contribute to the whole and not boast about its own individual identity.

Serious immersion in trinitarian theology offers the promise of a *new definition* of what it means to be a person. That new definition is simply this: *to be is to be related.* Here, relation is synonymous with community, fellowship, and mutuality.

We often define our knowing of the Triune God with the common phrase "a personal relationship with Jesus Christ." In doing so, we need to think of what we mean by "personal."

Is it personal in the sense of "an individual substance of a rational nature"? Or personal in some other way?

Much Nazarene practice reinforces the view of person—and inevitably of salvation also—as a strictly individual entity. We seem concerned only about our private salvation, not caring about anyone else. The doctrine of the Trinity can help us to realize we are saved for the sake of the new creation in Jesus Christ, saved for membership in the Body of Christ, saved not to diminish or escape personal responsibility, but saved to accept ever-wider spheres of responsibility.

Defining Personhood

Refer to Resource 14-3 in the Student Guide.

Catherine Mowry LaCugna suggests several qualities that should define personhood in the light of the Triune God:

Persons are in their very nature interpersonal and intersubjective.

LaCugna believes "an isolated person is a contradiction in terms, just as an essentially isolated God . . . is irreconcilable with the revelation of God in Jesus Christ." Only through the doctrine of the Trinity may we uphold "the essentially relational character of God, the relational nature of human existence, and the interdependent quality of the entire universe."

From God for Us, 288.

A person is unique, concrete, unrepeatable, and ineffable (mysterious).

These four descriptive words, when applied to persons, may seem to contradict LaCugna's insistence that "to be is to be related." However, she believes we are unique and concrete in relation with others, not in relation only with our own selves. "To exist as a person is to be referred to others; the negation and dissolution of personhood is total self-reference" or self-absorption. Human expressions such as sexuality (the desire for union), intelligence (the drive to know the truth), and love (the quest for spiritual union) demonstrate that persons come to their fullest development in the company of others.

Ibid., 289.

See his book Reflecting the Divine

1998). See also Grace, Faith, and

From Grace, Faith, and Holiness,

Image: Christian Ethics in Wesleyan Perspective (Downers

Holiness, 279-83, 485-98.

Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press,

Ibid., 290.

What is "natural" should be judged by what is "personal."

We should define what is natural according to what brings persons to their fullest realization. LaCugna believes "'Natural' is what corresponds most fully to right relationships at all levels: we to others, to the earth, to God, to ourselves."

Nazarene theologian and ethicist H. Ray Dunning has sometimes sounded the need for the four relationships mentioned by LaCugna: to God, to others, to the physical creation, to ourselves. Dunning makes the following summary statement, connecting fully realized personhood with Christian holiness:

The Christian ethic, when understood as an extrapolation of the *imago Dei*, is an extension of the creation ethic toward the achievement of full personhood. This means that in the fullest religious sense it is an ethic that enhances rather than perverts the humanity of man. Furthermore, this understanding entails the happy conclusion that God's ideals are not dehumanizing or pervertive of human nature. Holiness, as an ethical reality, does not make one less than human but more fully so.

Truly to be a person requires a balance between self-love and self-gift.

The key word here is *interdependence*. Person as we see it in the Triune God is *theonomous* person, that is, "The human person is named with reference to its origin and destiny in God." The extremes of *autonomy* (complete independence) and *heteronomy* (total dependence upon others for one's identity) are avoided in *theonomous* living.

Persons are to be catholic, that is, universal.

LaCugna believes the catholicity of the person means two things:

- Since catholic means "universal," she believes
 "persons are created to be inclusive of everything
 that exists. Personhood is the bridge between
 ourselves and everything and everyone else, past,
 present, and future."
- Because catholic means universal, whatever traits and qualities make up human beings should be present in each human in full measure. She writes, "each encounter with another human being is an encounter with the truth of our own common humanity."

From God for Us, 290.

Ibid., 291.

Personhood is achieved by self-discipline and "emptying out."

Have one of the students read this passage of scripture.

She quotes Colossians 3:5-10 to make the point that the new life in Jesus Christ must be the "natural" life, natural in the sense of what God intends for us.

Person is an exponential and developmental concept.

Because "to be is to be related," we grow in new directions with each person we truly meet. Our model once again is the Triune God, for to Him "belongs the sphere of infinite relatedness, infinite capacity for relationship, infinite actuality of relationship."

God for Us, 292.

To live as a person in communion is the true meaning of salvation.

Viewing God as triune prevents personhood from being reduced to either individual self-consciousness or simply a product of social relations. The Christian shaped by the triune doctrine of the personal is aware of the dangers of *I did it my way* and other dead-ends of self-centeredness.

Discussion Interlude

Which of these eight qualities do you view as the most significant?

Do they force you to think differently about yourself?

What do they say to the person who believes they can worship God and be a Christian without going to church?

Lecture/Discussion: One Plus One Plus One STILL Equals One: The Trinity and Christian Ethics

(25 minutes)

The Reality of Perichoresis

Refer to Resource 14-4 in the Student Guide.

The Greek word *perichoresis* is one that every beginning student of trinitarian theology should learn. It refers to the mutual indwelling of Father, Son, and Spirit, each one in the other two. Here are some of the meanings Catherine LaCugna attaches to the word, which first appeared in theological use in the eighth century, in the writings of the Greek theologian John of Damascus.

Perichoresis means:

- the divine persons mutually inhere in one another, draw life from one another.
- being-in-one-another, permeation without confusion.
- to be a divine person is to be *by nature* in relation to other persons. Each divine person is irresistibly drawn to the other.
- while there is no blurring of the individuality of each person, there is also no separation. There is only the communion of love in which each person comes to be . . . entirely with reference to the other.
- each person expresses both what He . . . is (and, by implication, what the other two are), and at the same time expresses what God is: ecstatic, relational, dynamic, vital. *Perichoresis* provides a dynamic model of persons in communion based on mutuality and interdependence.

Analogies of perichoresis:

- many lamps lighting a house, and yet all lamps equal a single, unified light.
- if perfume is sprayed, all of the air is fragrant. It is not possible to know where the scent begins and ends
- every physical object has three dimensions. Can one separate the object from its dimensions? No.
 Each of the three dimensions implies the reality of the other two.
- since these images are impersonal (as well as the others we have previously discussed, source-stream-river; root-trunk-branch), some have suggested "the divine dance" image be used. In that the Church of the Nazarene has historically had serious reservations about the propriety of dance, this image should be used with caution. Perhaps an image of equal fluidity, grace, and motion can be used.

Ibid., 270-78.

Discussion Interlude

Relate the meanings of *ecstatic, dynamic,* and *vital* to Christian ethics. Relate the conversation back to the crucial idea of mutual indwelling, the primary meaning of *perichoresis*.

Consider the explanatory comment regarding *perichoreis* by Jürgen Moltmann:

[Perichoresis] denotes the trinitarian unity which goes out beyond the doctrine of persons and their

From History and the Triune God: Contributions to Trinitarian Theology. New York: Crossroad, 1992, 86.

relations: by virtue of their eternal love, the divine persons exist so intimately with one another, for one another and in one another that they constitute themselves in their unique, incomparable and complete unity.

Discussion Interlude

As you read Moltmann's statement, does it seem like he over-emphasizes the threeness of the Trinity, and does not pay enough attention to the unity of the One God?

To what degree does your family life resemble the trinitarian life of perichoresis, which is in some ways an "open door" policy? The Father is always open to receive the Son and the Holy Spirit, the Son receives the Father and Spirit, and the Father and Son are always welcomed by the Holy Spirit.

None of the three Persons is egocentric or selfish, for the Triune God has not three minds, but one mind. This is the main contribution the doctrine of the Trinity can make to Christian ethics: the idea of community, regarding the other better than oneself, willingness to give up one's own selfish ideas for the good of the whole.

A Note on Richard of Saint Victor

Richard of Saint Victor was a twelfth-century theologian of the school of Paris. He believed the idea of God must contain the idea of love, that love was God's truest expression.

Love is itself a social idea. For Richard, love that is isolated and keeps to itself is not true love at all. Stanley Grenz explains Richard's meaning here:

Supreme love requires another, equal to the lover, who is the recipient of that love; and because supreme love is received as well as given, it must be a shared love, in which each person loves and is loved by the other. Finally, because supreme love must desire that the love it experiences through giving and receiving be one that is shared with another, it is not merely mutual love between two but is a love fully present among three and only three.

Richard believed the idea of love demonstrated or even proved the reality of the Triune God. Any two of the three divine Persons could experience mutual love back

Refer to Resource 14-5 in the Student Guide.

From The Social God and the Relational Self (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 31.

and forth between themselves, but for this love to be complete, that *mutual* love must be taken and *shared* with the third Person, hence completing the circle of divine love that means that God is One.

Small Groups: Trinitarian Life from God, Through Us, to Others

(20 minutes)

Divide the class into groups of three to work on the study sheet Resource 14-6 in the Student Guide

Allow them to spend most of the time working in groups, but allow enough time for each group to share their thoughts with the class.

Regarding how the Trinity impacts our lives as Christians before God and in the company of one another, the summary statement from Catherine LaCugna is especially good.

Trinitarian faith means living God's life: living from and for God, from and for others. [It] means living as Jesus Christ lived: preaching the gospel; relying totally on God; offering healing and reconciliation; rejecting laws, customs, conventions that place persons beneath rules; resisting temptation; praying constantly; eating with modern-day lepers and other outcasts; embracing the enemy and the sinner; dying for the sake of the gospel if it is God's will. [It] means living according to the power and presence of the Holy Spirit: training the eyes of the heart on God's face and name . . . responding to God in faith, hope and love.

From God for Us, 400-401.

Lesson Close

(10 minutes)

Review

Instruct students to locate objectives in the Student Guide.

Look at the learner objectives for this lesson. Do you

- appreciate the importance of viewing human nature in the light of the doctrine of the Trinity?
- see the connection between Christian ethics and Trinity, and the living of the Christian life?

Look Ahead

During the next lesson we will turn from revelational theology such as is found in the doctrine of the Trinity, to what might be called philosophical or even apologetic theology. We will consider some of the traditional "proofs" or demonstrations for the existence of God.

Assign Homework

Direct students to the Homework Assignments in the Student Guide.

We have devoted four lessons to the Trinity. This is fully 20 percent of Investigating Christian Theology 1.

- Has it been time well spent and invested?
- Write a summarizing essay of three or four pages, specifying what is now clear about the doctrine of the Trinity, and what may still remain as puzzling.

Bring to class an object, from the natural world, that could be used as an example of the design argument. (We will be looking at this argument in the next lesson.) The object should demonstrate God's loving and careful design of the created order.

Journal Prompt

If I could ask the Triune God one question about the Trinity, it would be . . .

Punctuate the Finish

Refer to Resource 14-7 in the Student Guide.

A Covenant Prayer

I am no longer my own, but Yours.
Put me to what You will,
Rank me with whom You will.
Put me to suffering.
Let me be employed by You or laid aside for You,
Exalted for You or brought low by You.
Let me have all things,
Let me have nothing.

I freely and heartily yield all things to Your pleasure and disposal.

And now, O glorious and blessed God,
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
You are mine, and I am Yours.

From Sing to the Lord, 484.

—John Wesley

Lesson 15

The Convergence and Divergence of Philosophy and Christian Theology

Lesson Overview

Schedule

Start Time	Task or Topic	Learning Activity	Materials Needed
0:00	Introduction	Orient	Student Guide
			Resource 15-1
0:05	Philosophy and	Lecture/Discussion	Resource 15-2
	Theology—Close or		Resource 15-3
	Distant Cousins?		Resource 15-4
0:40	Teleological	Lecture/Small Groups	Resource 15-5
	Arguments for the		Resource 15-6
	Existence of God		
1:00	Arguments Based on	Lecture/Small Groups	Resource 15-7
	Human Nature		Resource 15-8
			Resource 15-9
1:20	Lesson Close	Review, Assign	Student Guide
		_	Resource 15-10

Suggested Reading for Instructor

Flew, Anthony. *God and Philosophy.* New York: Dell Publishing, 1966. Flew is a British philosopher who is critical of the claims of Christianity. For "the other side of the story," Flew is worth consulting.

Grider, J. Kenneth. *A Wesleyan-Holiness Theology*. Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1994, 101-09.

- Hasker, William. "A Philosophical Perspective." In *The Openness of God: A Biblical Challenge to the Traditional Understanding of God.* Clark Pinnock, et al. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994. This essay does not discuss the arguments for the existence of God in detail, but does give helpful background on many of the divine attributes that have been taken up and discussed in connection with the arguments. Also some information on process theology.
- Holmes, Arthur F. Fact, Value, and God. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997. This excellent book is perhaps more about philosophical ethics than about the philosophy of religion, but Holmes discusses in lucid prose many of the philosophers who have been concerned about the existence of God, and to that extent this is a valuable work.
- Macquarrie, John. *Principles of Christian Theology.*Second edition, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1977, ch. 2.
- Oden, Thomas C. "Whether God Is." Chapter 4 in *The Living God: Systematic Theology*, Vol. 1. San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1987, 133-80.
- Trueblood, David Elton. *Philosophy of Religion*. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1957, Part II. An older work, but still valuable.
- Truesdale, Al. "The Eternal, Personal, Creative God." In A Contemporary Wesleyan Theology: Biblical, Systematic, and Practical, Vol. 1. Edited by Charles W. Carter. Grand Rapids: Francis Asbury Press, 1983. This chapter is more about Christian theology than about the philosophy of religion. It may be consulted to help students to see some of the similarities and differences between theology and philosophy.

Lesson Introduction

(5 minutes)

Accountability

Return and collect all homework except the objects that will be used later in the lesson.

Motivator

Refer to Resource 15-1 in the Student Guide.

Share with the class a prayer or two from the Danish theologian Kierkegard. From The Prayers of Kierkegaard, ed. Perry D. LeFevre (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1956), 20.

Ibid., 61.

And if Thou dost permit us to know the many magnificent secrets of science, do not let us forget the one thing necessary; and if Thou dost desire to extinguish our vigor of mind or if Thou dost let us grow old on earth so that our soul gets weary, one thing there is that can never be forgotten, even if we forget all else, that we are saved by Thy Son.

Thy love is beyond all proof: Whatever Thou doest to Thy subject it is infinite love. And when has there been greater truth in me than when I felt that Thou art infinite love? It was certainly not when I had proof, Oh no, it was when I felt it without proof, when it was not a dogma, which always needs demonstration, but had for me become an axiom which never needs such, Oh, but when my soul becomes weary, then Thou dost not leave me without proof.

Orientation

Today's lesson discusses two of the classic arguments for the existence of God: those from design, called teleological arguments, and those based on human nature. We also offer some opportunities to reflect on the material in a personal way.

Learner Objectives

Instruct students to locate objectives in the Student Guide.

Restating the objectives for the learners serves as an advanced organizer for the lesson and alerts learners to key information and concepts.

To help students

- learn something of how philosophy and theology are related disciplines, and yet distinct from one another
- examine briefly several of the classic arguments for the existence of God, noting both supporting arguments, as well as some of the criticisms raised
- appreciate some of the contributions philosophers have made to the tradition of Christian theology

Lesson Body

Lecture/Discussion: Philosophy and Theology—Close or Distant Cousins? (The Classical Arguments for the Existence of God)

(35 minutes)

The writer of this module shares this experience:

"In my college days the resident college philosophy instructor was not only a powerful professor, who attracted the brightest students of the college to his classes and especially his independent studies, but also perhaps the most astute and learned philosopher in the entire Church of the Nazarene during those days. He and my father were ordained into the ministry of the Church of the Nazarene on the same day, although neither made the ministry his primary career. This Nazarene philosopher was a godly, if occasionally intimidating, man. He was known to throw chalkboard erasers at errant ministerial students who took his required history of philosophy classes, because they were either sleeping or stupid or occasionally both.

"I never aspired to be a philosophy major, but three of my close college friends drank deeply from the wells of philosophy. Two of these three eventually finished Ph.D. degrees in philosophy and are now working at the university level in philosophical instruction. The third started a doctoral program in philosophy, eventually switched to computer science, and met a most sad and untimely death at the hands of a drunk driver on an Indiana back road. His university had the wisdom to grant to him the Ph.D. degree in computer studies posthumously.

"I have kept in contact with the two university philosophers. One was in my wedding, in fact. He grew up in a Nazarene parsonage, the oldest of seven children, was briefly married to a woman who was interested in Hinduism, and now practices meditation that would be described as Buddhist. His parents have at times expressed deep concern regarding the life he is leading, although he honestly loves his parents, and there is much mutual respect between him and his parents, if perhaps not total understanding. Through all of this I recognize a continuity of personality from the young man I first met thirty years ago to the philosopher and man of meditation I know today.

"The second philosopher claims to be an atheist, but is not especially dogmatic about it. He too seems oddly unchanged since college days, the same good-hearted and sensitive soul today as he was then, although I have not seen him in person for more than twenty-five years. He has likewise been divorced, after being married to a Jewish woman. This man did not benefit from the Nazarene upbringing of the other philosopher, although made a Christian profession in college and even attended Nazarene Theological Seminary for a year after graduating from college.

"Why do I tell these stories? Is it to prove that those who study philosophy in college, who subsequently earn Ph.D. degrees in the discipline, are bound to leave evangelical Christianity behind for greener pastures as soon as they get the chance?

"I wish these two stories were both headed for Christian endings, but I suspect neither one of my college friends will return to his former identification with evangelical Christianity, although I never underestimate the prevenient and pursuing grace of God. Based on these two stories, would anyone suggest my alma mater ought to stop offering classes in philosophy? I doubt that very much, for in fact the philosophy program there is now probably stronger than in my college days. For all of the stories of those who have seemingly been "ruined" by the study of philosophy, there are doubtless many times more students whose Christian faith has been deepened, strengthened, and broadened by the study of philosophy.

"My own college years were enriched by my meeting with the writings of the Danish theologian Søren Kierkegaard, whom we have mentioned before. Two more of his prayers seem appropriate to consider."

Teach me, O God, not to torture myself, not to make a martyr out of myself through stifling

reflection, but rather teach me to breathe deeply in faith.

Refer to Resource 15-2 in the Student Guide.

Ibid., 36.

Kierkegaard involves the entire body, one's entire being, in faith. Reflection may be stifling, that is, it may not allow us to breathe. The word "philosophy" means "the love of wisdom." If wisdom is *not* centered in Jesus Christ, in whom "all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell" (Col 1:19), then it is not truly wise or truly loving either. The Christian's study of philosophy must always be Christocentric.

To breathe deeply in faith is to live the life of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit's symbol is breath. To philosophize truly is to acknowledge that "no one comprehends what is truly God's except the Spirit of God" (1 Cor 2:11).

Of course, most philosophers, and especially those who are not committed to the claims of the gospel, will not agree with what I have said here. One of the distinguishing marks of philosophical study is *to remain open before all of the evidence*.

