

Transition From Modernity to Post-Modernity: // A Theological Evaluation

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• SUMMARY

An Introduction to Methods Used: This paper attempts to do a philosophical analysis and theological critique of the phenomenon of the Modern and Post-Modern Ages in their transition and mutual overlapping from

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• ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Zusammenfassung und Einleitendes zu den benutzten Methoden: Dieser Artikel versucht eine philosophische Analyse und theologische Kritik des Übergangs von der Moderne zur Postmoderne und

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• RÉSUMÉ

Une introduction à la méthode utilisée: cet article est une analyse philosophique de la modernité et de la post-modernité, de leur transition et de leur continuité

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First Reflection: The Relevance of This Topic For Theological Education in the Third World

Modernity and Post-Modernity are related to typical phenomena in the philosophical development of the Western world. Is theological education in Asia, Africa, and Latin America unnecessarily overlaid with these kinds of questions? In response to this justifiable question, I would like to list five arguments which seem important to me in dealing with this topic. They are as follows:

the perspective of theological education. Reflective remarks directly related to theological education are given in italics in addition to the text of the paper. They will also be very important in summarizing the oral presentation of the paper.

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deren gegenseitige Überlappung aus der Perspektive theologischer Ausbildung. Direkt auf theologische Ausbildung bezogene Reflektionen erscheinen kursiv als Zusätze zum Text des Artikels. Diese sind für die Zusammenfassung der mündlichen Präsentation des Artikels sehr wichtig.

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de l'une à l'autre, et un essai de critique théologique. L'auteur aborde la question sous l'angle de l'éducation théologique. Des réflexions ayant directement trait au sujet de l'éducation théologique sont fournies en italiques comme supplément.

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1. The 21st century will become the Information Age globally. Certain people in specific geographical areas can no longer be isolated from powerful ideas and intellectual movements.

2. The ideas of the Modern Age, developed in the West (Europe and North America), have brought progress in medicine, industry, etc. by means of the natural sciences and technology in which all nations understandably wish to have a part. Yet, one cannot completely separate this scientific-technological heritage from the thinking structure and the spirit of the Enlightenment, which is closely tied to these advances.

This fact will cause great problems in the future for all cultures and religions which have not yet had an age of enlightenment in their histories.

3. The process of urbanization taking place worldwide is increasing the trend towards international cultural exchange and is even creating, to a certain degree, one unified civilization strongly influenced by the West.

4. The more demanding the academic level of a theological seminary is, the more Western philosophy, its history, and way of thinking will influence theological literature. This is a reason why, in the past, many ecumenically-oriented churches allowed their leaders to do doctorates in the West. Evangelical leaders in the respective countries must also be able to hold their own in the resultant intellectual/philosophical discussion.

5. Evangelical churches and theologians in the West have had, in part, a centuries-long intensive intellectual struggle with the challenges of Modernity and Post-Modernity. In view of unbiblical and spiritually misleading influences Western theologians can, therefore, also help the Church worldwide in its effort to overcome these dangers. Moreover, treatment of the topic "Modernity and Post-Modernity" can then only really support theologians responsible for education if it shows the roots, respective contexts, and arguments which overcome this way of thinking. "If one part (of the body) suffers, every part suffers with it . . ." (I Cor. 12:26)

Introduction: The Interpretation of History as Prophetic Gift and Work

"The task of philosophy is to understand what is, for that which is is reason. Concerning the individual, just as each is, as it were, a child of his own times, so also philosophy grasps its time in thoughts." This is how Hegel, in his "Philosophy of Law" defines the task of philosophy, namely, to understand that which exists in thoughts, that is, to see through time and to analyze. Philosophy in the Hegelian sense thereby claims to know that through this analysis reality is taken into consciousness as comprehended reality. In this article, though, we would like to ask the question whether or not such should and can be accomplished on the part of the theology of history, which Hegel tried to do with his entire philosophy, namely, to comprehend time in thought and thereby to define it philosophically. This is an incredibly audacious claim to make.