The only real commitment the philosopher can make is a commitment to the truth. On the contrary, the Christian has already decided the question of truth, because the Christian believes in the One who called himself the truth incarnate.

From Concluding Unscientific Postscript, trans. from the Danish by David F. Swenson; completed after his death and provided with introduction and notes by Walter Lewis (Princeton: Princeton University Press, for American Scandinavian Foundation, 1968, c1941), 206.

In another of Kierkegaard's books the figure of Pilate appears. Pilate's question to Jesus, "What is truth?" (John 18:38), provoked Kierkegaard to reply:

Had not Pilate asked objectively what truth is, he would never have condemned Christ to be crucified. Had he asked subjectively, the passion of his inwardness respecting what in the decision facing him he had *in truth to do*, would have prevented him from doing wrong.

Now to the second of Kierkegaard's prayers:

Father in Heaven!
What is a man without Thee!
What is all that he knows,
vast accumulation though it be,
but a chipped fragment
if he does not know Thee!

What is all his striving, could it even encompass the world, but a half-finished work if he does not know Thee!

From The Prayers of Kierkegaard, 31.

Thee, the One who art one thing and who art all!

Discussion Interlude: The God of the Philosophers or the God of Jesus Christ?

Refer to Resource 15-3 in the Student Guide.

Blaise Pascal, the French philosopher and theologian, was famous for declaring that the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob *was not* the God of the philosophers. This is Pascal's experience of God:

The year of grace 1654

Monday, 23 November, day of Saint Clement, pope and martyr, and of others in the martyrology. Eve of Saint Chrysogonus, martyr, and others, From about half past ten in the evening until about half past twelve,

-----FIRE-----

God of Abraham, God of Isaac, God of Jacob, not of the philosophers and scholars.

Certitude, certitude, feeling, joy, peace.

God of Jesus Christ.

Thy God will be my God.

Forgetfulness of the world and of everything, except

GOD.

He is to be found by the ways taught in the Gospel. *Greatness* of the human soul.

O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee, but I have known thee.

Joy, joy, joy, tears of joy.

I have been separated from him.

My God, wilt thou forsake me?

Let me not be separated from God eternally.

This is the eternal life, that they know thee as the only true God, and the one whom thou hast sent, Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ.

I have been separated from him; I have fled him, renounced him, crucified him.

Let me never be separated from him.

He is preserved only by the ways taught in the Gospel.

Renunciation, total and sweet.

At what points do you identify with Pascal?

Are there other points where your experience is much different from that of Pascal?

Clearly, this is an extremely personal statement. Few if any can duplicate Pascal's passion, and few can testify to such a vivid divine visitation.

Paul Tillich, the philosophical theologian, contradicted Pascal. Tillich believed the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (the biblical God) was the same God as the God of the philosophers. Tillich believed Christian theologians owed a tremendous debt to speculative philosophers, who during the history of Christian theology had supplied much of the framework upon

From Morris Bishop, Pascal: the Life of Genius (New York: Reynal and Hitchcock, 1936), 172-3.

which theologians had built their systems. The best place to see Tillich's argument is in his short book of lectures, *Biblical Religion and the Search for Ultimate Reality*. The title gives away Tillich's thesis. He does not necessarily believe biblical religion is *identical* to speculative philosophy, but biblical religion is not ultimately incompatible with it either. To speculate, Tillich reminds the reader, is simply to see with depth, precision, and clarity (hence 'spectacles' to describe eyeglasses). The cognitive, analytic, and rational tools of the philosopher are one means to see with clarity.

From Systematic Theology, 1:22-28.

Tillich defined philosophy as "that cognitive approach to reality in which reality as a whole is the object." It asks the question of reality as a whole. Theology necessarily asks the same question, for God is believed to be the author and preserver of all reality. He could not be less and still be God. But philosophy and theology ask the question from different perspectives. The source of knowledge for the philosopher is the universal *logos* (word) of reason. The source of knowledge for the theologian is the *Logos*, Christ, in whom God was incarnate. The theologian needs to show how the *logos* of reason is related to and fulfilled in Christ, the *Logos* of God. How does Christ answer the question of reality, of being? (See Col 1:15-20.)

John Wesley sometimes almost bragged at how skilled he was at using reason. Of course in the case of Wesley, reason was always used in service to divine revelation, which is not typically true of the secular philosopher. Let us conclude by simply stating the obvious: since wisdom is a good that is desirable in and of itself, and since philosophy is the love of wisdom, the Christian theologian should not fear philosophy.

But neither should philosophy be relied upon uncritically. Like any tool, philosophy can be used for good or for ill. If used in service to theology, we welcome philosophy. Thomas Aquinas said to attempt to prove God's existence using the tools of philosophy was to demonstrate that we love God with our minds. Can we do any less than that?

Relevant or Irrelevant?

Not all works of Christian or systematic theology will discuss the traditional arguments for the existence of God. The Nazarene systematic theology, H. Ray Dunning's *Grace, Faith, and Holiness,* is largely silent on the topic. The same is true for *A Wesleyan-Holiness Theology* by J. Kenneth Grider, although he does

Refer to Resource 15-4 in the Student Guide.

From God the Almighty, 66.

Remind students that these books are listed in the syllabus bibliography.

devote nine or ten pages to the general topic. Donald Bloesch writes, "the traditional proofs for the existence of God can be helpful in clarifying the relation of God and the world, but only faith can identify the God of rational demonstration with the God of divine revelation."

Thomas C. Oden's *The Living God: Systematic Theology, Volume One* offers an extensive, chapterlong discussion, "Whether God Is." Much of our discussion is indebted to his wisdom.

David Elton Trueblood's *Philosophy of Religion* is an older but readable work. It is not a work of Christian theology, but discusses the traditional arguments for God's existence with sympathy to evangelical Christian sensibilities.

Many, of course, have passionately argued that to set forth on the path to proving God's existence is ill advised, even sinful. Can God's existence be demonstrated? Some of those who answer "no" do so simply because *our* ideas about existence cannot possibly be applied to God, whose being and nature is a case unto itself. An anonymous theologian from the sixth century, known to history as Pseudo Dionysius the Areopagite, because he presented himself as Paul's Athenian convert (Acts 17:34), said:

God does not exist. Don't be afraid when I say that. It's simply that our concept of existence, our experience of existence, is so limited that it cannot possibly be applied to God. . . . God is not one of the things that "are." God is not one of the things that exist like this podium, or this Cathedral, or the atom. God is not something you can discover or prove.

Traditional Christian theology hears and obeys 1 Timothy 6:16: "It is he alone who has immortality and dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see." This attestation is offered up to God in the spirit of worship, honor, and adoration. To this God "be honor and eternal dominion." Anyone who inquires into the arguments for the existence of God should remember that the God being investigated is the God of honor and eternal dominion. This God, said the classical theologians, may be *known*, but cannot be fully *comprehended*.

It should be equally obvious that God's being or nonbeing is not contingent on these arguments. Oden is correct in claiming that "God does not come into being From The Living God, 138.

on the basis of the success or failure of our rational arguments." Pascal's famous declaration is fitting here: The heart has reasons, which the reason cannot fathom or understand. Pascal is saying that the reasons of the heart are their own proof, a proof that is sufficient unto itself.

Bloesch's quotation is worth recalling here. No Christian theologian has ever said that proofs for God's existence are superior to faith. At best the proofs can supplement faith. The rational arguments, says Oden, "corroborate what faith knows, rather than produce or establish faith. These are not independent, airtight, unchallengeable 'proofs,' but taken together, they tend to confirm and rationally to validate what faith already knows of God's existence and to corroborate faith's persistently intuited conviction that God exists."

Discussion Interlude

Does the Bible show any interest in proving God's existence?

If the Bible is not interested, should we not be interested either?

Oden suggests the best proofs bring together into a believable whole aspects and insights from a wide range of human thought endeavors; for example, natural, moral, intuitive, logical, scientific, historical, cultural, and religious. Do you agree with this?

Of what use is the attempt to demonstrate God's existence to the average Christian?

What is the best way to think of the relationship between faith and reason? Oden notes, "healthy theism, as argued by Athanasius, Augustine, Anselm, and Thomas Aquinas, takes a median view between these two extremes (that reason can know nothing or that faith can thoughtlessly know everything without reason) by arguing that we can use some modest and self-constricting modes of inference to speak of God's existence."

How can we strike the needed and necessary balance between a "blind" faith (sometimes called fideism), which excludes all appeal to reason, and a hyperrationalism that rejects all claims to know by faith?

Media Scan

What do they really say about God?

Ibid.

Discuss with the students the following questions before moving ahead to the five broad arguments for God's existence.

The Living God, 141-42.

If there is time, you could be prepared with some magazine and

newspaper articles that contain references to God. Do not bring only Christian articles, but also secular media.

Either divide the class into small groups or allow them to work alone. Hand out the articles and have them read them with these questions in mind.

What qualities and attributes are ascribed to God in these media reports?

Look especially for how God is depicted and portrayed.

Lecture/Discussion: Teleological Arguments for the **Existence of God**

(20 minutes)

Stating the Design Argument

Thomas C. Oden suggests the teleological argument for the existence of God is the oldest, simplest, and most economic of the five he surveys. It may also be pastorally useful, if someone experiences life as chaotic, misshapen, and confused.

It may be found in Psalm 94:9-10, "He who planted the ear, does he not hear? He who formed the eye, does he not see? He who disciplines the nations, he who teaches knowledge to humankind, does he not chastise?" This psalm demonstrates God as a God who has planted within the universe, within all living beings, balance, harmony, proportion, order, and design.

Oden states the teleological argument formally in this way:

- The world we experience is "an orderly unit whose order is constant, uniform, complex, and intrinsic."
- Such a world cannot be explained but by recourse to an intelligent Designer. To conceive of such a universe demonstrates God's omniscience, that God knows everything. To bring such a universe into existence demonstrates God's omnipotence, because God must be able not only to conceive of, but also to create it.
- God necessarily exists as the intelligent cause of the ordered universe.

Refer to Resource 15-5 in the Student Guide.

The Living God, 142-46.

Lesson Enhancement: The teleological order appeals to the fact of a universe that is orderly, predictable, and rational. A scientist or instructor of science may be able to offer some depth and examples of this general principle, if one is able to visit your class.

> Instinct in animals may be a further demonstration of the principle of an orderly universe. Can this be

explained by arguing from an evolutionary perspective that has no interest in God? Oden believes that if evolution is rightly viewed, it may also speak of the kind of designed universe that points to the existence of an intelligent creator:

The very language used in much evolutionary theory, such as "fitness," "adaptivity," "selectivity," "survival," and "law," constantly implies ends (i.e. purposes) of instinctual animal behavior. Suppose there is no larger intelligence . . . The question still remains as to how such a complex order could emerge without an orderer. To what purpose is something fitted or adapted? . . . It hardly helps to appeal to a "law" of natural selectivity if one has undercut the possibility of law by ascribing behavior to chance, spontaneity, or blind necessity or fate.

The Living God, 145-6.

Demonstrating the Design Argument

The design argument is definitely an *empirical* argument, meaning it is meant to be tested in relationship to observed facts, tendencies, and realities of the seen, heard, felt, tasted, and experienced world. In that regard, the opening statement of First John seems to strike a design note, or invites the reader to consider the weight and value of empirical evidence.

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched—this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us (1 John 1:1-2, NIV).

Romans 1:20 might also be used to support the design argument:

For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.

Now that you have learned more about the design argument, is there an object you think would be a better choice?

Have the students share the objects they brought to demonstrate the design argument.

Ask them to explain the reasons behind their choice.

Criticisms of the Design Argument

Refer to Resource 15-6 in the Student Guide.

The following criticisms have often been raised against the design argument:

- Is the world really so well designed after all? What about all of the evil, chaos, and uncertainty so evident in the world as we experience it?
- Because the world is in such a mess, the most the
 argument from design can show is that someone,
 not necessarily infinitely good, designed what we
 can observe, and certainly not that God created the
 world out of nothing. David Hume, the 18th century
 Scottish philosopher, argued in this way. Hume is
 often credited with "destroying" the argument from
 design, because he doubted an absolutely good God
 could possibly create a world that is far from good.

For his part, Oden admits the teleological argument cannot stand by itself, but must be used in concert with various other demonstrations of God's reality.

Lecture/Small Groups: Arguments Based on Human Nature

(20 minutes)

The Living God, 147-55.

Underlying Assumptions

This argument focuses on the human mind in particular. Teleological arguments tend to focus on animal behavior, and even on inanimate objects. But the argument based on human nature centers on the complexity of being human. This argument assumes we can trust our reasoning capacities not to deceive us. "Human reasoning begins," Oden declares, "with a fundamental trust in its own power of reasoning."

Ibid., 147.

Refer to Resource 15-7 in the Student Guide.

Here are some of the underlying assumptions of the human mind argument:

- 1. To the question "Where did intelligence come from?" there is simply no suitable answer but that it must come from God. Intelligence did not emerge in an evolutionary fashion, as some claim. It exists in humankind because it has been implanted within men and women by a God of infinite intelligence. Oden writes, "It is implausible to hypothesize a spontaneous emergence of intelligibility for such a massive order of intelligible events and beings."
- 2. Even scientific investigation can move forward only under the assumption that there must be a

The Living God, 149.

correspondence between our minds as knowing minds and the world the mind knows, grasps, and experiences.

- 3. It is conceivable that the world could continue to flourish without *any particular finite mind*, but not without some mind.
- 4. If we quest after certain values, which we undeniably do, there must be someone who inspires this search for the good life, and this someone is God.
- 5. We value persons above things. But what is the essential ingredient of personhood? What separates humans from animals? Most would agree it is the presence of mind within. God is the Supreme Mind from whom all finite minds derive.
- 6. The cumulative weight of all of this evidence points beyond itself to God. "If humanity has the idea of God implanted in its very nature," Oden allows, "then some sufficient reason must be hypothesized. Of many possible hypotheses, the most evident and plausible one is that God implanted it."

Small Groups

We are all familiar with the Christian teaching that we are created in the image of God. The argument from human nature to God assumes this is true. Even though defaced by sin, the image of God still persists in a powerful way.

Passages such as Gen 1:26-27, Ps 8, 19, 51; Rom 1-2, and Heb 2:6 tell of God's being within us and within the world. Pause to consider how these scriptures support the general claim of the argument from the appearance of finite human minds to the reality of One, Infinite Mind, who is God.

Locate in the assigned passages some demonstrations of what has been discussed under the general heading of the appeal to human consent.

Consider also Paul's meeting with the Athenians in front of the Areopagus, as recorded in Acts 17:22-34, where Paul implies that God is present within all of them, perhaps closer to them than they are aware, and yet fully known to them only in the provision of Jesus Christ.

Ibid., 152.

Refer to Resource 15-8 in the Student Guide.

In Lesson 3, Dr. Leupp wrote, "The gift of a mind is among God's choicest bestowments."

Divide the class into four groups. If the class is too small to have four groups, use two groups and give each group two passages to study.

Supporting Arguments from Human Consent

The elder President George Bush told the story of attending an official state funeral in the Soviet Union, as vice president in the Reagan administration. As the widow of the fallen leader approached the casket, she made the sign of the cross over his body. Even in the officially atheist Soviet Union the widow of the fallen president had hopes that he would go to heaven. Belief in God persists in the face of attempts to stamp it out. Oden is correct in claiming, "the prevalence of varied forms of belief in God is an astonishing fact of human history."

The Living God, 153.

Public opinion polls in the USA commonly indicate that about 96% of all people believe in some sort of Supreme Being. While obviously not all of these believe in the God and Father of Jesus Christ, such overwhelming numbers cannot simply be set aside.

Figures in the United Kingdom and other northern European countries tend to be much lower, sometimes reported to be as low as only 35% of the people believing in God. One writer suggested the percentage is lower in Europe because Europeans have had a closer brush with the horrors of evil than their North American counterparts. After all, Auschwitz and Bosnia happened on the European continent.

Refer to Resource 15-9 in the Student Guide.

Regarding the appeal to human and cultural consent, three important points must be made:

- Consent does not mean unanimity. Some scoffers and disbelievers will remain.
- Overall, this argument appeals more to history, cultures, and societies than to strict logical reasoning.
- Throughout history, many thousands of people have been willing to die for their belief in God.
 People sometimes die for false beliefs, but the deaths of the martyrs cannot be conveniently explained away that simply. The burden of proof is upon those who discount this evidence.

Lesson Close

(5 minutes)

Review

How do you answer the question posed at the beginning of this lesson?

Philosophy and Theology: Close or Distant Cousins?

Look Ahead

In the next lesson we continue our study of some of the classic demonstrations of the existence of God. We will study the cosmological arguments, arguments from various strata of experience, and the ontological argument.

Assign Homework

Direct students to the Homework Assignments in the Student Guide. Write a three-page essay indicating your agreement and disagreement with Barth, giving careful explanations as to why and how you agree and disagree.

- Karl Barth was famously opposed to the use of philosophy to buttress or support the claims of Christian theology. For him the Word of God was sufficient in and of itself.
- Barth is well known for his declaration that "belief cannot argue with unbelief: it can only preach to it."

Part of the next lesson asks us to consider how the presence of beauty in the world might demonstrate that God is real. To show this point, bring to class something that shows your idea of what is beautiful: a photograph, a song, a poem, a small statue, whatever it may be.

Journal Prompt

Consider the two arguments studied in this lesson. Which impacts your life the most? Why?

Punctuate the Finish

Refer to Resource 15-10.

Let reason do all that reason can: Employ it as far as it will go. But, at the same time, acknowledge it is utterly incapable of giving either faith, or hope, or love; and, consequently, of producing either real virtue, or substantial happiness. Expect these from a higher source, even from the Father of the spirits of all flesh. Seek and receive them, not as your own acquisition; but as the gift of God. Lift up your hearts to Him who

From "Sermon 70: The Case of Reason Impartially Considered," in Works, 2:600. "giveth to all men liberally, and unbraideth not." He alone can give that faith which is "the evidence" and conviction "of things not seen." He alone can "beget unto you a lively hope" of an inheritance eternal in the heavens; and He alone can "shed his love abroad in your heart by the Holy Ghost given unto you."

—John Wesley

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Lesson 16

Further Investigations into Demonstrations for the Existence of God

Lesson Overview

Schedule

Start Time	Task or Topic	Learning Activity	Materials Needed
0:00	Introduction	Orient	Student Guide
0:10	Cosmological	Lecture/Discussion	Resource 16-1
	Arguments		
0:30	Arguments Taking	Lecture/Discussion	Resource 16-2
	into Account Morality,		Resource 16-3
	Religious Experience,		Resource 16-4
	and Beauty		
1:10	The Ontological	Lecture/Discussion	Resource 16-5
	Argument, or		
	Anselm's Discovery		
1:25	Lesson Close	Review, Assign	Student Guide
			Resource 16-6

Suggested Reading for Instructor

Same as Lesson 15

Lesson Introduction

(10 minutes)

Accountability

Call on one or two students to read their essay.

Return and collect all homework.

Motivator

You might bring to class some art books that have some pictures of the great works of religious art. As part of your homework you were asked to bring to class something that demonstrated your understanding of what is beautiful. We are going to take a few minutes to share with each other our items of beauty.

Orientation

Today we conclude our study of the arguments for demonstrating the existence of God.

Learner Objectives

Instruct students to locate objectives in the Student Guide.

Restating the objectives for the learners serves as an advanced organizer for the lesson and alerts learners to key information and concepts.

To help students

- learn something of how philosophy and theology are related disciplines, and yet distinct from one another
- examine briefly several of the classic arguments for the existence of God, noting both supporting arguments, as well as some of the criticisms that have been raised
- appreciate some of the contributions philosophers have made to the tradition of Christian theology

Lesson Body

Lecture/Discussion: Cosmological Arguments

(20 minutes)

Try to build bridges from the admittedly abstract concepts in this lesson to the everyday worlds of the students.

Refer to Resource 16-1 in the Student Guide.

These arguments for the existence of God are called cosmological because they invite people to reflect on the world or *cosmos* as it exists. There are five of these arguments as classically presented by Thomas Aquinas. Here we consider four of them, because Thomas' fifth argument has already been considered as the argument from order and design, in the previous lesson. Overall these arguments are known as *a posteriori*, which simply means after or "posterior to" our human experience. One cannot lay in one's bed and appreciate the full force of the various cosmological arguments. One must encounter them in the real world.

The Argument from Change

Change is an observable part of our everyday lives. Sometimes we can see why and how something has changed, sometimes not. But we believe that standing behind all of the change we can observe, there must be someone who does not change, who originated all change. This someone we call God, or in philosophical terms the Prime Mover or Unmoved Mover. Scripture may itself anticipate this line of thinking when it asserts, "every house is built by someone, but the builder of all things is God" (Heb 3:4). Thomas Aquinas summarized this argument when he wrote that "all mutables [things which change] lead us back to a first immutable."

The Argument from Causality

This argument is much like the first one, except that instead of change we now consider cause. We may be able to observe change happening empirically, but to discern the reasons for change will take us beyond mere change to reflecting upon causes.

In the Philippines, during the monsoon season, the heavy rains cause the bamboo to grow so profusely that one can almost witness the growth with the naked eye. Certainly one could mark growth from day to day with a measuring device. But merely to observe and mark growth and change is not to explain it. The cause

and effect relationship between monsoon rains and bamboo growth would need deeper explanations.

Some have posited that there could be an "infinite causal regress," meaning causes could be traced back to infinity, with no beginning at all. To believe in that way taxes the imagination. Could all of this world have erupted spontaneously?

Thomas Aquinas writes, "if there were an infinite regress among efficient causes, no cause would be first. . . . We must, therefore, posit that there exists a first efficient cause. This is God." D. Elton Trueblood writes, "beyond all secondary causes and giving rise to the entire series, there must be a first cause, itself uncaused and self-existent. To say that such a first cause exists is to say that God is."

From Philosophy of Religion (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1957), 92

The Argument from Contingency

Parents of young children understand very keenly that their offspring are highly dependent upon them for their every need. To be a dependent creature is to be a contingent creature. In that sense, obviously every human being is dependent.

For Thomas Aquinas it was plain that not *all* levels of being are contingent. If everything is contingent on something else, Thomas believed, "nothing could ever have begun, for what is does not begin to be except because of something which is, and so there would be nothing even now. This is clearly hollow. Therefore all things cannot be might-not-have-beens; among them must be a being whose existence is necessary." This one being whose existence is *necessary* is God.

The Argument from Degrees of Being or Grades of Perfection

"As a student," the author writes, "I worked for a time in an Oregon lumber mill. The most difficult job in the mill, not one I was qualified to perform, was to grade the lumber as it came by. The man who graded it had only a few seconds to mark it with a wax crayon as it skidded by."

We speak in comparative language dozens if not hundreds of times each day. *Good . . . better . . . best* or *small . . . medium . . . large* – these words are seldom far removed from our thinking.

If there are different grades of perfection, or even different powers of being (who would really claim that a visit to a retirement center demonstrates as much human energy as a nursery school?), then there must be a Perfect Being, whom Christian tradition has named as God.

Discussion Interlude

Which of these four make the most sense to you?

Which would be the most difficult for today's generation to accept?

What language or examples can we use to make them understandable?

Lecture/Discussion: Arguments Taking into Account Morality, Religious Experience, and Beauty

(40 minutes)

Basic Overview

Refer to Resource 16-2 in the Student Guide.

Immanuel Kant, the great German philosopher of the Enlightenment, disagreed with all of the classic arguments for the existence of God except the moral argument. Kant wanted to know only two things: "the starry skies above and the moral law within." Kant believed the maintenance of morality was essential to prevent the social and intellectual fabric from unraveling.

For Kant it was never right to tell a lie, not even to save the life of an innocent prisoner who has fled from terrorizing guards and now seeks refuge in your house. If you are asked if you are harboring a fugitive, even a righteous fugitive, you must answer "yes." While you are answering in the affirmative, Kant reasons, the one being sought may be able to escape out the back door. If you lie, saying he is not here, and he is later captured, his blood is on your hands. Incidentally, John Wesley agreed with Kant that one should never lie. Wesley, possibly exaggerating for the sake of emphasis, claimed he would not tell a lie even to save the souls of the entire human race.

The complex of arguments we briefly survey here has the weight of common sense and practicality on its side. God exists, these all say in one way or another, because certain observable facts about the world we live in demand God's existence. There is a moral order around us, and hence there must be a Divine Lawgiver who gives and supports it. Everyone has a sense of

what is beautiful, and therefore there must be a Supreme Beauty, who is God. God has instructed us that He will reward those who earnestly seek after Him (Heb 11:6), and what is religious experience other than the search after God?

Discussion Interlude—Experience

The Church of the Nazarene has long had "testimony time" in its services. What are some of the theological implications behind the fact of some people willingly standing to their feet and bearing witness to what the Lord has accomplished lately in their hearts and lives?

Refer to Resource 16-3 in the Student Guide.

Here are some possibilities:

- God speaks to His people all of the time, and someone who has truly heard needs to say so.
- The fact that laypeople are welcome to give a testimony is one proof that the Church of the Nazarene believes in the priesthood of all believers, and does not elevate clergy above the laity. No one's testimony is any more valid than that of any other.
- The "interior witness of the Holy Spirit" is one of the certain evidences of entire sanctification, and this interior witness needs to be shared publicly.
- It may well be that the Holy Spirit is speaking through the one who stands to testify, and that the remainder of the service will be blessed by the Spirit's presence in a special and evident way because of the effort made to testify.

The reality of religious experience may be certified in many other ways, but the Nazarene tradition of giving public testimonies is one of the most vivid.

No appeal to morality, a sense of beauty, and religious experience, as a means of demonstrating that there is a God to be reckoned with, will meet with universal approval.

However, as in the case with nearly every universal cultural belief in God, the burden of proof may be said to rest upon the doubters.

Have the students turn to Resource 16-4 and complete it at this time. Allow an appropriate amount of time and then have the students share some of their responses.

Individual Reflection

Discussion Interlude—Law

Return to the well-known quotation from Immanuel Kant, that he desired to know nothing except the starry skies above and the moral law within.

Let's contemplate God as Divine Lawgiver.

Is the God who gives the divine law the God of Jesus Christ, or the God of the philosophers?

Is the God who gives the divine law someone we can love and worship, or only respect, admire, and possibly even fear?

Is God the Divine Lawgiver the ultimate source for our conscience? Why or why not?

Lecture/Discussion: The Ontological Argument, or Anselm's Discovery

(15 minutes)

Refer to Resource 16-5 in the Student Guide.

From The Living God, 174.

We spoke earlier of *a posteriori* arguments used to demonstrate the reality of God, noting that such arguments are *after* experience. The ontological argument is different from those. It is an *a priori* argument whose force depends on logic and deductive thinking. Oden says this argument is "so simple that its profundity escapes our notice. . . . It is an argument that requires some quiet meditation in order that in due time it may grasp one's soul."

Anselm (c. 1033-1109) stated the ontological argument with force and precision, such that it is sometimes called "Anselm's discovery." He began with a definition of God as that than which nothing greater can be conceived. Anselm believed our minds were capable of thinking of a perfect being. The being Anselm had in mind was necessarily greater in power, wisdom, goodness, and sheer being than anything we could conceive. Hence his definition of God as that than which nothing greater can be thought.

If we accept this definition, God's existence necessarily must follow. If we say the absolutely perfect being who is fixed firmly in our minds *does not exist*, how can we continue to say this being is *absolutely perfect?* The very definition of God as "that than which nothing greater can be conceived" implies His real existence. In Oden's explanatory phrase, "An absolutely perfect being must exist if it is to be absolutely perfect."

Ibid., 174.

It was soon obviously objected that the idea of a perfect being does not necessarily imply it must exist. I may imagine myself to be a perfect tennis player, winning Wimbledon, but my thinking it does not bring it to pass. I cannot imagine my bank account to be filled with money just because I think it so.

But to return to Anselm's foundational definition, it can apply *only* to that which is infinite, and playing tennis and building my bank account are finite realities. The existence of God is in a thought category all by itself.

Augustine captured the intent of the ontological argument when he wrote: "God is more truly thought than He is described, and exists more truly than He is thought."

Discussion Interlude

Anselm lived a thousand years ago and Augustine lived 600 years before that.

How can we reword their statements and definitions so that today's laypeople can understand and make them part of their beliefs?

Lesson Close

(5 minutes)

Review

Instruct students to locate objectives in the Student Guide.

Look at the learner objectives for the last two lessons. Did you

- learn something of how philosophy and theology are related disciplines, and yet distinct from one another?
- examine briefly several of the classic arguments for the existence of God, noting both supporting arguments, as well as some of the criticisms raised?
- appreciate some of the contributions philosophers have made to the tradition of Christian theology?

Look Ahead

For the next class we will study the question of Christianity among the religions of the world.

Assign Homework

Direct students to the Homework Assignments in the Student Guide. Complete Resource 16-6. Write your answers on a separate sheet of paper.

Journal Prompt

Does the average Christian layperson really care about all of these philosophical arguments for the existence of God? Why?

Punctuate the Finish

Yet I am not ashamed, because I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him for that day.

—2 Timothy 1:12

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Lesson 17

How Should We Regard Religions Other than Christianity?

Lesson Overview

Schedule

Start Time	Task or Topic	Learning Activity	Materials Needed
0:00	Introduction	Orient	Student Guide
			Resource 17-1
0:10	Searching for Perspective	Lecture	Resource 17-2
0:25	Hymn Analysis	Small Groups	Resource 17-3 Hymnals
0:45	The Gift of Discernment	Lecture	Resource 17-4
0:55	Some Help in Sorting It All Out	Lecture/Discussion	Resource 17-5 Resource 17-6
1:20	Lesson Close	Review, Assign	Student Guide

Suggested Reading for Instructor

Braaten, Carl E. *No Other Gospel: Christianity Among the World's Religions.* Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992. From a distinguished Lutheran writer.

- Carter, Charles W., and Everett N. Hunt, Jr. "The Divine Mandate." In A Contemporary Wesleyan Theology: Biblical, Systematic, and Practical, Vol. 2. Edited by Charles W. Carter. Grand Rapids: Francis Asbury Press, 1983. This chapter represents a theology of mission, more than an investigation of Christianity among the religions of the world.
- Cunningham, Floyd T. "Interreligious Dialogue: A Wesleyan Holiness Perspective." In *Grounds for Understanding: Ecumenical Resources for Responses to Religious Pluralism.* Edited by S. Mark Heim. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998.
- Flemming, Dean. "Foundations for Responding to Religious Pluralism." *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 31 (Spring 1996): 51-75.
- Hick, John. *God Has Many Names*. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1980. Readable, but very liberal, essays and addresses from one of the main theoretical voices of the pluralist persuasion.
- ______, and Brian Hebblethwaite, eds. Christianity and Other Religions: Selected Readings.

 Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981. These readings present a cross-section of views. The essay by Karl Barth may be of special interest. Other established writers such as Karl Rahner, Paul Tillich, Jürgen Moltmann, Wilfred Cantwell Smith, and John Hick are represented.
- Ingersol, Stan, and Wesley Tracy. *Here We Stand*. Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1998. Offers comparative analyses of Nazarene doctrine and practices in relationship to the major Christian denominations as well as to major religions of the world.
- Knitter, Paul F. No Other Name? A Critical Survey of Christian Attitudes Toward the World Religions.

 Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1985. For the most part a liberal treatment, although does consider the evangelical perspective in chapter 5.
- Maddox, Randy. "Wesley and the Question of Truth or Salvation Through Other Religions." Wesleyan Theological Journal 27 (Spring-Fall, 1992): 7-29.

Newbigin, Leslie. *The Open Secret: An Introduction to the Theology of Mission.* Revised edition, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995. Newbigin is one of the greatest missiologists and evangelists of the 20th century. Solidly evangelical.

Swidler, Leonard, ed. *Toward a Universal Theology of Religion*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1987. Also filled with liberal perspectives, so should be used with some caution. See especially the essays by Wilfred Cantwell Smith, Leonard Swidler, Raimundo Panikkar, Paul F. Knitter, and Hans Kung.

Lesson Introduction

(10 minutes)

Accountability

Call on two students to read their answer to just one of the arguments addressed on Resource 16-6.

Return and collect all homework.

Motivator

Refer to Resource 17-1 in the Student Guide.

These quotes are designed to help students see some of the ways in which Wesleyan and holiness theology approaches the questions of this lesson.

From Floyd T. Cunningham, "Interreligious Dialogue: A Wesleyan Holiness Perspective," in Grounds for Understanding: Ecumenical Resources for Responses to Religious Pluralism, ed. S. Mark Heim (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 189, 191.

> But clea diff pos

From Randy L. Maddox, "Wesley and the Question of Truth or Salvation Through Other Religions," Wesleyan Theological Journal, 27 (Spring-Fall 1992), 19. Holiness theology is filled with an optimism of grace that at its best elicits rather than thwarts compassion and empathy to those outside the reaches of the established church.

—Floyd T. Cunningham

Holiness churches may offer to interfaith dialogue the nuances they carry of Wesleyan theology: first, a dynamic understanding of Christ's prevenient grace, which reaches and is active within all human beings; second, an understanding that human beings may enjoy now full assurance of present salvation from sin, guilt, fear, and shame; third, a way of and emphasis upon discipleship.

—Floyd T. Cunningham

Particularly in Evangelical circles, suggestions of some truth existing in other religions, or of some possibility of salvation among those who have never heard of Christ, are typically charged with a lack of appreciation for the indispensable role of divine grace in salvation. But this cannot be said of [John] Wesley. He quite clearly grounds all salvation in God's grace. If he differs from other theologians who would rule out any possibility of salvation among the heathen, it is not in the *need* for grace, but in the *nature* of God's grace. In other words, the convictions that lead Wesley to suggest that a truly loving and just God would judge the heathen in terms of their response to the light of initial universal revelation are the same convictions that had led him earlier to reject unconditional predestination.

—Randy L. Maddox

Orientation

In this lesson we will briefly survey some of the typical positions taken when thinking of the relationship between Christianity and the other religions of the world.

Learner Objectives

Instruct students to locate objectives in the Student Guide.

Restating the objectives for the learners serves as an advanced organizer for the lesson and alerts learners to key information and concepts.

To help students

- learn to appreciate with greater depth and penetration the great faith traditions of the world other than Christianity
- become tolerant without at the same time becoming unprincipled
- appreciate the finality of the Christian gospel and revelation

Lesson Body

Lecture: Searching for Perspective

(15 minutes)

Narrative Introduction

Dr. Leupp writes, "As missionaries we enjoyed the questions we were asked, because the questions helped to clarify many things: the level of interest of Nazarene preachers and laity in what we were doing, how the message was getting across, and our own self-understanding of what exactly we were doing. Behind some of the questions there seemed to be a hidden request that the missionary would tell a great missionary story, which was not exactly our strong suit as missionaries.

"One question has stayed with me five years after it was asked of us. It has stayed for two reasons: the question itself, and the circumstances surrounding its asking. We were in the Asia-Pacific regional office, in a small office looking into an even smaller camera, attached to the top of a computer. We were trying, with some success and definitely not through our own technological prowess, to have an interactive, question-and-answer session with a Nazarene congregation in the United States.

"That was the setting. What was the question? The question caught me off guard, because to answer it honestly definitely took me out of my academic 'comfort zone,' and helped me reflect on the work of a missionary theologian and his missionary librarian wife.

"'Do you have any memorable conversion stories to tell?' was the scope, if not the exactness, of the question. Quickly I rifled through my memory banks, and looked to Stephanie for guidance. I could not remember any conversions I had been privileged to be part of. The teacher can always hope but never 'get inside' the minds of the students enough to know if perhaps, at some level, they are being 'converted' to a better way of thinking theologically, which in its turn definitely could lead to the increase of the Kingdom of God.

"No conversion stories immediately stuck out, and I sensed that the stateside Nazarene pastor was probably somewhat disappointed—and possibly

surprised—at my relative lack of enthusiasm for the question. Finally I remembered one of the Korean students who had been a Buddhist monk before becoming a Christian. He seemed poised to enter the Christian ministry in his homeland after graduation.

"Stephanie offered up the story of a beloved seminary worker and domestic 'helper' who had not found personal satisfaction in her Philippine Roman Catholic upbringing, even though she kept the Holy Week obligations and observances to the extent of crawling on her knees down the center aisle at the local Roman parish. Her current Christian testimony was vital and vibrant, and the local Nazarene community lost one of its finest when she died in an untimely manner.

"Why do I tell this story to begin this lesson of how pastors-in-training ought to think about the other religions of the world? As we increasingly rub shoulders with people who have little knowledge or even appreciation for the truths of Christianity—regardless of whether it is the Nazarene, Baptist, Catholic, Pentecostal, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Methodist, etc. we will necessarily ask ourselves: how should I think of these people? Am I an 'insider' while they are sadly 'outsiders'? Should I look upon them with love, puzzlement or confusion? Should I regard them as potential friends, or try to avoid them as inherently strange? How much am I obligated, if at all, to try to learn something about their religion? Should my strategy be to convert them, to befriend them, to ignore them? What is the meaning of 'conversion' anyway?"

The Importance of This Issue

In this lesson we need to address a subject that is immediately controversial. It can divide people, and conceivably even local churches. Simply stated, our subject is: How should Nazarenes regard the other great religions of the world? A generation or two ago this was not an important issue for Nazarenes in North America, but now it has become important and likely will remain important for the foreseeable future.