Jesus Christ calls His Church to "understand

the signs of the times", and so to interpret time prophetically in a certain sense. But this competency has nothing to do with the power of the human subject, because "the discernment of spirits" is about a charismatic gift given by God over which man has no control. The philosophical interpretation of the present is an intellectual act of man, which one perceives on one's own. But seeing reality clearly in a prophetic way from the standpoint of the knowledge of faith is not only a gift of grace which God alone can grant, but even its use is always made with circumspection. Ultimately, in his philosophy, Hegel presumes that complete knowledge of the absolute mind (spirit) is present within him and that he, therefore, can also speak a final word about reality. But a theologian gifted with prophetic understanding in the New Testament sense never speaks from his own knowledge by reason, but, rather stays bound to the word of revelation. In his interpretation of the theology of history, he will never be allowed to or be able to go as far as Hegel, as a philosopher of history, claims for himself, simply because his judgment is done with eschatological reservation. He is not able to take stock of the ultimate end result, but, rather, can, at best, try to take stock provisionally, and this is what I will attempt to do here and now in view of my topic.

The phrase "from Modernity to Post-Modernity" first of all signifies an historical-chronological change. First comes Modernism, and then Post-Modernity follows. But when we speak of Modernism, then it is thereby implied that there also must have been something which preceded it, which we would, with some caution, like to term "Pre-Modernity", that is, that development of the history of thought which was supplanted by Modernism in the course of history. Therefore, I could structure this article in such a ways that I show historically the chronological succession, presented as a whole. However, I do not wish to do this, but, rather, to attempt to show systematic-phenomenologically some main characteristics in the succession of Pre-Modernity, Modernism, and Post-Modernity and to briefly interpret them each from a theological viewpoint in order to reap some results for our situation today. There are three phenomena which I would like to sketch briefly and to evaluate.

1. The Anthropocentric Change
2. The Relativizing of Truth
3. The Existential Crisis of Meaning in the Present

Of course, in keeping with our topic, I am placing the emphasis upon Modernism and Post-Modernism. The so-called Pre-Modernism mentioned here will be referred to only briefly in order to demonstrate the transition which occurred with the arrival of Modernism. A discussion of Modernism within the context of dealing with Post-Modernism is indispensable because the later, in part, presents itself as the decisive contradiction to the former, yet, in part, also accepts the former and continues it in a radical way.

Second Reflection: Theology as Serving Jesus Through His Church

It must be clear in theological education that theology has no purpose in and of itself such as academic brilliance in which people actualize themselves intellectually. It is also not an art which people's perception is based on their own abilities. Theology, rather, is done in service to Jesus and occurs through the empowerment with His Spirit. Among the diverse charismatic gifts the gifts of the word, wisdom, teaching, and the distinction of spirits are very important for theologians. They should be given priority in education, discovered, and nurtured. In an age of pluralism, syncretism, and multi-cultural societies this gift must be recognized and exercised in dealing with difficult and challenging topics. Moreover, in the philosophical debate with Modernity and Post-Modernity, considered under these methodological aspects, this concern is very appropriate.

1. The Anthropocentric Change from Pre-Modern Theocentricity through Modern Egotism to Post-Modern Individualism.

1.1. The Theocentricity of the Early Church and of the Middle Ages

Pre-Modernism here means, in short, the ages of the Early Church and the Medieval period. These epochs placed God in the center of thought, culture, and society. This is quite evident architecturally in the rising Gothic cathedrals in the centers of cities. At the center of all human areas of life and all artistic creativity was the encounter with God. Man is, in this sense, no autonomous figure, and therefore also no independent theme. Closely interwoven with the question of God is certainly a view of human life in which earthly things are only a very temporal, provisional intermediary station on the way towards real human existence in

God's eternity. And with this, there is also always the possibility of ultimate failure, that is, of eternal lostness.

Third Reflection: Theological Colleges and Seminaries as "Pre-Modern" Sub-Cultures?

A theology teacher once used the metaphor of military training for the task of theological education in which he pointed to the fact that soldiers are not trained on the front, but in their own home country. Something can be said for theology students. They need the protective environment of a Christian seminary to be prepared there for practical service on the "missionary front". In this sense, seminaries where theology teachers live, pray, and work together with the students are islands of Christian faith in a secular or multi-religious environment. However, an evangelical seminary is seen, sociologically speaking, as kind of a pre-modern sub-culture in society. One must clearly understand that this fact of being a purely Christian institution is, on the one hand, necessary because of the spiritual influence and concentration on education, yet, on the other hand, it creates an artificial world significantly different from the reality which surrounds it. It is important that everyone who is a part of the education process is agreed that the relative seclusion of this situation is not an end in itself, but serves to solidly prepare one for the challenges of Modernity, Post-Modernity, or whatever missionary challenges there are. Internships in churches and with missionaries during seminary education therefore have an important function. The "Pre-Modern" situation corresponds, then, to Jesus' practice of taking His disciples aside time and again to a secluded place before sending them out to do public ministry.

1.2. Modern Egotism

Modernism began as a radical change with the Renaissance and Humanism. From then on, man, no longer God, time and each individual's earthly state of health, became the center of interest. Renaissance means the rebirth of the classical antiquity of Greece and Rome and the orientation to their pre-Christian ideals. The Italian Renaissance can be shown in the basic anthropocentric attitude of Francesco Petrarca, who, while climbing Mount Ventoux, becomes aware of his own "I" identity, and experiences himself as an individual in contradistinction to the world. He understands himself not only facing the world, but also God. A kind of man develops who, from now on, finds

his own vital best interest in himself. In Germany, this change is characterized especially by the movement of Humanism which takes *humanum*, that is, man's possibilities, as its starting point. Humanistic anthropology essentially says that man is capable of learning and can be educated. Education is, thereby, the real task we are presented with. Because man can be developed into a better character, the worldview of Humanism is basically optimistic. The conflict during the Reformation with the anthropology of Humanism can be very clearly documented in the dispute between Martin Luther and Erasmus of Rotterdam, for instance, in Luther's writing, *De servo arbitrio*. Luther's awareness of man's lost condition and his exclusive dependence upon God's salvation stands in contrast to Erasmus' pride, who thinks that one can, in the end, develop man through some corrections into someone who is good.

Philosophically, the ego-centric philosophy of Modernism was decidedly furthered by Rene Descartes, in which he sought an ultimate certainty in a methodical process of doubt. Descartes was not a doubter out of principle, one who criticizes out of enjoyment of skepticism, or who was interested in the destruction of every bit of truth. Rather, he was a serious seeker of truth who, with his scientific methods of doubt at first wished to do away with every kind method of certainty which was based only on tradition or on empirical observation, or just on rational deduction. In contesting all knowledge which seemed questionable to him, he hoped to reach a clearer and more definite certainty. The certainty which Descartes then discovered in his critical process was that, for him, only the "I" of the thinking person as *res cogitans* was the final, most basic, and indubitable truth: "*Cogito ergo sum*", I think, therefore, I am. This basic conviction describes even before Kant a transcendental "I" as a reality concentrated on the pure act of thought. The *res cogitans* in which the thinking individual exists for himself, is the Archimedean Point from which Descartes then can come to a certainty about God through an ontological process of conclusion. This is so because God has been given beforehand in the thinking "I" a priori as an innate idea necessary for thought, that is, as an in-born idea with respect to his awareness. Finally, God's attributes of goodness and truthfulness guarantee not only the trustworthiness of divine thought, but also of knowledge of the world in the sense of the *res extensa*, i.e., the extended being. Because He is good, God does not deceive man,

His intelligent creation, with unreal or misleading sensory reality.