Statistics and projections tell the story that we long expected to be true. The United States as a whole is becoming more and more diverse and multicultural. Battles are fought at the local public school and in the town square: should the singing of Christmas carols be allowed, since they have an explicitly Christian message? May a Nativity scene be displayed in the center of town, on public land?

In 1960 about 80% of the American people could be linked rather directly with the first settlers who came from England. White, Protestant, Anglo-Saxon. But 100 years later, and possibly sooner than that, projections indicate that one-half or less of the citizens of the USA will own the so-called WASP (for White Anglo-Saxon Protestant) heritage. Even today there are more Muslims than Episcopalians in the United States, something that even fifteen years ago was unthinkable.

Essentials, Nonessentials, and Charity

Recall that earlier, in the syllabus of this module of Investigating Christian Theology 1, we quoted Nazarene patriarch Phineas F. Bresee on the point of urging unity on essentials, liberty on nonessentials, and in all things charity. It seems doubtful to me that when he recommended this standard of theological kindness, Bresee was thinking outside the purview of Christianity. Regarding other Christian groups, early Nazarenes sought to strive for unity in essentials, liberty regarding nonessentials, and in all things kindness.

We can only guess what Bresee might say today. He would no doubt be pleased with how the Church of the Nazarene in Southern California has taken full responsibility for preaching the gospel to the full spectrum of humanity found there.

What is the "typical" Nazarene attitude toward the other religions of the world today? Is there any way of finding this out? "At least twice within the past fifteen years," Dr. Leupp writes, "I have born personal witness to what seemed to me inappropriate opinions voiced about non-Christian religions. One occasion was done in ignorance, which probably makes it that much sadder. At an all-church banquet a song meant to be humorous was sung. But it was blatantly anti-semitic, at least for those with ears to hear. The other incident was a choir number mocking Buddhism."

At the very least, I hope all would agree that we ought to show respect for the other religions of the world. In the past, official Nazarene textbooks have been very critical of non-Christian religions, as in the first edition of the basic theology textbook, *Exploring Our Christian Faith*. The second edition of this book either softened the criticism or else eliminated it all together. As the missionary outreach of the Church of the Nazarene spans the globe, by necessity Nazarenes have had to

educate themselves to both the virtues and the weaknesses of the non-Christian religions.

"My own personal example," states Dr. Leupp, "was teaching Christian theology in the Philippines. Since at least 83% of the native population is at least nominally Roman Catholic, a great many of the Filipino students there arrived at the seminary with a lot of contact with the country's majority religion. In isolated cases students had in the past contemplated becoming nuns, and some had served as altar boys.

- "I found it unusual that evangelical Filipino Christians would with regularity divide the population into Catholics and Christians. Not being from the Philippines, when I heard this, I heard it as meaning that the Catholics were not Christians at all.
- "I thought this was the wrong approach to take, even though Protestants in the Philippines can with some justification claim that Catholicism goes to extremes in some ways, notably the veneration of the Virgin Mary that often crosses over into worship. But for any Christian, it is a sin to worship anyone but the Triune God

"For those students inclined to doubt the validity of the Roman Catholic Church, I tried to help them to see how much all Christians owe to the Roman tradition. Where would all of Christianity be without the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed, Augustine of Hippo, Francis of Assisi, and Thomas Aquinas?"

The Centrality of Grace

Floyd T. Cunningham, longtime academic dean of Asia-Pacific Nazarene Seminary in the Philippines, does us a great service by reminding us once again of the centrality of grace for the entire Wesleyan outlook:

Refer to Resource 17-2 in the Student Guide.

In Wesleyanism there is a continuity of grace . . . Prevenient grace is the beginning stage of that soteriologically motivated and christocentric flow. The next stage is "convincing" or convicting grace, by which the individual knows himself or herself to be a sinner. Without that self-knowledge there can be no onward progress toward God. By grace and the work of the Holy Spirit men and women come to know their true spiritual conditions. They are enabled to know whether or not they enjoy peace with God. Prevenient grace provides this light. It shines through certain societal and religious conventions, as well as through individual

From "Interreligious Dialogue," 193-94.

consciences. The religions of the world are instruments of this light, since men and women come to know their moral failures or triumphs through them. Within them is an imprint and witness to the Truth, which, though not recognized as such, is Christ. Where this imprint and witness in other religions is, may be judged by Christians on the basis of biblical revelation.

Discussion Interlude

In the foregoing materials I told many stories about my missionary years in the Philippines.

Now is the time for students and the instructor to tell similar stories concerning how they have interacted with different faith traditions, either Christian or non-Christian.

Small Groups: Hymn Analysis

(20 minutes)

Refer to Resource 17-3 in the Student Guide.

Divide the class into small groups to analyze four hymns.

Each group will need at least one hymnal. The page listings are from Sing to the Lord.

Lecture: The Gift of Discernment

(10 minutes)

The advice Jesus Christ gave to His disciples, to be "wise as serpents and innocent as doves" (Mt 10:16), may serve us well when considering the other religions of the world. Let us take the second bit of Jesus' advice first, to be innocent as doves. This means we ought to see other religions in the best, and not the worst, possible light. Here are some practical suggestions.

Innocent as Doves

First Consideration

It is generally very true that we fear and feel uncomfortable regarding that of which we have little if any personal knowledge. It may pay dividends to become informed, at least in an elementary way, about two or three of the world's major religions other than Christianity. For the sake of convenience, we can name

the following as major religions: Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, Taoism, and Confucianism. Virtually every region of the world has tribal religions, and we could certainly name some other religions that are closely identified with one world area, such as Shinto and Sikhism, but the six named above are major world faiths.

How might one become informed? There are many ways: reading books and magazine articles, watching instructional videos, attending information sessions, talking with practitioners, eating in ethnic restaurants associated with these various creeds.

Of these ways, meeting and knowing someone who actually practices that religion is probably the best way. This may help us see the world through that person's eyes. If we have had the personal experience of being a minority in a majority world, this knowledge may give us some "creative empathy" for non-Christians who practice their faith in the USA.

"For example," states Dr. Leupp, "virtually all of the adult education students I have recently taught would consider themselves to be Christian to one degree or another. In one class there was an exception, a practicing Jew. After one class session she remarked that the class had seemed so Christian to her. In saying this she was not offended. She did not feel like her fellow classmates were converging on her trying to convert her. But she sensed, rightly I am sure, that the focus of the class was not just "religion in general," but "Christian in particular." I think our classes must continue to be *self-consciously* and *unapologetically* Christian, yet at the same time cognizant that not everyone will see things our way."

Some may think becoming educated regarding other religions is "playing into the devil's hands." If one seriously believes that, and has prayed about it, it is probably best *for that person* not to study non-Christian religions.

"When I lived in the Philippines," continues Dr. Leupp,
"I came to appreciate Roman Catholicism more and
more, because I could see more of its virtues than I
had known while growing up Protestant in the USA. But
I was happier than ever before for my Protestant
upbringing."

Although Roman Catholicism is an important part of the Christian family, the same general principle may hold: investigating "the other" may serve the dual purpose of *both* appreciating "the other" *and* increasing one's conviction regarding Jesus Christ.

Second Consideration

If we take the time to learn about other religions, we may understand that it is difficult, even impossible, to evaluate all of the religions of the world according to the ways we evaluate what is true and what is false for Christian doctrine. The questions other religions raise, and the ways they solve the problems they raise, may be *similar* to Christianity, without yet being *identical*. Christians and Buddhists, for example, may view "the human predicament" in different ways, with the result being that "salvation" is also viewed differently.

After being as sympathetic as we possibly can be toward other religions, we will still judge them as deficient in fundamental ways when compared with the Christian faith. To return to Buddhism, we may think Buddhism does offer a program of salvation, but it is very far removed from "by grace through faith." We may think it resembles "works righteousness," exerting tremendous mental energy toward the "extinction" of nirvana.

If we travel and especially live in countries not our own, we desire above all else to be treated as unique, as persons of intrinsic worth and value, as persons whose "home" country and culture are valuable. It should be the same as we study other religions. As we study we should realize we are on unfamiliar ground. That is not the same as to say we are on "holy ground," for we are not on Christian ground, which is our only holy ground. When we travel in a foreign place, the respect we expect to be accorded *to us* we should also give to those in whose countries we are visitors. If one cannot show respect for the new and unknown, one should really just stay at home.

Wise as Serpents

First Consideration

Every Christian knows such verses as John 14:6, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." And Acts 4:12, "There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among mortals by which we must be saved."

We must not ignore the force of these verses. Yet along side of this we also hear John 10:16, "I have

For further explanation of the uniqueness of Christianity among world religions, refer students to Resource 17-4.

other sheep that do not belong to this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd."

John 10:16 certainly does not declare that non-Christian religions are *salvific*, but it does suggest the best means of evangelization is to approach members of *other* religions not as if they were *aliens*, *strangers*, *foreigners*, *oddities*, but rather as if they were indeed *other* or *potential sheep*. That one little difference in perspective and attitude—viewing them as potential sheep to be cultivated rather than wolves to be feared—may in fact make all of the difference.

Second Consideration

It is often said that a little knowledge is a dangerous thing. So here also. This can mean two things:

- No one will have the time and resources to study a non-Christian religion to more than a casual and cursory degree. Distortions may creep in when knowledge is far from complete. But it is probably a risk worth taking.
- We do not have time in Investigating Christian
 Theology 1 to devote a great deal of time to the
 specific question of Christianity among the religions
 of the world.

Lecture/Discussion: Some Help in Sorting It All Out

(25 minutes)

There are many ways of approaching the general question we are now investigating. One way that is often repeated features a three-way analytical distinction.

Exclusivism

Refer to Resource 17-5 in the Student Guide.

This is the tried and true position that Christianity is the only true religion. In fact, many who follow this position would not be happy in calling Christianity a religion. For them, any *mere religion* is almost by definition a human creation. The most ingenious people have created the most ingenious experiments in thinking and have called the results *religion*.

Karl Barth is one theologian who believed in *religionless Christianity*. Simply put, Barth thought religion is a sign, not of belief, but of unbelief. Religion, thought Barth, is what happens when we approach God through our own initiative and try to fashion Him in our own image. Religion is our *screaming* at God

presumptuously rather than *listening* to God *humbly*. Jesus Christ as the revealed Word of the Father must be the center of the Christian proclamation.

Those who are fond of saying that Christianity is not a religion but is rather a relationship *with* God the Father, *through* God the Son, and *in the power* of God the Spirit are probably exclusivists.

Inclusivism

Inclusivism is another way many people see the various religions. The New York Yankees surprised baseball fans just a little bit by *not* winning the 2001 World Series. But few would argue the point that everything represented by baseball can be found in this most famous of professional sports franchises. The record and the history of the Yankees speak for themselves. But, there are other teams and other histories that are legitimate in their own right. They play the game of baseball in ways that are distinctive to them.

Something like that is happening in the "inclusivism" paradigm. It suggests that the truths of other religions can be found implicitly in Christianity. Whatever is of value in Hinduism, for example, may be found in a parallel form within Christianity. In that sense Christianity is inclusive of all religious value, worth, and virtue.

The Roman Catholic theologian Karl Rahner may be a representative of inclusivism through his teaching of "anonymous Christianity." Rahner's main point seems to be grace. If someone is not a Christian, yet lives his or her life according to the light and grace given by the Lord God, then this person is "anonymously" a Christian, whether or not it is acknowledged.

This sounds like an attractive idea, but its logic cannot be limited only to Christianity. Would not anyone rightly be considered, for example, an "anonymous Buddhist" if he lived according to Buddhist teachings, even if he did not know he was doing so?

Pluralism

The word "pluralism" may mean different things to different persons, according to the context of meaning. But in this case the word means, in essence, that all of the great faith paths are legitimate, true, redemptive, and salvific.

From his book of essays and lectures, God Has Many Names (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1980), 71.

John Hick is a representative figure. He believes the great faith traditions of the world should center on the unity they have in God, who is expressed in different ways by each, rather than being divided by competing savior figures. "And we have to realize that the universe of faiths centers upon *God*, and not upon Christianity or upon any other religion. He is the sun, the originative source of light and life, whom all the religions reflect in their own different ways." Not surprisingly, John Hick downplays the uniqueness of Jesus Christ, disagreeing with the orthodox view that Jesus is the only-begotten Son of God and the Second Person of the Trinity.

The Roman Catholic theologian Hans Kung has spoken of the religions of the world as being the "ordinary" paths to wholeness and salvation, with Roman Catholicism as being the "extraordinary" path. Today, Kung might accept that not only is Catholicism salvific in an extraordinary sense, but so also are Protestantism and Eastern Orthodoxy.

Is Kung's distinction between the "ordinary" and the "extraordinary" ways of salvation a satisfactory resolution of the question of Christianity among the religions of the world? If not, is the *exclusivism*, *inclusivism*, and *pluralism* distinction more defensible?

Do Judaism and Islam Constitute a Special Case?

It is customary to call Judaism, Christianity, and Islam (listing them here in the order of their respective historical appearances), the three "Abrahamic monotheisms." All of these three religions hold Abraham to be a decisive figure. In one form or another all three believe in divine revelation. Their followers may be said to be "People of the Book," since various holy scriptures influence the faith communities each religion supports.

Knowing all of this, should we say that Judaism and Islam are special cases, not to be lumped uncritically with the other great religions we have mentioned? Certainly history is on our side if we say that the vision of God in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam shows more overlap, convergence, and similarity than dissimilarity. Jesus Christ declared His oneness with His Father (John 10:30), and this Father is the same God known and worshipped by Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Islamic thinking about God has traditionally and typically proceeded along lines that are very similar to, if not identical with, Judeo-Christian approaches. The rise of Islamic fundamentalism in the contemporary world has clouded the dramatic convergence shared among Yahweh, the God and Father of Jesus Christ, and Allah. Regarding the Muslim view of God, an Islamic scholar has written:

From Seyyed Hossein Nasr, "God," in Islamic Spirituality: Foundations, ed. Seyyed Hossein Nasr (New York: Crossroad, 1991), 311.

At the heart of the Quranic message lies the full and plenary doctrine of God as both transcendent and immanent, as both majesty and beauty, as both the One and the Source of the manifold, as both Origin of Mercy and Judge of all human actions, as the Originator and Sustainer of the cosmos and the goal to which all beings journey. . . The Quranic doctrine of God reveals Him as being at once Absolute, Infinite, and Perfect, as the Source of all reality and all positive qualities manifested in the cosmic order.

If the adjective 'biblical' were substituted in place of 'Quranic,' would a Jew or Christian take issue with the resulting description of the biblical God? Would a Jew or Christian dispute the Quranic description of God as 'the First and the Last, the Outward and the Inward' (LVII, 3)?

Yet Christianity constitutes a special case unto itself in comparison with Judaism and Islam. At the conclusion of his sermon on the Day of Pentecost, Peter identifies what separates Christianity from the Abrahamic monotheisms. He even addressed his remarks to any Jews who had ears to hear: "Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:36). Because Jesus of Nazareth is Jesus Christ, God's Anointed, the monotheism of Christianity is a *Trinitarian* monotheism, unlike the respective monotheisms of either Judaism or Islam. The divinity of Jesus Christ is what finally separates Christianity from either Judaism or Islam.

Muslims believe Jesus to be one of the prophets leading up to the final and definitive prophet, Muhammad, and even accord Jesus the honor of a virgin birth, although they do not conclude from this that Jesus was divine. Jews likewise honor Jesus as a prophet, yet not the incarnation of the promised messiah they still await.

If Judaism and Islam constitute a special case, which I believe they do, we ought to treat adherents of these

two monotheistic faiths with additional respect, while at the same time remaining open to the power of the Holy Spirit to share the good news that Jesus is indeed the Christ and is in fact Lord of all!

Discussion Interlude

Refer to Resource 17-6 in the Student Guide.

Karl Barth is one of the theological pillars for what was called the *exclusivist* position we looked at. Some of his representative statements are:

"Religion is unbelief. It is a concern, indeed, we must say that it is the one great concern, of godless man."

"We can speak of 'true religion' only in the sense in which we speak of a 'justified sinner.' "

From Karl Barth, "The Revelation of God as the Abolition of Religion," in Christianity and Other Religions: Selected Readings, ed. John Hick and Brian Hebblethwaite (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981), 35, 43. "No religion is true. It can only become true, i.e. according to that which it purports to be and for which it is upheld. . . . Like justified man, true religion is a creature of grace. But grace is the revelation of God. No religion can stand before it as true religion. No man is righteous in its presence."

Do you agree with these statements? Why or why not?

Lesson Close

(10 minutes)

Review

What one thought stands out from all the others, for you, in today's lesson?

Look Ahead

In our next lesson we will look at how Christianity engages culture.

Assign Homework

Direct students to the Homework Assignments in the Student Guide.

Interview at least two Nazarene pastors and three Nazarene laypeople.

- Ask them if they believe Christianity is superior to the other religions of the world. If they answer "yes," ask them what they mean by "superior." Work toward discerning what their attitude is toward other religions.
- Write a 2-page essay about your experience.

Do something to come to a greater awareness of one of the following religions: Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, or even New Age movements. You might also consider such Christian sects as Seventh Day Adventist, Mormonism, Jehovah's Witness.

- The goal of the study is to assess how the Church of the Nazarene differs from the religion you choose to study. You should also note any similarities and areas of common agreement you discover.
- Write a 2-page essay about what you learned.

Journal Prompt

For many years the missionary magazine of the Church of the Nazarene was called "The Other Sheep," based on John 10:16. Read this verse in its context. What is the meaning of "the other sheep" to you personally?

Punctuate the Finish

Have the class sing one of the four hymns studied today.

Lesson 18

Christianity Engages Culture

Lesson Overview

Schedule

Start Time	Task or Topic	Learning Activity	Materials Needed
0:00	Introduction	Orient	Student Guide
0:10	Why This Lesson Is Important	Lecture	Resource 18-1 Resource 18-2
0:20	Coming to Cultural and Christian Awareness	Small Groups	Resource 18-3
0:45	What Difference Does Culture Make?	Lecture/Discussion	Resource 18-4
1:00	The Five Paradigms of Christ and Culture	Lecture/Discussion	Resource 18-5 Resource 18-6
1:20	Lesson Close	Review, Assign	Student Guide

Suggested Reading for Instructor

- Bevans, Stephen B. *Models of Contextual Theology*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1992. Discusses five different ways in which Christian theology interacts with the surrounding culture. Of the five discussed, the Nazarene view is probably the closest to what Bevans calls "The Translation Model."
- Carter, Charles W. "Culture and Theological Education." Wesleyan Theological Journal 14 (Fall 1979): 77-81.
- Jenson, Robert W. *Essays in Theology of Culture.* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995. From a distinguished Lutheran theologian.
- Martin, Karl. *The Evangelical Church and American Popular Culture.* San Diego: Point Loma Press, 2001.
- Niebuhr, H. Richard. *Christ and Culture*. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1951.
- Pelikan, Jaroslav. *Jesus Through the Centuries: His Place in the History of Culture.* New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1985. (A newer edition is available, as well as an illustrated edition.)
- Tanner, Kathryn. *Theories of Culture: A New Agenda for Theology.* Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997.
- Tillich, Paul. *Theology of Culture*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1959.
- Wainwright, Geoffrey. *Doxology: The Praise of God in Worship, Doctrine, and Life.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1980, chapter XI. From a great British Methodist theologian.