Descartes' line of reasoning is quite characteristic for the Modern turn towards anthropocentrism. On the one hand, Medieval traditional science, which had until then been broadly accepted, was critically questioned. The simple fact that facts had been always believed by everyone everywhere in the sense of the classical Catholic principle of tradition, was, for Descartes, not enough for clear and definite certainty. Yet, on the other hand, the apparent evidence of empirical perception also did not suffice as such because there is the phenomenon of dreams and sensory deception. Even the results of logical conclusions have proven themselves to be mistakes time and again. And so, at the end of the thinking process, neither tradition, nor the objective world, nor the certainty of the contents of thought remain, but simply the fact of the thinking being for himself, the *res cogitans*. He is, as we have shown earlier, the Archimedean Point from which then God and the world are brought back with great effort into thinking and thereby, finally, also into reality. But, epistemologically speaking, the thinking "I" remains the principal and center of the universe.

In the wake of the Enlightenment and of German Idealism the modern approach with the autonomous "I" of man was further developed in line with this. Immanuel Kant forwarded the Enlightenment essentially as a moral undertaking to "depart from self-made mental immaturity". His critical struggle is not simply or even primarily considered as the emancipation of thought from the bonds of traditional prejudices, but, rather, as the moral self-determination of the individual. In the name of freedom, all heteronomous influence upon moral decision is to be opposed. By virtue of his own practical reason, the "I" determines himself in autonomously setting the norms of his actions. Man is obligated solely to gain insight into the evidence of commands which appear reasonable corresponding to the categorical imperative. Descartes' epistemological anthropocentrism becomes moral anthropocentrism with Kant. In this context, divine commandments have, at best, only a propaedeutic and pedagogical function.

Kant's student Johann Gottlieb Fichte takes this a crucial step further in radicalizing the "I" philosophy of modernism to the extreme, namely, to the self-establishment of human existence as placement of the "I" opposite to the "Non-I", which, for his part, no longer exists as a placement of the

"I". The "I" has thereby become the absolute, the creator of all existent reality. God, nature, history, society, all reality can be traced by to the free productivity of the "I". With this universalization of the "I", modern anthropocentrism reached a unsurpassable highpoint in a quasi-apotheosis. All further intellectual and cultural developments of modern Anthropocentrism are only small distinctions and developments of this Modern-age claim for self. The ideal of the strong, self-confident individual turns out to be normative for all areas of life, whether in politics, business, art, or culture.

Fourth Reflection: A Model Study of How an Idea is Accepted As a Fundamental Change of Paradigms

The transition from theo-centric to anthropo-centric thinking presents a model with which the significance and effect of a paradigm change for theology can be studied with respect to culture and the history of philosophy. One could say that the new paradigm gains acceptance, as it were, in concentric circles. With Descartes, it begins with one of his epistemological questions (cogito ergo sum). This is continued by Kant in the area of practical moral behavior (freedom from all heteronomous divine commands), and becomes a universal model for all of human existence (Man creates himself) with Fichte. Students can learn through this process how a culture can be shaken in its foundations and changed by a new approach to thinking as well.

1.3. Post-Modern Individualism

The transition from the modern "I" philosophy to the Post-Modern "I" culture is very characteristic for the present intellectual situation. Post-Modernism radicalizes the Modernist subject to the atomized individual and dissolves it thus into oblivion. Man in his "I"-loneliness proves to be overburdened with the task of self-establishment and self-design, and enters the crisis of meaning found in nihilism and existentialism which will be discussed later.