Lesson Introduction

(10 minutes)

Accountability

Have one student share from each of the two homework assignments.

Return and collect all homework.

Motivator

It is somewhat ironic, as sometimes happens, that a building once used to house a Nazarene congregation becomes something else. A church is not bricks and mortar, but rather heart and spirit, so the Nazarene "spirit" cannot be defiled when, for example, a former Nazarene building becomes a movie theatre or restaurant.

Use your own examples or experiences here if possible.

I know of at least two Nazarene buildings that are no longer used for Nazarene worship. One is now a restaurant and the other became a Pentecostal church.

One of the sadder memories of my life was a brief trip to Manchester, England, seeing many former Church of England buildings either in total disrepair or in some cases now being used by Islamic groups.

Do any of you have an example? What did the change mean to you personally?

Do you find this sad? Why?

Orientation

Today we will look at Christianity and its intersection with culture.

Learner Objectives

Instruct students to locate objectives in the Student Guide.

Restating the objectives for the learners serves as an advanced organizer for the lesson and alerts learners to key information and concepts.

To help students

- define culture with some understanding
- reflect more adequately on how culture shapes theological formulation
- understand the student's own cultural "location" and place
- be increasingly cognizant of cultural realities that have shaped Nazarene practices

Lesson Body

Lecture: Why This Lesson Is Important

(10 minutes)

Toward a Definition of Culture

Some church growth studies have indicated that the fastest growing churches are those where the incoming people are the most like those who already attend, taking into account things such as politics, educational level, income range, family structure, and so forth.

It is not necessarily a good thing that people tend to want to worship among their own kind. In fact, in many ways this desire is contrary to the Christian message, which stresses that we should seek out and welcome *the other* in much the same way that Jesus Christ willingly left the splendor of heaven to live among mere mortals.

But this point of like wanting to worship with like is mentioned to remind us of the importance of culture. What, after all, is culture? Fifty years ago two anthropologists surveyed more than 160 definitions of culture. Taking all of this variety into account, they synthesized the following definition of culture:

Refer to Resource 18-1 in the Student Guide.

Culture is a product; is historical; includes ideas, patterns, and values; is selective; is learned; is based on symbols; and is an abstraction from behavior and the products of behavior.

Christian ethicist H. Richard Niebuhr suggests several features of culture in his book *Christ and Culture:*

- culture is social
- culture is a human achievement
- one important way any culture expresses itself is through the values it promotes
- every culture is marked to one degree or another by pluralism

Intellectual historian Edward W. Said defines culture as follows:

First of all it means all those practices, like the arts of description, communication, and representation, that have relative autonomy [freedom] from the economic, social, and political realms and that often exist in aesthetic [related to the beautiful] forms,

(New York: Harper and Bros., 1951), 32-39.

From Culture and Imperialism (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993),

one of whose principal aims is pleasure. Included, of course, are both the popular stock of lore about distant parts of the world and specialized knowledge available in such learned disciplines as ethnography, historiography, philology, sociology, and literary history.

The Christian gospel should challenge and even confront the culture to which it is preached. However, before we are able to do that, we first must understand everything possible about the target culture—its symbols, its values, its history.

How Do We Understand Jesus Christ?

More than fifty years ago, in 1949, H. Richard Niebuhr delivered the lectures that were later published as his noteworthy work, *Christ and Culture*. Even then Niebuhr could point to the great diversity of ways of understanding the meaning and relevance of Jesus Christ. He comments, "so great, however, is the variety of personal and communal 'belief in Jesus Christ," so manifold the interpretation of his essential nature, that the question must arise whether the Christ of Christianity is indeed one Lord."

Niebuhr suggests some of the obvious ways in which we may approach the figure of Jesus Christ:

- A teacher for the ages who gives us moral wisdom and new truth and new law. Christianity is *new teaching*.
- Jesus Christ is the revelation of God in His very person. Christianity is *new life*.
- Jesus Christ is the founder of a new community, the church. Christianity is *new community*.

However, Niebuhr stresses that after all of the variety has been accounted for, there is overwhelming continuity and agreement about Jesus Christ:

There always remain the original portraits with which all later pictures may be compared and by which all caricatures may be corrected. And in these original portraits he is recognizably one and the same. Whatever roles he plays in the varieties of Christian experience, it is the same Christ who exercises these various offices. The founder of the church is the same Christ who gives the new law; the teacher of truths about God is the same Christ who is in himself the revelation of the truth.

From Christ and Culture, 11-12.

Refer to Resource 18-2 in the Student Guide.

Ibid., 12.

Ibid., 13.

Small Groups: Coming to Cultural and Christian Awareness

(25 minutes)

Divide the class into groups of three. Let them work for most of the time in their own group, but allow some time for the groups to interact with each other.

Refer to Resource 18-3 in the Student Guide.

- 1. What is your personal definition of culture?
- 2. What activities do you engage in, and attitudes do you hold, that are "typical" of your understanding of culture? In other words, what actions and attitudes express your own cultural identity?
- Define the following words and phrases, and give examples of how they work in the world: subculture, pluralism, popular culture, media culture, multiculturalism
- 4. How is your understanding of Jesus Christ affected by your understanding of culture? Which comes first, in your opinion: your theology of Jesus Christ, or your understanding of culture?
- 5. Are changes in worship practices and patterns shaped by changes in culture? For example, some churches no longer having Sunday evening services, less use of the hymnal and more use of choruses, fewer and shorter revival meetings, less concern about shopping or working on Sunday, etc.
- 6. What specific memories do you have of some of these common Nazarene practices, some of them no longer very much in evidence: the altar call, the district camp meeting, the visiting revivalist, testimony time, "shouting the glory down," etc.?
- 7. What do the following two Nazarene congregations have in common?
 - A large, urban congregation in Los Angeles, New York, or Chicago that is attended by many peoples from many different lands, and offers a wide range of Christian ministries: literacy, work training, health care, day care, breakfast for the needy, in addition to more traditional ministries such as the preaching of the word, a sacramental life, and Christian nurture and education
 - A small-town congregation of 80 people, almost all of them Caucasian, offering more traditional ministries such as the preaching of the Word, Christian nurture and education, and the ministry of the sacraments

8. Eventually the Church of the Nazarene will elect a female general superintendent, or one from a non-Western nation. When that happens, what will this say about cultural realities within the entire denomination?

Lecture/Discussion: What Difference Does Culture Make?

(15 minutes)

Culture: The One or the Many?

Can we today speak of only *one* culture, or should we really speak of many, each of which we should approach with a different strategy for preaching and theologizing? One philosophical theologian has distinguished between what he calls *classicist* and *empirical* approaches to how culture is defined. Here is how this distinction is described:

For the classicist notion of culture, there really is

Refer to Resource 18-4 in the Student Guide.

only one culture, and it is both universal and permanent. Within this understanding of culture, one becomes "cultured," and so listened to Bach and Beethoven, read Homer and Dickens and Flaubert, and appreciated Van Dyck, Michelangelo, and Rembrandt. The person of culture, in other words, nourished oneself on the great human achievements of the West. The empiricist notion of culture, however, defines culture as a set of meanings and values that informs a way of lifeand there are obviously many such sets throughout the world. Within the parameters of this understanding of culture, one is "cultured" by being socialized within a particular society. Culture is not something "out there," but something that everyone participates in already.

From Stephen B. Bevans, Models of Contextual Theology (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1992), 7.

A Step Back in Time

Dr. Leupp writes, "I have attended the Church of the Nazarene all of my life, stretching now to nearly 50 years. Geographically, most of my regular church attendance has been in the Pacific Northwest, with some additional time in Oklahoma and Florida. Hence I am not well qualified to comment on regional differences across the American Nazarene world. I have had the additional privilege of worshiping with Nazarenes in Australia, South Korea, and the Philippines.

"A year or two ago I attended a revival service conducted in a small holiness church, not a Nazarene congregation, but belonging to the same general theological family. Throughout the course of the service I had the strong sense of being transported back to the Nazarene world of the 1930s or 1940s, when indeed I was not yet alive.

"Women had not cut their hair, but wore it either down or 'swept' atop their heads in creative styles. No wedding rings. Use of the old Nazarene hymnal *Praise* and *Worship*. Little if any religious symbolism in the sanctuary. Very determined singing (refreshingly so!!).

"The sermon seemed to be what I would call 'moral boosterism.' The accent was on being wary and watchful not to slip from the high road of entire sanctification. There was little if any sense that God's grace was what sanctified one in the first place, and kept one there. Instead, the tone of the message was more that we could stay sanctified by the sheer gumption, grit, and determination of our own tenacity. To me this came very close to a gospel of works righteousness. There was no questioning the sincerity of these Christians. But the entire experience was for me almost a 'retreat' to another culture, space, and time.

"Over the course of the last 50-60 years the Church of the Nazarene has tried to keep the best elements of the sort of service I attended—fervent singing, openness to the Holy Spirit, missionary spirit, awareness of our potential to sin—while yet going beyond some of the 'mustiness' and 'old-fashioned' qualities I experienced, as in no wedding rings, no religious symbolism, no contemporary dress or hair styles.

"It is often said that the Church of the Nazarene defines Christianity in terms of what one *ought not to do*—in terms of certain 'signature' Nazarene moral issues—rather than using positive standards and criteria, but in the year 2002 the Church of the Nazarene has made gains in stepping beyond the punitive toward the positive."

What Is the Theological Relevance of Culture?

Paul Tillich said the *depth* of any culture was to be found in its spiritual or religious elements, whereas the *form* in which this depth expressed itself was inevitably

cultural. The history of any nation will demonstrate this truth. The United States has sometimes been called "The Nation with the Soul of a Church." Patriotic holidays such as Memorial Day, Veterans Day, and Independence Day are typically celebrated with religious overtones. The defining moment of the entire 19th century—the Civil War—was watched over by the man named by many as the greatest American theologian of that century, Abraham Lincoln.

Many times we experience the influence of the surrounding culture upon our theological beliefs as being detrimental and maybe even "toxic." The fact of our living in a "consumer culture" is taken for granted, but when this dynamic threatens to obscure or even destroy the true meaning of Christmas under a barrage of gift buying and giving, we rightly protest.

The culture of the Church of the Nazarene owes a great deal to the American frontier spirit that nurtured the spirit of revivalism. This frontier spirit encouraged sturdy individualism, which reinforced the need to have a "personal relationship with Jesus Christ," and occasionally neglected more communitarian themes such as the Church as the Body of Christ and the need for "constant communion"—as John Wesley put it.

Discussion Interlude

Because Investigating Christian Theology 1 is designed ultimately for the worldwide Church of the Nazarene, we cannot give too many examples from any one country. The instructor should be prepared to explore with the students other ways in which culture and Christian theology each impact the other.

Lecture/Discussion: The Five Paradigms of Christ and Culture

(20 minutes)

Reckoning with a Classic Text

For an analysis of Niebuhr's five typologies, see Geoffrey Wainwright, Doxology: The Praise of God in Worship, Doctrine, and Life (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 388-98. See also the essays by Niebuhr ("Prologue: Types of Christian Ethics," 15-29) and John Howard Yoder ("How H. Richard Niebuhr Reasoned: A Critique of Christ and Culture," 31-

Although it was published 50 years ago, many believe H. Richard Niebuhr's study, *Christ and Culture*, is still worth studying today. In that study Niebuhr advanced five typical answers to the question we have been here considering, "How does the church and Christianity relate to the surrounding culture?" Here are the answers Niebuhr provides:

89) in Authentic Transformation: A New Vision of Christ and Culture, ed. Glen H. Stassen, D. M. Yeager, and John Howard Yoder (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996).

Refer to Resource 18-5 in the Student Guide

Christ Against Culture—the Antagonists. This group "uncompromisingly affirms the sole authority of Christ over the Christian and resolutely rejects culture's claims to loyalty." In this statement we see two of the key descriptive words that come to define the broader issue: *authority* and *loyalty*.

The Christ of Culture—the Accommodationists.

People in this group sometimes spoke of "The Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man." This is the liberal end of the spectrum. In another book Niebuhr offered this famous characterization of liberalism: "A God without wrath brought men without sin into a kingdom without judgment through the ministrations of a Christ without a cross."

Christ Above Culture—the Synthesists. This position is somewhat close to "The Christ of Culture," except in this case Jesus Christ is still able to pronounce judgment on the culture, whereas for the accommodationists the dominant idea is to accept the culture as it stands. To say that Christ is "above" culture is obviously to say that the culture is functioning well when everything is ordered efficiently and effectively under His leadership and Lordship. Since Thomas Aquinas is the great representative of this position in the Middle Ages, it has sometimes been typical of Roman Catholic views.

Christ and Culture in Paradox—the Dualists. Some Lutherans hold to this approach, which bears some family resemblance to the antagonists, even as the accommodationists and the synthesists are close together. Dualists believe Christ and culture run on parallel tracks, never intersecting.

The Christian may live in two kingdoms at once. The Christian lives in the kingdom of law because of human depravity, but in the kingdom of grace because of God's mercy. While we continue to live on earth, these kingdoms will continue to do battle one against the other, and will never be united.

Christ the Transformer of Culture—the

Conversionists. Niebuhr says Augustine is the chief exemplar of this point of view, and John Calvin and John Wesley have also represented it in Christian history. Nazarenes should sit up and take notice, since Wesley is so crucial to Nazarene theology. Some of the activities of the early Nazarenes—ministering to the poor and allowing the Holy Spirit to reign in freedom—correspond to this paradigm.

The antagonist would tend either to avoid or to criticize culture, and the dualist to despair of ever changing the ills of human society. The accommodationist would more or less accept the culture as it currently presented itself, and the synthesist would look for signs within existing social and cultural institutions that the grace and love of God were indeed present and active.

How then is the conversionist different? The conversionist takes into full account the dual reality of both sin/law and grace/mercy. The conversionist is neither foolishly optimistic nor negatively pessimistic. The conversionist believes humans can, with some success, work for the coming of the kingdom of God upon the face of the earth, while yet realizing that only God himself can give the Kingdom in its entirety.

Locating the Church of the Nazarene

As may be evident, the Church of the Nazarene has historically often been found in "the Christ Against Culture" identity. Today, however, there is encouraging evidence that Nazarenes are embracing the fifth perspective, endeavoring through the indwelling Holy Spirit to produce genuine and Christian change in culture.

Discussion Interlude

Have students share examples of how they observe Nazarene pastors and laypeople working to transform the surrounding culture in redemptive ways.

Again seek clarification.

Do you think this is true? Why?

If this is thought to be not true, why it is not true?

Closing Thoughts

This lesson has tended to reinforce what we already know, because we experience it every day. Namely, the world is changing to a world where pluralism and the multiculturalism are assumed as the norms for conduct, thought, and action.

Of course, it is still very much up for grabs as to how pluralism and multiculturalism are to be defined. As implied in this lesson, there are significant regional differences in the North American Church of the Nazarene, and around the world even greater differences among Nazarenes.

Refer to Resource 18-6 in the Student Guide.

To claim that *culture* is necessarily diverse and plural is not at the same time to claim that the Christian *gospel*

is likewise diverse and plural. We affirm the insightful analysis given by Geoffrey Wainwright:

The Christian vision of reality has the grounds for its own universal claim written into it. It pictures a single consistent Creator with a constant purpose for all humanity (and indeed for the whole universe). The divine purpose for humanity is growth into the likeness of God as self-giving love (and God's purpose for other parts of creation must match that in appropriately transposed forms). When God's purpose for humanity is thus simply expressed, it is hard to credit that it cannot be grasped by the simplest human spirit or intelligence. In the nature of the case (it is a matter of self-giving love), acceptance of that purpose can only be by free response.

From Doxology, 358-59.

Wainwright believes the gospel is one, although its means and modes of expression should be various, so that every listener will hear the gospel in meaningful and culturally appropriate ways. To say that the gospel is one is not the same as to say that it is monolithic or capable of being expressed in only one way or using only one set of concepts. As Wainwright says, "Ever since the days of the New Testament, the Church has recognized that there are variant versions of a vision which remains recognizably one."

Ibid., 359.

For a Nazarene example see, Paul M. Bassett, ed., Great Holiness Classics, Vol. 1, Holiness Teaching: New Testament Times to Wesley (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1997).

In former times it might have been thought that there were no significant developments regarding Christian holiness between the New Testament and the rise of Methodism in the 18th century. But Bassett's volume disproves this idea. Theologians and spiritual writers whom Bassett includes in this volume have much to contribute. This reinforces Wainwright's idea about there being "variant versions of a vision which remains recognizably one."

Lesson Close

(10 minutes)

Review

Name one idea from today's lesson that really excites you.

Look Ahead

The next two lessons will conclude this module on Investigating Christian Theology 1. They will focus on theological anthropology, which in traditional terms was phrased "What Is Man?," and on the related question of sin.

Assign Homework

Direct students to the Homework Assignments in the Student Guide. When we speak about culture, we are obviously speaking about personal stories. This is a good time for you to investigate some of your religious roots. In some cases, your roots in the Nazarene or related traditions may be very deep indeed; in other cases, not deep at all.

- Conduct "oral history" interviews with members of your extended family, finding out as much as possible about their respective religious (or even irreligious) roots.
- The following areas of investigation are appropriate:
 - —conversion stories
 - —acts of compassion carried forth in the name of the gospel
 - Christian vocations such as pastoring and missionary service
 - —ethical transformations
 - —witnessing to nonbelievers
 - —theological change and growth over the years
 - —the future of belief for those who are interviewed
- The results should be written up in a four-page paper.

Look through newspapers and magazines (both religious and secular), cutting out articles showing contemporary views of humankind and human nature. Bring these to class.

Journal Prompt

Which of H. Richard Niebuhr's five basic typologies is most characteristic of my personal life?

Punctuate the Finish

Reread a portion of the quote from Wainwright on Resource 18-6.

From Doxology, 358-59.

The Christian vision of reality . . . pictures a single consistent Creator with a constant purpose for all humanity (and indeed for the whole universe). The divine purpose for humanity is growth into the likeness of God as self-giving love.