The atomization of the individual in Post-Modernism is an expression of ego-centrism according to the motto: "every man for himself, against everybody else". The dance around the golden calf of self causes the cohesion of especially large institutions to break up. This affects political parties as well as trade unions and churches. The central question with respect to social structures is: "What does being a member of an institution

or cooperation in a certain organization do for me personally? The willingness to be socially involved becomes dependent upon individual and temporary calculated usefulness. Communal experiences become fragmented, and closely related to this is the unique explosion of the possibilities to choose from which, for the first time in history, sets the individual free to put the theoretical-philosophical concept of subjective self-realization into actual practice in society. The biographical design is determined neither by social status nor by an anonymous fate, but chosen by free-will. This lifting of barriers for the "I", of course, leads to also to an overabundance of possibilities which, for its part, makes the ambivalence of Post-Modern existence manifest. Post-Modern man can not only come up with his own design for himself, but he must also do it. He is, as Jean Paul Sartre put it, condemned to freedom. With this he bears the full risk of failure and thereby the whole burden of responsibility himself, in case he does not succeed. And so the fear arises of missing life, which is understood as a last opportunity in an almost secular-eschatological way. Because of this existential uncertainty, one tries to keep open as many options for as long as possible and lives, in a certain sense, "last minute". Besides this, the atomization of the individual is closely connected to the dissolution of pre-existing norms, whose only criterium is: "What is clear to me?".

Sociologically, the ethical disorientation of the Post-Modern contemporary is most clearly seen in the area of sexual ethics in view of individual concepts of relationships and crises in such. Beginning with the model of the so-called life phase partnerships, to the decision to be single, to the express desire to be single parents, and finally, to the "patchwork families", which children of different ex-partnerships live together. In fact, the urbanization of the modern world has done much to promote such socio-cultural forms of behavior in the Post-Modern Age. And so, for example, the anonymity of the big city provides a homosexual youth, who still perhaps feels like an outsider in his small hometown, all the freedoms to submerge into this kind of subculture.

Fifth Reflection: A Model Study of How the Radicalizing of An Approach to Thinking Can Lead to a Serious Crisis

The worsening of modern anthrocentristic thinking in Post-Modern individualism makes clear the

momentum, yet also the self-destructive power of a kind of thinking which has separated itself from God and His Word. The gift of God to man of being a free and independent individual is "damned to freedom" for Sartre. In the separation from God, social relationships are also abandoned. The individual is pushed into the loneliness of egotism and loses the capacity for responsible, loving fellowship. The study of Post-Modernism can concretely illustrate the fruits of such thinking.

1.4. A Theological Evaluation and Criticism of Post-Modern Individualism

How should one take theological responsibility in properly dealing with the phenomenon of Individualism? First of all, we can realize that society has no problem with the fact that there still is the subculture or milieu of the Church. Even church worship, with its relatively small attendance, is, in this context, just one of many subcultures in the whole society. This point was made quite clear to me in discussion with vicars of the Wuertemberg Lutheran Church. These young pastors argued, "Why should we really invest so much time and energy in the worship service which only perhaps three to five percent of the membership attends? All the other church members have the same right to us as pastors. Why, then, should we place the special event of the worship service so strongly into the center of our church work?" It is right that, as long as we, sociologically speaking, are only moving within the small milieu of church attenders, and so, established mainline church services are even de-facto just free-church worship services, because we are just reaching only a fraction of the population. And, as long as the churches are moving in this uncontested terrain which has been granted them, they also present no problem for the pluralistic society. The challenge for Post-Modernism first arises in the moment when the boundaries of the church are crossed to penetrate into other subcultures with missionary intent.

Sixth Reflection: Learning How to Deal with the Gift of Individuality

Characteristic of Biblical anthropology is, first of all, the positive view of the individual; an interesting comparison could be made here with the East Asian religions or Marxist-collectivist ideology. Modern individualism is basically rooted in the premises of Christian anthropology, yet it, as has been shown

above, perverts these.

Theological education offers then, especially in the context of a seminary, many different possibilities to exercise a healthy self-understanding in the balance between individual freedom connected to Christ, and loving responsibility for a fellowship. The possibility of individual development and integration in a fellowship at the same time is important for future service of the Church. This has to do with learning how to accept certain rules and authorities. If this is learned in seminary, it helps greatly in the service of the Church and presents a good Christian witness especially in a Post-Modern environment.