Lesson 19

Humanity Graciously Endowed: Theological Anthropology

Lesson Overview

Schedule

Start Time	Task or Topic	Learning Activity	Materials Needed
0:00	Introduction	Orient	Student Guide
			Resource 19-1
0:10	Humanity in the	Lecture	Resource 19-2
	Image of God		Resource 19-3
			Resource 19-4
			Resource 19-5
0:25	Sharpening the	Small Groups	Resource 19-6
	Relational Focus		
0:45	An Ancient Distinction	Lecture/Discussion	Resource 19-7
	with Contemporary		Resource 19-8
	Relevance		
1:00	By Way of	Lecture/Discussion	Resource 19-9
	Comparison		Resource 19-10
1:20	Lesson Close	Review, Assign	Student Guide

Suggested Reading for Instructor

Bonhoeffer: Agent of Grace. A film from Augsburg Fortress, Minneapolis, distributed by Vision Video, P.O. Box 540, Worcester, PA 19490,

www.gatewayfilms.com.

- Dunning, H. Ray. *Grace, Faith, and Holiness: A Wesleyan Systematic Theology.* Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1988, 150-61.
- Grenz, Stanley J. *The Matrix of Christian Theology.* Vol. 1, *The Social God and the Relational Self: A Trinitarian Theology of the Imago Dei.* Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001, chs. 2-4.
- Grider, J. Kenneth. "The Doctrine of Ourselves." Chapter 9 in *A Wesleyan-Holiness Theology*. Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1994, 230-55.
- Lodahl, Michael. *The Story of God: Wesleyan Theology and Biblical Narrative*. Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1994, 67-72.
- Macquarrie, John. *In Search of Humanity: A Theological and Philosophical Approach*. New York: Crossroad, 1983.
- _____. *Principles of Christian Theology.* Second edition, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1977, ch. 3.
- Maddox, Randy L. "Humanity's Need and God's Initial Restoring Grace." Chapter 3 in *Responsible Grace: John Wesley's Practical Theology.* Nashville: Kingswood Books, 1994, 65-93.
- Shaw, Joseph M., et al., eds. *Readings in Christian Humanism*. Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1982. A wideranging anthology of readings centered on the theme of Christian humanism.
- Staples, Rob L. "Adam," "Woman," "Neighbor." In Words of Faith: An Easy Reference to Theological Terms. Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 2001, 37-8, 39-40, 99-100.
- Stevenson, Leslie, and David L. Haberman. *Ten Theories of Human Nature*. Third edition, New York: Oxford University Press, 1998. Of particular interest are the chapters on the Bible, Plato, Kant, Marx, Freud, Sartre, and Skinner. Chapters on Hinduism and Confucianism are more relevant to those outside North America. Konrad Lorenz on "Evolutionary Psychology" is the tenth chapter.
- Wynkoop, Mildred Bangs. *A Theology of Love: The Dynamic of Wesleyanism.* Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1972, chs. 6 and 7.

Lesson Introduction

(10 minutes)

Accountability

Call on several students to share something they found out about their roots.

Have the students hold on to the news articles for later.

Return and collect all homework.

Motivator

Refer to Resource 19-1 in the Student Guide.

"The glory of God is man fully alive."

-Irenaeus

Psalm 8

O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory above the heavens. From the lips of children and infants you have ordained praise because of your enemies, to silence the foe and the avenger. When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him? You made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor. You made him ruler over the works of your hands; you put everything under his feet: All flocks and herds. and the beasts of the field. the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea. O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth.

From A Theology of Love: The Dynamic of Wesleyanism (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1972), 103.

"Today, the one great mystery is man himself."
—Mildred Bangs Wynkoop

"No man living is entirely destitute of what is vulgarly called 'natural conscience'. But this is not natural; it is more properly termed 'preventing grace'. Every man has a greater or less measure of this, which waiteth not for the call of man. . . . Everyone has some

From "Sermon 85: On Working Out Our Own Salvation," in The Works of John Wesley, Vol. 3, Sermons III: 71-114, ed. Albert C. Outler (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1986), 207 measure of that light, some faint glimmering ray, which sooner or later, more or less, enlightens every man that cometh into the world. And everyone, unless he be one of the small number whose conscience is seared as with a hot iron, feels more or less uneasy when he acts contrary to the light of his own conscience. So that no man sins because he has not grace, but because he does not use the grace which he hath."

—John Wesley

Orientation

The last two lessons of this module of Investigating Christian Theology 1 are transitional to Christian Theology 2. Theological anthropology is the subject of these two lessons. In older language, we are concerned with "What Is Man?" or, better, "Who Is Man?" since the human is not a thing to be manipulated, abused, or coerced, but a self, even a *thou*, in whom the light of God shines.

Today, the use of "Man" to refer to all of humankind is thought to exclude half of the human family. In other words it is "sexist" language. Since we believe the gospel is for all times, all seasons, all human conditions, none dare be excluded by careless language. We therefore now speak of humanity, the human, or humankind. We shall follow this convention for the most part, although the use of "Man" to represent the entire human family may be at times unavoidable.

Learner Objectives

Instruct students to locate objectives in the Student Guide.

Restating the objectives for the learners serves as an advanced organizer for the lesson and alerts learners to key information and concepts.

To help students

- know the Christian teaching of humanity created in the image of God
- explore further some of the relational dynamics and presuppositions that being created in God's image implies
- see the Christian view in a broader context of comparison with various other views

Lesson Body

Lecture: Humanity in the Image of God

(15 minutes)

Richly Endowed

A careful reading of Genesis 2 would be appropriate, as a way of demonstrating the several points Wynkoop makes about this chapter.

Biblical religion begins with the declaration of "In the beginning, God . . . " and not "In the beginning, Humanity . . . " This makes all the difference. This lesson is therefore about *theological anthropology* and not *anthropological theology*. What is the difference between these two?

Refer to Resource 19-2 in the Student Guide.

Karl Barth once said we cannot speak of the divine simply by speaking about the human in a loud voice. If our theology begins with ourselves, by looking within, and magnifying and amplifying what we find there, and then calling that "God," we are practicing anthropological theology. Conversely, theological anthropology begins with God and then moves to humanity. We might call this "anthropology from above," whereas anthropological theology is "anthropology from below," from the human to the divine.

From G. C. Berkouwer, Man: The Image of God (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962), 59-60.

In support of the biblical position, G. C. Berkouwer writes, "Scripture is concerned with man in his relation to God, in which he can never be seen as man-in-himself, and surely not with man's 'essence' described as self or person."

It will seem strange to postmodern ears to hear Berkouwer suggesting that we should *not* begin with the human as an abstract essence described as self or person. He is not rejecting the idea of personhood, but is saying that true humanhood is impossible apart from knowing the Triune God. The only fully human being ever to live must be Jesus Christ, and through the Holy Spirit we can approximate ever closer to this example. To be like Christ, as enabled by the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives, is one of the best definitions of entire sanctification.

H. Ray Dunning rightly believes the correct way of speaking is of the image of God within humankind rather than humankind in the image of God.

The poet Thomas Chisholm understood this more than a century ago when he wrote:

"O to Be Like Thee," in Sing to the Lord, 490, Copyright © 1993 by Lillenas Publishing Co. All rights reserved. Litho in USA.

O to be like Thee! O to be like Thee, Blessed Redeemer, Pure as Thou art! Come in Thy sweetness, come in Thy fullness, Stamp Thine own image deep on my heart.

Dunning offers this helpful commentary:

Traditionally, efforts have been made to define the meaning of the *imago* by seeking to identify that in man which differentiates him from the rest of creation. That involved defining it from below. Under the influence of Greek thought this differentia has been classically identified as reason, freedom, and/or personality. When defined from below, it can be affirmed that man's essential form includes freedom, rationality, the capacity for selftranscendence and immortality. All these are created characteristics that differentiate him from the lower orders of creation. These qualities do indeed provide the irreducible requirements necessary for man to stand in relation to God, but within themselves they do not constitute that capacity. That is a God-given possibility, since all these "ontic" qualities may conceivably be present without any essential orientation toward the Divine.

From Grace, Faith, and Holiness, 154.

Dunning is simply saying that the human needs to give credit where credit is due. That credit all goes to God. None of us is a self-made human being. Frank Sinatra's primal hunch that "I did it my way" is the rankest sort of "anthropology from below." When a victor is crowned in a team sport, the acknowledged star of the team does well to pass around the credit to the rest of the team. If the star refuses to do that, he or she is trying to take all of the glory personally. On a much bigger scale than athletics, all of humanity must acknowledge that God has impressed His mark upon us (not we upon God), and the only life worth living is lived in constant awareness of this reality.

All of human life, the Bible understands, is to be lived out in grateful recognition of its gifted and graced quality. God's freedom means nothing coerced God to create anything. That there is a world populated by human beings who are free, moral, rational, and responsible (the four designations used by my college philosophy teacher, Dr. J. William Jones, to describe humanity) redounds not to human greatness, but to divine grace, love, and mercy.

Each of the great religions of the world might be defined by a single word or complex of words. For

Judaism, which shares so much history with Christianity, that word might be covenant. Islam is all about *submission*, for a Muslim by definition is one who submits. Buddhism is known by the "coolness" of nirvana, which means extinction or emptiness. Hinduism, marked by hundreds and even thousands of gods, answers to joyous profusion or abundance.

Christianity, we believe, is circumscribed by the gentle arc of grace, mercy, and love, which here together mean the same thing. The call to justice, righteousness, and holiness comes from the loving God who endues and strengthens willing participants along this straight and narrow path.

A Fork in the Road?

Robert Frost ended his poem, "The Road Not Taken," with these often-quoted words:

> Two roads diverged in a wood, and I— I took the one less traveled by,

> And that has made all the difference.

Refer to Resource 19-3 in the

Press. 1950), 557.

Student Guide.

In The Oxford Book of American

Verse (New York: Oxford University

If we are convinced we have been created in the image of God, what more can we say? When speaking of humanity in the image of God, two choices present themselves. They are often referred to as the relational and the substantial or substantival. Nazarene theologians such as H. Ray Dunning, Mildred Bangs Wynkoop, and Michael Lodahl clearly favor the relational outlook. On the other hand, Richard Taylor and J. Kenneth Grider have clearly leaned toward the substantial.

Stanley Grenz helps us sort out the differences between the two:

The most commonly held recounting of theological history [of the imago dei] finds two basic approaches to the image of God within the tradition: the substantial or structural view, which understands the *imago dei* as consisting of certain attributes or capabilities lodged within the person, and the relational view, which sees the divine image as referring to a fundamental relationship between the human creature and the Creator.

Two images, credited to the Christian ethicist Paul Ramsey, help our understanding:

From The Social God and the Relational Self, 142.

Substantial or Structural: God shapes us as a sculptor shapes stone or an artist paints a painting

Ibid.

Relational: Humans reflect the divine image somewhat like a mirror

From The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1952), 59.

Noted neoorthodox theologian Emil Brunner is squarely on the side of the relational. Our being made in God's image "is conceived not as a self-existing substance but as a relation. And this is the most important point to grasp. Responsibility (the essence of the 'formal' image) is a relation; it is not a substance."

The danger of the substantialist view is indicated by the modifier Brunner chooses to use: "self-existing." If we speak of "the image of God in humanity" and locate that image in some particular human function (for example freedom or the capacity for self-transcendence), it is dangerously easy to take credit for *our* human freedom, *our* human ability to love, *our* creativity. The relational view keeps constantly before us our indebtedness to God.

Wesleyan theology and ethics are based on grace, and grace is a relational term. J. Kenneth Grider, who in some ways favors the more substantival view, believes, "the Arminian-Wesleyan tradition teaches human freedom in the context of prevenient grace." When analyzing the image of God, Grider speaks of "The Image of God in Ourselves," which is exactly the way Dunning said *not* to speak. ("The proper way of speaking is not to speak of the image of God in man [Grider's choice] but of man in the image of God [the relational choice]."

However, there is likely more agreement than disagreement between Grider and Dunning. After all, Grider also uses the language of "we were created in God's own image," which is Dunning's preferred expression. "The wide context of Scripture and human experience," Grider writes, "suggests that the image of God in us consists in part of our rational, volitional, and moral capacities." These are important, but for Grider the crucial capacity, and God's chief impress upon us, is our ability to love. Are these capacities to think, to will, to make moral choices, and to love *self-generated* or *God-endowed?* To that both Grider and Dunning would answer a hearty *God-endowed!*

A Wesleyan-Holiness Theology, 245.

Ibid., 236.

Grace, Faith, and Holiness, 156.

A Wesleyan-Holiness Theology, 236.

Ibid., 236-37.

In Student Resource 19-6, we have a chance to discuss the relational perspective of Mildred Bangs Finding deep symbolic importance in Genesis 2, Wynkoop believes it tells us this about the human condition: Wynkoop. Here, we can anticipate that discussion.

Refer to Resource 19-4 in the Student Guide.

From A Theology of Love, 115-6.

was superior to the animals in intelligence, insight, self-understanding, purpose, and spirituality; (2) that he is essentially a social being, a society (male and female); and (3) that his world, the earth, is his home, his domain, his palace; but (4) that he himself is the very shrine of God (in this is his distinction from all other orders of creation, his glory, and then the bitterness of his shame); (5) that in mankind there is the constant poignant reminder of his fallibility.

Genesis 2 tells us in its symbolic way (1) that man

Michael Lodahl makes the following relevant points, which taken together offer further support to the relational view:

Refer to Resource 19-5 in the Student Guide.

1. Humans, and only humans, are capable of inquiring about their own selves. This is a God-given quality. Because this ability originates from God, He is the one before whom and to whom we owe ultimate allegiance and responsibility.

Lodahl believes:

The human being, this mysterious being created in the 'image and likeness' of God, is that being who is questioned, who is addressed, who is called to account—but who can do his or her own questioning, addressing, and calling to account, whether of God, of neighbor, or of self.

2. The chief human end is not mere introspection or self-examination. Lodahl writes that by God's

speaking the creature is called to relationship, to accountability, to response-ability before the Creator. This allows human beings an opportunity to *speak back* to God, to answer, to offer their own meaningful words to this great Story of God. For Him to create human beings in the divine image and likeness is, according to the creation narrative, God's great venture into the risk of relationship. For here He creates a living being in whom He intends to "see himself" as in a mirror, a being who will correspond (corespond) to Him, who will answer to Him.

3. To live relationally is to live responsibly. Lodahl believes:

God creates us not to be puppets on a string; the paradox of being human is that while we are entirely dependent upon Him in each moment for

From The Story of God, 69.

Ibid., 68.

Ibid., 69.

For liberation theologian Leonardo Boff, the reality of God's triunity means that we as humans are created to be in an "active web of relationships," because this is

be answerable for them.

true of God himself:

our very being, God sustains us in each moment precisely to 'stand forth' [which is the meaning of 'to exist'], and to be able to make choices and to

In light of the Trinity, being a person in the image and likeness of the divine Persons means acting as a permanently active web of relationships: relating backwards and upwards to one's origin in the unfathomable mystery of the Father, relating outwards to one's fellow human beings by revealing oneself to them and welcoming the revelation of them in the mystery of the Son, relating inwards to the depths of one's own personality in the mystery of the Spirit.

From Trinity and Society, trans. Paul Burns (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1988), 149.

What is the relevance of Boff's three dimensions for theology, worship, and evangelism?

- Relating backwards and upwards: God the Father
- Relating outwards: God the Son
- Relating inwards: God the Holy Spirit

Small Groups: Sharpening the Relational Focus

(20 minutes)

Divide the class into groups of two to three to work on Resource 19-6.

Allow time for the groups to interact at the end of the allotted time.

Lecture/Discussion: An Ancient Distinction with Contemporary Relevance

(15 minutes)

Our sustained discussion of the doctrine of sin must wait until Lesson 20, but something by way of anticipation must be said here. Irenaeus (c. 130—c. 200), sometimes called "the founder of Christian theology," distinguished between the image and the likeness of God, based on Genesis 1:26. Most modern interpreters would view image and likeness as being identical in meaning, as a demonstration of parallelism in the Hebrew scriptures.

Refer to Resource 19-7 in the Student Guide.

Irenaeus was influenced by the Greek philosopher Plato, who understood the human to be composed of body, soul, and spirit. Irenaeus taught that the body and the soul taken together constituted the natural human being. This is the image of God in humanity. The gift of the spirit is what separates humanity from beast and links the human with the divine, and hence this is the likeness of God in humanity.

What was lost in the Fall of the human race? Image or likeness? Dunning explains, "the image is interpreted as man's rational capacity to appreciate the first principles of philosophy, even including the ability to demonstrate the rational necessity of certain theological ideas. This is the aspect retained after the Fall."

From Grace, Faith, and Holiness, 151

Clearly, for Irenaeus, the Fall destroyed Adam's likeness to God. Through his sin Adam forfeited his incorruptibility. Adam is now subject to pain, suffering, and finally death. It is this human situation that the Incarnate Word of God, Jesus Christ, comes to earth to address.

Donald Bloesch explains the meaning of Irenaeus' distinction:

From Essentials of Evangelical Theology, Vol. 1 (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1978), 94.

Through sin man has lost the likeness to God, which consists in the gift of supernatural communion with God and original righteousness, but not the image, which represents the freedom and rationality of his nature.

At issue, as Bloesch says, is "the depth of the corruption of sin." There is here a marked gap between Roman Catholicism and most Protestantism. Following Irenaeus, Catholic teaching believes "human nature is only wounded and is susceptible to healing." Catholicism, then, affirms that the chasm between nature and supernature, or between nature and grace, is not as great as most Protestants believe.

John Wesley and other Protestants have maintained the distinction Irenaeus made, although not to the Roman Catholic extent. Wesley spoke of the moral image (what Irenaeus called the likeness to God) and the natural image (Irenaeus' image of God). The natural image was compromised and damaged in the Fall, and the moral image was totally destroyed. The goal of redemption is the complete restoration of God's moral image in us, since this is what linked us most closely to God in the first place, reflecting God's truth, justice, and love.

From Grace, Faith, and Holiness, 152

Discussion Interlude

Refer to Resource 19-8 in the Student Guide.

Wynkoop begins her chapter on "Man, Made in the Image of God" by reminding her readers of the crucial quality of this statement: "What man thinks of man determines in a large measure how he relates himself to his earth and to his fellows. Religious and social systems, governments and institutions, as well as technological manipulation and 'fabrication' of human genetics fall into the mold of man's self-understanding,

From A Theology of Love, 102.

Notice how many realities Wynkoop mentions and implicates in her statement:

- the human
- the earth
- our neighbors
- religious systems

for better or for worse."

- social systems
- governments
- institutions (for example, family, educational systems, business, military, trade unions technologies)

On an overhead, whiteboard, or blackboard, write a column for "Better" and a column for "Worse."

Ask for examples for each of the areas in each of the columns.

She ends her statement by saying that what we think about ourselves leads us to "for better or for worse." Let us take her suggestions and see if we are able to provide examples in both columns, "for better" and "for worse."

How does our view of the human ("Who Is Man?") affect "for better" and "for worse" in each of the following?

- The earth
- Our neighbors
- Religious systems
- Social systems
- Governments
- Institutions
- Technologies

Lecture/Discussion: By Way of Comparison

(20 minutes)

Note to the instructor: In this section we will present various quotations from various past thinkers, that taken together represent different ways in which philosophers and theologians have answered the question, "Who Is Man?"

We begin with Resource 19-9, a statement from Dietrich Bonhoeffer while imprisoned by the forces of the Third Reich. The video wherein this quotation may be found is cited at the beginning of the Suggested Reading for Instructors. The instructor should consider showing the relevant segment to the students as part of the lesson. Perhaps the entire 90-minute video might be shown.

Refer to Resource 19-9 in the Student Guide.

Have someone who is an excellent reader to read the statement to the class. Then have the students write a three-minute response. Reckoning with Dietrich Bonhoeffer.

WHO AM I?

Who am I? They often tell me I would step from my cell's confinement calmly, cheerfully, firmly, like a squire from his country-house.

Who am I? They also tell me I would talk to my warders freely and friendly and clearly, as though I were mine to command.

Who am I? They also tell me I would bear the days of misfortune equably, smilingly, proudly, like one accustomed to win.

Am I then really all that which other men tell of?
Or am I only what I myself know of myself,
restless and longing and sick, like a bird in a cage,
struggling for breath, as though hands were
compressing my throat,

yearning for colors, for flowers, for the voices of birds, thirsting for words of kindness, for neighborliness, trembling with anger at despotisms and petty humiliation,

tossing in expectation of great events, powerlessly trembling for friends at an infinite distance,

weary and empty at praying, at thinking, at making, faint, and ready to say farewell to it all? Who am I? This or the other?

Am I one person today, and tomorrow another? Am I both at once? A hypocrite before others, and before myself a contemptibly woebegone weakling?

Or is something within me still like a beaten army, fleeing in disorder from victory already achieved? Who am I? They mock me, these lonely questions of mine.

Whoever I am, thou knowest, O God, I am thine.

Turning Inward

Refer to Resource 19-10 in the Student Guide.

Today, most psychologists, philosophers, and theologians agree that the contemporary view of the self is marked by an inward turn. The ancient Greeks lived under the motto of *Know Thyself* and Socrates is famous for declaring that "the unexamined life is not worth living."

From Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), 111.

What the Greeks sowed thousands of years ago has come to full flower today. Charles Taylor writes, "our modern notion of the self is related to, one might say constituted by, a certain sense (or perhaps family of senses) of inwardness."

Earlier in the 20th century, similar voices were heard.

The self is "the individual as known to the individual." It is "that to which we refer when we say 'I.' It is the "custodian of awareness"; it is the thing about a person which has awareness and alertness, "which notices what goes on . . . and notices what goes on in its own field."

A. T. Jersild.

From In Search of Self (New York: Teachers College Press of Columbia University, 1952), 9-10.

Rollo May, known for advocating "existential psychotherapy," wrote, "the self is . . . not merely the sum of the various 'roles' one plays—it is the capacity by which one *knows* he plays these roles; it is the center from which one sees and is aware of these so-called different 'sides' of himself."

From Man's Search for Himself (New York: Dell, 1973), 92.

Historical Context

Rene Descartes (1596-1650), routinely called "The Father of Modern Philosophy," is known for desiring to found philosophy on something indubitable, beyond all doubting. He found this center in his own self, and gave us this truth in the maxim *Cogito*, *Ergo Sum*, meaning, "I think, therefore I am (or exist)."

More than a millennium before Descartes' breakthrough, Augustine (354-430) had anticipated Descartes. In *The City of God* Augustine wrote:

If I am deceived I am. For he who is not cannot be deceived; and if I am deceived, by this same token I am. And since I am if I am deceived, how am I deceived in believing that I am? For it is certain that I am if I am deceived. Since, therefore, I, the person deceived, should be, even if I were deceived, certainly I am not deceived in this

The City of God, *Book 11, Chapter 26, quoted in Grenz,* The Social God and the Relational Self, *62*.

knowledge that I am.

For Augustine, to know one's own person truly and deeply was to know God at the same time. God was the author of all truth, and a sincere search for truth was at the same time a quest to know the Triune God. Augustine was motivated by such scriptures as John 17:3, "Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent," and Matthew 22:37, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind."

From Etienne Gilson, The Christian Philosophy of Saint Augustine. New York: Random House, 1960, 20. Augustine's method was to move "from things outward to inward, from lower to higher" or in the words of one of his interpreters, "from the exterior to the interior and from the interior to the superior."

Discussion Interlude

The students were to bring news articles to class showing contemporary views of humankind and human nature. Have them share and discuss these articles at this time.

On Resource 19-10.

Review the definitions by A. T. Jersild and Rollo May.

How is the truth of these definitions to be seen in our contemporary world?

Lesson Close

(10 minutes)

Review

Give personal examples that demonstrate Augustine's method:

- from things outward to inward, from lower to higher
- from the exterior to the interior, and from the interior to the superior

Look Ahead

In the next lesson, the final one Investigating Christian Theology 1, we will study the Christian doctrine of sin.

Assign Homework

Direct students to the Homework Assignments in the Student Guide.

Watch at least two hours of talk shows on television. You should watch at least two different talk shows.

- What clues about the question "Who is man?" can be learned and viewed from these programs?
- Is there any evidence of humanity being made in the image of God? Or of humanity as fallen?
- Write a two-page essay detailing your findings.

Journal Prompt

The noted Roman Catholic monk and spiritual writer, Thomas Merton, was standing on a street corner in a busy Kentucky city in the 1960s. Suddenly he was overcome by the awareness that he was deeply in love with all of humanity. Has that ever happened to you? Do you expect it to?

Punctuate the Finish

Jean-Jacques Rousseau wrote in *The Confessions:*

I have resolved on an enterprise which has no precedent, and which, once complete, will have no imitator. My purpose is to display to my kind a portrait in every way true to nature, and the man I shall portray will be myself. Simply myself. I know my own heart and understand my fellow man. But I am made unlike any one I have ever met; I will even venture to say that I am like no one in the whole world. I may be no better, but at least I am different. Whether Nature did well or ill in breaking the mould in which she formed me, is a question

(New York: Viking Penguin, Inc., 1953), 17.

which can only be resolved after the reading of my book.

Is Rousseau's confession Christian in any sense?

Charles Wesley wrote in "And Can It Be?"

Long my imprisoned spirit lay
Fast bound in sin and nature's night.
Thine eye diffused a quick'ning ray:
I woke—the dungeon flamed with light!
My chains fell off, my heart was free,
I rose, went forth, and followed Thee.

From Sing to the Lord, 225.

Charles Wesley's hymn lyric is Christian through and through. It teaches of sin and the solution for sin.

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Lesson 20

The Element within Us, or Thinking about Sin

Lesson Overview

Schedule

Start Time	Task or Topic	Learning Activity	Materials Needed
0:00	Introduction	Orient	Student Guide
			Resource 20-1
0:10	Sin, a Defining Criterion of Wesleyan (and All) Theology	Lecture/Discussion	Resource 20-2—20-7
0:50	Compare/Contrast Wesleyan View of Sin	Small Groups	Resource 20-8
1:00	Additional	Lecture/Small Groups	Resource 20-9
	Perspectives from		Resource 20-10
	Scripture, Theology,		Resource 20-11
	and Philosophy		
1:20	Lesson Close	Review, Assign	Student Guide

Suggested Reading for Instructor

Bloesch, Donald G. *Essentials of Evangelical Theology.* Vol. 1, *God, Authority, and Salvation.* San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1978, ch. 5.

Carter, Charles W. "Hamartiology." In *A Contemporary Wesleyan Theology*, Vol. 1. Edited by Charles W. Carter. Grand Rapids: Francis Asbury Press, 1983, 237-82.

Cobb, John B., Jr. *Grace and Responsibility: A Wesleyan Theology for Today.* Nashville: Abingdon, 1995, 79-84.

- Cox, Leo G. *John Wesley's Concept of Perfection.* Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1964, ch. 2.
- Dunning, H. Ray. "Man the Sinner." Chapter 9 in *Grace, Faith, and Holiness: A Wesleyan Systematic Theology.* Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1988, 275-301.
- Flew, R. Newton. *The Idea of Perfection in Christian Theology*. New York: Humanities Press, 1968, 332-36. Discussion of John Wesley's view of sin.
- Grider, J. Kenneth. "The Mystery of Evil," and "The Doctrine of Sin." Chapters 8 and 10 in *A Wesleyan-Holiness Theology*. Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1994, 184-229, 256-96.
- Harper, Steve. *John Wesley's Message for Today.* Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983, ch. 2.
- Lodahl, Michael. *The Story of God: Wesleyan Theology and Biblical Narrative.* Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1994, ch. 8-10.
- Maddox, Randy L. *Responsible Grace*. Nashville: Kingswood Books, 1994, ch. 3.
- Menninger, Karl. *Whatever Became of Sin?* New York: Hawthorn Books, 1973.
- Outler, Albert C. *Theology in the Wesleyan Spirit*. Nashville: Discipleship Resources—Tidings, 1975, ch. 2.
- Pelikan, Jaroslav. "Evil" and "Sin." In *The Melody of Theology: A Philosophical Dictionary.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988.
- Staples, Rob L. "Sin" and "Temptation." In Words of Faith: An Easy Reference to Theological Terms.

 Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 2001, 43-4, 73-4.
- Wesley, John. "Sermon 44: Original Sin." In *The Works of John Wesley*. Vol. 2, *Sermons II: 34-70*. Edited by Albert C. Outler. Nashville: Abingdon, 1985, 170-85. Also in the fourteen-volume edition, VI:54-65.
- Williams, Colin W. *John Wesley's Theology Today.* Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1960, ch. 4.

Wynkoop, Mildred Bangs. *A Theology of Love: The Dynamic of Wesleyanism.* Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1972, ch. 6.

Lesson Introduction

(10 minutes)

Accountability

Call on one or two students to share their reports with the class.

Return and collect homework.

Motivator

Refer to Resource 20-1 in the Student Guide.

"Sin, understood in the Christian sense, is the rent that cuts through the whole of existence."

-Emil Brunner

"Vanity is so anchored in the heart of man that . . . those who write against it want to have the glory of having written well; and those who read it desire the glory of having read it."

—Blaise Pascal

"I don't need to fight To prove I'm right I don't need to be forgiven."

—The Who, British rock band

"The real trouble with our times is not the multiplication of sinners, it is the disappearance of sin."

—Etienne Gilson

"All sins are so many spiritual diseases, which must be cured by the power of Christ before we can be capable of being happy, even though it were possible for us to be admitted into the kingdom of heaven hereafter."

-Susanna Wesley, in a letter to her son John Wesley

Breathe, O breathe thy loving Spirit
Into every troubled breast,
Let us all in thee inherit,
Let us find that second rest;
Take away our power of sinning,
Alpha and Omega be,
End of faith, as its beginning,
Set our hearts at liberty.
—Charles Wesley, "Love Divine, All Loves Excelling"

"Indeed we are already bound hand and foot by the chains of our own sins. These, considered with regard to ourselves, are chains of iron and fetters of brass.

From "Sermon 26: Upon Our Lord's Sermon on the Mount, Discourse the Sixth" in The Works of Wesley, Vol. 7, Sermons I: 1-33, ed. Albert C. Outler (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1984), 586. They are wounds wherewith the world, the flesh, and the devil have gashed and mangled us all over. They are diseases that drink up our blood and spirits, that bring us down to the chambers of the grave. But, considered as they are here, with regard to God, they are debts immense and numberless. Well, therefore, seeing we have nothing to pay, may we cry unto Him, that He would frankly forgive us all!"

—John Wesley

"All who deny this—call it 'original sin' or by any other title—are but heathens still in the fundamental point which differences heathenism from Christianity. They may indeed allow that men have many vices; that some are born with us; and that consequently we are not born altogether so wise or so virtuous as we should be; there being few that will roundly affirm we are born with as much propensity to good as to evil, and that every man is by nature as virtuous and wise as Adam was at his creation. But here is the shibboleth: Is man by nature filled with all manner of evil? Is he void of all good? Is he wholly fallen? Is his soul totally corrupted? Or, to come back to the text, is 'every imagination of the thoughts of his heart evil continually'? Allow this, and you are so far a Christian. Deny it, and you are but an heathen still."

From "Sermon 44: Original Sin," in Works, 2:183-4.

—John Wesley

Orientation

In this lesson we will consider some aspects of the classic Christian teaching on sin. We will take special note of some distinctives John Wesley and the Church of the Nazarene have added to the conversation.

We will also try to give some sense of how other Christians have viewed sin differently, and raise the issue of the broader culture awareness of and interest in the question of sin.

Learner Objectives

Instruct students to locate objectives in the Student Guide.

Restating the objectives for the learners serves as an advanced organizer for the lesson and alerts learners to key information and concepts.

To help students

- survey relevant aspects of the classical Christian doctrine of sin
- note some of the distinctive elements of the Wesleyan view of sin
- note points of contact between the doctrine of sin and the doctrine of entire sanctification
- note some of the criticisms of the Wesleyan understanding of sin

Lesson Body

Lecture/Discussion: Sin, a Defining Criterion of Wesleyan (and All) Theology

(40 minutes)

Introduction: The Struggle to Define Sin

A thoughtful interviewer probed the depths of Michael Jordan's greatness. To virtually every query about how the basketball legend measured the meaning of life, from first principles to final resolution, Jordan's answer boiled down to two words: "The Game." Jordan's unswerving focus on a leather ball and a wooden floor set him apart from every other player in the history of the game.

When Christian theology surveys the cultural landscape, offering its unique perspectives on the ills that dog humankind, its answer also tends toward the monotonous. The problem with any person, group, situation, or event, Christians declare, is *sin.* "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom 3:23) is Paul's pithy summation. We undoubtedly sin against other people, against ourselves, maybe even against the earth, but in the end all sin is finally against God.

For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me.

Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight

—Psalm 51:3-4, NIV

Sin is one theological term that has penetrated the wider cultural vocabulary and remained. Native Alaskan peoples have dozens of different words to describe snow and Filipinos have dozens of ways of naming rice. But no barrage of synonyms can replace the simple realities of snow and rice. In a similar way, we have many alternative ways of speaking of sin. Philosophical theologian Paul Tillich believed perhaps the word "sin" was outmoded for modern people, who would understand concepts such as estrangement and alienation better. And yet the primal significance of sin remains.

The Totality of Total Depravity

Donald Bloesch reminds us that the doctrine of total depravity, shared by all Protestants and most Roman Catholics, does not mean "that the very substance of man is nothing but sin." The *imago dei* has been effaced and marred through human sin, but not totally obliterated.

Refer to Resource 20-2 in the Student Guide.

Four meanings, Bloesch believes, illumine the teaching of total depravity:

- 1. The very center of the human being has been corrupted. This does not mean that nothing but sin remains within man, but whatever defines the human being has been corrupted.
- 2. This infection has spread to every segment of the human being.
- 3. Humankind has no innate ability to please God, and apart from grace we are not able to move toward God. Total depravity means the bondage of the will, at least so far as the will's being capable of moving itself toward God.

Here we do well to recall that Wesley preferred to speak of "free grace" rather than "free will," and to that extent agrees with Reformed theology. Donald Bloesch, who is a Reformed theologian, does not have the profound appreciation of prevenient grace that is central to Wesleyan understanding. The Reformed tradition is more inclined to speak of "common grace" than of prevenient grace. Common grace is given to all humans, and is responsible for the good that evil people do in the world. But it does not "tug" the heart toward God as decisively as does prevenient grace.

From Essentials of Evangelical Theology, Vol. 1, 90.

4. Human depravity also points to the "universal corruption of the human race, despite the fact that some peoples and cultures manifest this corruption much less than others." The last part of this assertion is certainly debatable. Bloesch is saying that some cultures are "holier" than others, or at least "less perverse."

Discussion Interlude

Can this claim (number 4) be defended?

Have the students share their definitions and synonyms.

Write a one-sentence definition of sin, and think of as many synonyms for sin as you are able to (1 minute).

One Nazarene Definition of Sin

Refer to Resource 20-3 in the Student Guide.

For Rob L. Staples, the biblical evidence (especially the story of the Fall in Genesis 3) shows sin to be a manyheaded monster:

- Sin begins in a questioning of divine authority.
- Sin is essentially the attempt to become like God.
- Sin is not only an individual transgression against a holy God, but also has a social dimension.
- Sin involves the breaking of fellowship.
- Sin includes the denial of responsibility.
- Sin robs life of meaning and purpose.
- Sin always ends in our alienation from the Lord God.

Personalizing this Definition

Ask students to think of a real life situation that illustrates several, or even all, of Staples' seven points.

From "Sin" in Words of Faith, 43-4.

Share your own story if possible.

Dr. Leupp shares his story.

As a Nazarene youth, I knew the church's stances against the use of tobacco and alcohol. These were black and white areas, where gray never intruded, at least for me. On some other moral fronts, notably the occasional visit to the movie theatre, much more gray interposed itself, and I was not always strictly in step with Nazarene guidelines. Although by no means a perfect youth, my record was better than most.

On this particular Sunday evening, members of the church youth group and I were gathered in someone's house after church. It was spring or summer, and warm outside. The pastor of the church and his wife graced us with their presence, although their roles were to be more advisory and listening than actively instructing. There were probably fifteen to eighteen youth crowded into a room not large enough to hold us all comfortably.

One of the older youth had the floor, a young man known to be on the fringes of accepted Nazarene morality for that time. His was not the best home life, not the nurturing and watchful moral environment I benefited from.

But tonight this young man felt the courage of his convictions. He was going to make some break with his past. He was allowing grace to work in his life. To this youth meeting he brought some of the elements of the life he was now trying to leave behind. On the corner

of the coffee table, near the sofa on which he was seated, were a pack of cigarettes and perhaps a can of beer. I admired him for this confession, coming as it did among his peers. He wanted to exchange his reputation as a tough guy outsider who rode motorcycles to someone who could be trusted.

But not too many minutes into this heartfelt confession the watching pastor stormed to his feet, exclaiming that he did not have to subject himself to this verbal and visual pollution. He grabbed his stunned wife and marched out of the room, surprising her and all of the rest of us.

It is of course arguable as to whom at that precise moment was the bigger sinner: the confessing young man trying to break with his past, or the overly-judgmental pastor who left every impression of being harsh, unbending, inflexible, and downright nasty. More than 30 years later I am still trying to sort all of this out. The pastor went on to other Nazarene posts, including some of relatively high responsibility. The same might not be said for the confessing sinner. For all I know, he is today not as close to the covenant of grace as he was that Sunday night.

A Sin-sick Soul or a Violator of the Law?

"I first arrived," writes Dr. Leupp, "in the Republic of the Philippines late one steamy June night, and was driven to my place of missionary service around midnight. Tired from the long flight, I was yet not so tired as not to keep alert and awake as we made our long way to the campus of the Asia-Pacific Nazarene Theological Seminary.

"One of my first impressions of the Philippines was not a positive one, and through eight years of living there it was reinforced dozens if not hundreds of times. On night ride I witnessed first one, then another, and probably eventually a dozen drivers who were heedless to red lights in their paths. Under cover of night they did whatever was expedient to reach their destination. For them law was not law, but merely a suggestion that could now be conveniently avoided. That is, Filipinos are more interested in *personal relationships* than they are in keeping the *letter of the law*. Of course not all Filipinos are habitual lawbreakers, but in general terms the *relational* is definitely valued above the *legal*."

It is not too much of a stretch to say this is true for Wesleyan and Nazarene ways of looking at the From Susanna Wesley: The Complete Writings, ed. Charles Wallace, Jr. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 58.

Refer to Resource 20-4 in the Student Guide.

From Faith Seeking Understanding: An Introduction to Christian Theology (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 130.

Ibid.

Ibid., 131.

See Randy L. Maddox, Responsible Grace (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 1994), and John B. Cobb, Jr., Grace and Responsibility: A Wesleyan Theology for Today (Nashville: Abingdon, 1995). multidimensional reality we call sin. Relational, moral, and ethical approaches to sin are more in evidence than strict adherence to a legal code or exacting rules.

To her son Samuel Wesley, Jr. Susanna Wesley, matriarch of Methodism, advised: "I would have you take some pains to get a clear knowledge and deep sense of the corruption of your nature. For the better you are acquainted with your disease, the better you may apply a remedy."

To liken sin to a disease is to say that we need hospital care, not jail time. To speak of corruption is to be reminded of the fall of Adam, where supernature fell to mere nature that was continually subject to sin, death, and the devil.

Not only Nazarene writers have stressed the relational component of sin. Mainline Protestant writer Daniel L. Migliore expresses that "we misunderstand the depth of sin if we see it only as a violation of a moral code; it is, instead, primarily the disruption of our relationship with God." Migliore continues by saying there are two particular ways in which we willfully choose to ignore God:

- One is to exalt ourselves in place of God, as Staples said above. "Declaring our freedom to be infinite, we proclaim ourselves God," Migliore explains. "This is the sin of the prideful, titanic, egocentric self. Often referred to simply as the sin of pride, it is an active and self-centered idolatry."
- The second form of flight from God is much different. It "is the sin of self-rejection, and it frequently leads to a passive and other-centered idolatry." Our theological traditions may not pay much attention to this form of sin, but "this form of sin is no less a turning from the gracious God who calls us to freedom, maturity, and responsibility in community."

As many writers have recently explored, two poles of Wesleyan theology are grace and responsibility. Both of these crucial terms are relational. God's grace is not for His own purpose and use. As the fullness of perfect love, what need has God for grace? Grace is given to humans for them to know God.

To respond to grace is to stir up yet more grace, which is inexhaustible. The Christian life is always undergirded by grace, but to live in grace is to live in responsible obedience to the law of God (defined by

Wesley as the law of love), which results in faithful and fruitful living in the midst of the human community.

The Relational View Is More Demanding, Not Less

Some people may question the view just offered, that the typical Wesleyan view of sin is more relational than it is legal. After all, they say, did not John Wesley define sin "properly so-called" as a willful transgression of a known law of God? Do not the very words of Wesley point to sin as legal transgression? It must be readily granted that Wesley was never "soft" when it came to the question of sin. As the lengthy quotation in Resource 20-1 demonstrated, Wesley believed adherence to the teaching of original sin was what separated the Christian from the heathen. His longest single theological treatise was on the doctrine of original sin.

Refer to Resource 20-5 in the Student Guide.

Leo G. Cox wisely reminds us that Wesley's view of prevenient grace affected his view of sin. Original sin, Cox writes,

accounts for the natural weaknesses and evils inherent in the human race. However the guilt for this sin is removed for all men [and women] in prevenient grace, though the unfortunate and evil results remain. From this fallen nature flow the corruptions and evil tendencies in the sons of Adam. But into this evil nature also flows the grace of God, which fact changed Wesley's definition of sin. Since man has grace, it is the refusal of this grace that becomes the condemning sin.

From John Wesley's Concept of Perfection (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1964), 180.

Wesley's theology seeks to resolve the divine-human conflict. It is therefore a *soteriological* theology. To diagnose the human condition as fallen and alien from God is not the end of wisdom (because that end is Jesus Christ), but it is the beginning of wisdom. The claims of the gospel stumble and falter if the truth of human depravity is denied. "The universal corruption of human nature is for Wesley an essential Christian doctrine apart from which the whole gospel becomes meaningless" is John Cobb's wise statement.

From Grace and Responsibility, 81.

The God to whom the gospel points is not so much a taskmaster or moral sergeant-at-arms as a grieved and wounded Father hoping for the return of His sinning creatures. Wesley knew that as we return to God, we are confronted by this startling paradox: the closer we draw to God, the more we understand our

profound distance from His holy nature, a distance which God chose to bridge in Jesus Christ. The relational road to God is actually more demanding, but more fulfilling also, than any legalistic reckoning.

Wesleyan theology has never been comfortable with the definition of sin attributed to classical Protestantism such as Lutheranism and Presbyterianism. There is a certain stern beauty to the thought that we inevitably sin every day "in word, thought, and deed." Yet most Wesleyans have seen this formula of sin's inevitability as a counsel of despair that sells short the power of God's grace to transform personal lives and even social situations.

On the other hand, too many under the influence of Wesleyan theology have downplayed and soft-pedaled the ugliness of sin. Sin is not mistakes. Sin is not a chance to evade responsibility. John Wesley viewed the trauma of sin with utmost seriousness, with great clarity. Sin as violation of a known law of God does not exhaust the meaning of sin. There are also sins of omission to avoid, and when discovered, to repent of.

From John Wesley, ed. Albert C. Outler (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), 302.

A Matter of Emphasis

All Nazarene theologians agree with John Wesley about the gravity of sin, but some significant differences may be noted among them. As expected, these differences reflect other differences in their respective theologies.

1 John 1:9 reads, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness." Nazarene theologians have typically found in this passage an implicit witness to the reality of *two related and yet distinguishable types of sin*.

The sins we confess, the sins that are forgiven, are expunged by the first work of grace, which is variously called justification, the new birth, adoption, or regeneration, depending on what aspect is being emphasized. These are *acts of sin.*

But the *proclivity or tendency toward sin*, called *inbred corruption*, awaits a second work of grace. To be purified or cleansed of all unrighteousness is to be entirely sanctified. This is *the condition of sin* (Charles Wesley's "bent toward sinning" or "power of sinning") that admittedly gives rise to the various acts of sin.

The Nazarene article of faith on entire sanctification states that this inward corruption is purged at the

Refer to Resource 20-6 in the Student Guide.

beginning moment of entire sanctification ("purity") although the working out of this "Christian perfection" is a lifelong expectation ("maturity").

Is the inward corruption that is addressed and rectified by entire sanctification to be viewed as a twisted and perverted "something"? Or should it be seen as more relational in tone and scope? This is a point of division between Nazarene theologians. Richard Taylor and Kenneth Grider seem to favor the more substantialist view, which emphasizes that original sin is a state or condition humanity has inherited from Adam.

Rob Staples, Mildred Bangs Wynkoop, and H. Ray Dunning prefer the more relational perspective. "Sin is not a substance but rebellion," writes Wynkoop. For the Judeo-Christian doctrine of sin, she claims, "Sin is always religious 'malfunction.' It is a wrong relation to God. It is rebellion on the part of responsible manhood. It is alienation, a moral disorder." For his part, Staples writes, "sin is not something written into the genetic code, found in DNA molecules," meaning original sin cannot be passed on genetically, or through the act of human procreation.

This difference does not mean Taylor and Grider take original sin or "Adamic depravity" seriously, whereas Staples, Wynkoop, and Dunning do not. Again, as we observed in Lesson 19 when we first mentioned the difference between the relational and the substantival, there is far more agreement among these five Nazarene thinkers than there is disagreement.

Grider may have misunderstood Wynkoop, of whom he is quite critical in *A Wesleyan-Holiness Theology*. Grider believes that to say that sin and holiness are *states* and *conditions* is not to deny that these states and conditions can be at the same time *relational states and conditions*.

We believe Wynkoop would also agree with this Grider quotation and view it as instructive: "Sin and holiness as states that are relational, also, is to be preferred to the view that they are only 'personal relationships.' If original sin is a state, then cleansing from it is called for—its purging."

Does Wynkoop believe sin is *only* a "personal relationship," as Grider suggests she does? Yes, if by personal relationship we mean we have offended the personal God. No, if this means we do not share in original sin along with the rest of the human race, or

From A Theology of Love, 49.
From Words of Faith, 44.

See 285-86.

Ibid., 286.

that our sphere of relationality extends no further than our own immediate needs and concerns.

Two Criticisms of the Wesleyan View of Sin

Two recurring criticisms of the Wesleyan view of sin have often been voiced. One of them we have already anticipated in the previous section. The other one can likely be easily guessed.

First Criticism

Refer to Resource 20-7 in the Student Guide.

In his famous book *The Idea of Perfection in Christian Theology*, British Methodist theologian R. Newton Flew faults Wesley's traditional definition of sin as a voluntary transgression of a known law as being entirely too narrow. Flew insists:

The word [sin] has too long a history behind it for such a limitation to be possible. Indeed the narrower sense is not even desirable. Our worst sins are often those of which we are unconscious. The stress on the consciousness and deliberate intention of the agent is the most formidable defect in Wesley's doctrine of the ideal. If only those transgressions are overcome which are recognized to be transgressions by the agent, the degree of sanctification attained by him will depend on his previous moral development, on his own insight into motive, and on his knowledge of himself.

Noting that Wesley tended to think of sin "as a substance which might be expelled, or rooted out, or as an external burden which might be taken away," Flew counters this by writing:

Sin is not a mere *thing*. From a mere bundle on the back however burdensome a man may be delivered in an instant. How can he be delivered in an instant from that which he himself is? The man himself must be changed; and we are changed by the companionship of the indwelling Spirit of God.

Edward H. Sugden similarly claimed Wesley "never quite shook off the fallacious notion that sin is a *thing* which has to be taken out of a man, like a cancer or a rotten tooth. . . . But sin is not a thing; it is a condition of balance amongst our motives."

(New York: Humanities Press, 1968), 332-3.

Ibid., 335.

From Wesley's Standard Sermons, Volume II, ed. Edward H. Sugden (London: Epworth Press, 1921), 459, note 18.

Second Criticism

The second criticism of the Wesleyan doctrine of sin comes not from those who sympathize with the Wesleyan doctrine of Christian perfection, but from those who doubt the doctrine is biblically sound and experientially possible.

From "Response to Dieter," in Five Views on Sanctification, Melvin E. Dieter, et al (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987), 49. Reformed theologian Anthony A. Hoekema is typical of this view, and writes, "I do not believe that the Bible allows for the possibility of living without sin, even without 'willful sin,' in this life. I do not accept the Wesleyan teaching about entire sanctification. . . . I must reject the possibility of sinless living on this side of glory. . . . We are *genuinely* new but not yet *totally* new."

We cannot present a detailed criticism of Hoekema here. We can note that Wesley was unwilling to "contend for sinless perfection" among the early Methodists, and that *Christian* perfection is much different from *sinless* perfection. Wynkoop addresses some of these concerns in her chapter on "Christian Perfection" (14) in *A Theology of Love*.

Small Groups: Compare/Contrast the Wesleyan View of Sin with Others

(10 minutes)

Divide the class into groups of two to three.

Have them work on Resource 20-8.

Paul Tillich was a Lutheran theologian, and this statement, taken from one of his sermons, is typical, both of his own thought, and of that of classical Protestantism in general.

Have the men of our time still a feeling of the meaning of sin? Do they, and do we, still realize that sin does not mean an immoral act, that "sin" should never be used in the plural, and that not our sins, but rather our sin is the great, all-pervading problem of our life? Do we still know that it is arrogant and erroneous to divide men by calling some "sinners" and others "righteous"? For by way of such a division, we can usually discover that we ourselves do not quite belong to the "sinners", since we have avoided heavy sins, have made some progress in the control of this or that sin, and have been even humble enough not to call ourselves "righteous". Are we still able to realize that this kind of thinking and feeling about sin is far removed from what the great religious tradition, both within and outside the Bible, has meant when it speaks of sin?

From The Shaking of the Foundations (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1948), 154.

In what ways can Nazarenes agree with this statement?

What are points of disagreement?

Lecture/Small Groups: Additional Perspectives from Scripture, Theology, and Philosophy

(20 minutes)

In today's culture there seems to be a "softening" regarding the reality, severity, and gravity of sin. Conditions that in former times were widely thought sinful (homosexuality and even alcoholism) are now widely thought of as being either "alternative" (homosexuality) or a "disease" (alcoholism). It is wise to help students see what is happening in the surrounding culture, and to be able to respond to this theologically.

Refer to Resource 20-9 in the Student Guide.

Three Tensions

Daniel Migliore mentions three tensions connected with any honest thinking about sin. They are:

The Universal and the Particular

Sin is pervasive and thus a universal problem, yet we are responsible for it because of our choices.

Sin Is Pervasive, and for That Reason Ambiguous

Migliore writes, "sin insinuates itself into all human action, including not only what is widely condemned as *evil* but also what is commonly praised as *good. . . .* Sin may be most seductively and demonically at work under the guise of doing good."

Does it not sometimes happen that when we *intend to be good* it turns out to be evil? If Christian perfection is described as a perfection of intention and motive, people who live under the banner of Christian holiness should exercise extra caution that their motives are indeed pure.

Reinhold Niebuhr preached the ambiguity of all of life. When the Savior of the world was born, why was the birth accompanied by the slaughter of the innocents? This points to the ambiguity of all historical events. Personal choice is likewise often ambiguous.

The Individual and the Corporate

Migliore's comment is again worth noting: "In modern society there is an increasing tendency to privatize sin and to restrict it to the behavior of individuals. Against this tendency stands the biblical witness with its emphasis on an encompassing reign of evil and the solidarity of all humanity in the old 'Adam' of sin and alienation."

From Faith Seeking Understanding, 135

Small Group Interlude: Prophetic Solidarity

Divide the class into groups of two to three to work on Resource 20-10. The verses are on the resource.

See Abraham J. Heschel, The Prophets (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), ch. 11.

Refer to Resource 20-11 in the Student Guide.

From The Essential Reinhold Niebuhr: Selected Essays and Addresses, ed. Robert McAfee Brown (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1986), 108.

From The Nature and Destiny of Man: A Christian Interpretation, Vol. 2, Human Destiny (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1943), 175.

The Hebrew prophets and the wisdom literature had a keen sense of God's justice and a powerful awareness of social sin. Look up the following verses, and from them put together a picture of social solidarity, care for the poor, and the promises and expectations of God.

Three Closing Thoughts

Reinhold Niebuhr (1892—1971)

Niebuhr is widely acclaimed as one of the leading social thinkers and Christian ethicists of the 20th century. Among his many contributions to Christian theology, perhaps none is as great as his insistence on the tragic fallenness of humanity and the shattering ambiguity of life. By its very nature, life produces anxiety. Niebuhr believed "anxiety is an inevitable concomitant of human freedom, and is the root of the inevitable sin which expresses itself in every human activity and creativity."

Notice Niebuhr's use of "inevitable." He believed sin was "inevitable but not necessary," meaning we are not "fated" to sin. There is nothing mechanical within us that drives us against our choosing to sin necessarily. But inevitably we exercise our choices in the wrong way. There is no escaping sin.

Regarding Wesley, Niebuhr believed he "rightly maintains the moral imperatives of the gospel but wrongly imagines that they can be completely realized."

Paul Tillich (1886—1965)

Like Niebuhr, with whom he taught at Union Theological Seminary in New York City, Tillich saw the human condition as fraught with anxiety. Unlike Niebuhr, Tillich developed his thought in more philosophical and less historical ways. Tillich was also very influenced by depth psychology, and hence saw sin in terms of alienation and estrangement.

Niebuhr certainly was not a biblical literalist, and would probably say the account of the Fall in Genesis 3 should be taken "seriously, but not literally." Tillich, however, saw the Fall as mythological, as being a fall from "essence" to "existence." Essence might be characterized as a "dreaming innocence," but existence was the harsh reality of the daily grind. Tillich posited a "transcendent fall" before history. He admits the myth of the transcendent fall is not directly biblical, but claims it does not contradict the biblical witness either. Many have disputed Tillich at this point. Donald Bloesch simply writes, "the fall is not the transition from essence to existence (as in Tillich), but a turning away from God in the life of every person within history."

From Tillich, Systematic Theology, 2:31-39.

From Essentials of Evangelical Theology, 1:107.

Contemporary Trends

Each of the many strands of contemporary theology we have elsewhere surveyed in this lesson has its own view of sin. There is much overlap among these various views. Rosemary Radford Ruether believes "sin, therefore, has to be seen both in the capacity to set up prideful, antagonistic relations to others and in the passivity of men and women who acquiesce to the group ego."

From Sexism and God-Talk: Toward a Feminist Theology (Boston: Beacon Press, 1983),

> In Ruether's statement we note the relational element we have stressed throughout this lesson. In her treatment, though, the quality of our relations with other people and with the earth determines the quality of our knowing God. In language often used, Ruether's view of the relational is more "horizontal" (reaching out to other people) than it is "vertical" (knowing God for the sake of knowing God).

Process theology values freedom so highly that any failure on our parts to use our freedom to its fullest extent is likely to be sin. Blocking others from their greatest fulfillment might be social sin.

Lesson Close

(5 minutes)

Review

What did Reinhold Niebuhr mean when he said that of all of the Christian doctrines, only original sin could be empirically proven?

Look Ahead

While the conversation of Christian theology is neverending, we have reached a tentative end here, as Investigating Christian Theology 1 has closed.

In this module we have been especially concerned with the question of God: God the Creator, the qualities and attributes of God, the Triune God, proofs and demonstrations of the existence of God.

At the same time we have inquired about the world God has made, taking up the question of the problem of evil, and briefly pausing to consider the relationship between science and religion.

We have also devoted attention to the question of the human (Who Is Man?) and of human sinfulness.

Christian Theology 2 is about the person and work of Jesus Christ, the reality of atonement, the centrality of the church, the sacramental life, Christian eschatology, and related questions.

Assign Homework

Direct students to the Homework Assignments in the Student Guide. Read John 8:1-11. Consider how this passage of scripture impacts one's doctrine of sin.

Journal Prompt

J. Kenneth Grider noted that famous neoorthodox theologian Emil Brunner believed he always lived in Romans 7, meaning he never got beyond the struggle against the flesh.

Thoughtfully read Romans 7. What does this scripture say to us in light of human depravity, in light of the hope for heart holiness before God and among humanity?

Punctuate the Finish

End with a time of prayer and blessing for each of the students.