1.5. A Critical Assessment of Post-Modern Individualism within the Context of the History of Political Freedom

"No man is an island". No individual exists for himself, but is tied to larger social structures and political conditions of life. Therefore, the development of the history of ideas sketched in the previous sections can also presented and explained with relation to the history of political freedom.

In the Pre-Modern era, that is, until the end of the Middle Ages, there was a type of heavenly hierarchy which corresponded to society on earth. God was at the top of the pyramid with the angelic powers. People had their clearly defined social context in which they could develop individually only in a very limited way. The question of individual self-actualization had basically not yet been posed because each person, by reason of his birth, was already defined by divine predestination as having a very special role in society. In the Modern Age, this was turned around. In the struggle for individual fulfilment political freedom became increasingly relevant in the historical process. Thus, in 1789, in the wake of French Revolution, the "tiers état", the third class of the rising bourgeoisie, won through against the first two classes, namely, the nobility and the clergy. The bourgeoisie itself came to power and realized civil liberties.

It is noteworthy here that the Modern revolutions each had their respective specific range of promises. They tied themselves to a promise developed by a certain worldview. For the French Revolution, this was articulated in the triad of *liberté, égalité, fraternité* (liberty, equality, fraternity), which were given as a promise. The freedom of the individual, which, historically, the way for which had already been prepared for by the Enlightenment, was now being put into practice politically. Of course, later thinkers on the edge of the

Post-Modern Age, in looking back on the French Revolution, have clearly seen through the dialectic of the Enlightenment with its dangers and chasms. Theodor Adorno and Juergen Habermas make clear in their works that the emancipatory claim to truth of the Modern Age can also very easily lead to a new kind of absolutism. This becomes obvious in looking at the history of the effects of Hegel's philosophy who, as we saw at the beginning, wanted to penetrate reality in its immanent logic and lead to freedom in a universalistic way.

With Hegel, this was just something which all took place in the head, as was the case with philosophy of consciousness of all of German idealism. But, when Marx accepted this dialectic principle and applied it to concrete real politics, the whole thing ended tragically. The absolute claim to truth take from Hegel led necessarily by its inner logic to the catastrophe in the real existing socialism of Soviet provenance because history does not follow according to philosophical premises. The Marxist system could not longer be corrected, not least because of the context it was based upon. For since dialecticism should drive history forward in a very definite direction with scientific precision, its teleological development can no longer be revised. In the Leninist system, only the elite of the Communist cadre see into the process of history which they therefore claim to guide with infallible certainty. Habermas' and Adorno's dialectic of the Enlightenment must be considered as based on this background.

What we have experienced at the end of the 20th century is, in the meantime, the victory of the American model of the bourgeois revolution. Historically, the French Revolution and the intensive settlement of North America occurred at pretty much the same time. The American Declaration of Independence along with the Bill of Rights made possible the first realized democracy in the New World. Alexis de Tocqueville's classic work on "Democracy in America" is characterized by the enthusiasm of this epoch and portrays the early 19th century, describing the great possibilities for the free development of the individual. In a nation where, as opposed to old Europe, church and state are strictly separated, and in which everyone may live in the freedom of his faith, the most widely divergent forms of religious fellowships can live side by side. In spite of this strong individualism, a strong communal solidarity developed then in the United States at least at the local level. The optimism described by Tocqueville has continued to be fundamental for later Americans' feeling

about life even until today. Typical for the ever new feeling of pressing on one can read, for example, in the inaugural addresses of U.S. presidents John F. Kennedy and Bill Clinton. Both are borne by great enthusiasm. They live in the awareness of having a mission for this world, namely, to care for democracy, freedom, and human rights. Their promising cry is: "Make this world a better place to live!"

The basic feeling of Europeans at the end of the millennium was and still is different from that of Americans, which, in view of their respective forms of Post-Modernism, have grave effects. Europe has experienced the storm clouds of the apocalypse in the 20th century in manifold forms. Historical TV documentaries televised on the occasion of the turn of the century show with brunt force how terrible the first half of this century, in view of the horrible massacres, wars, liquidations, and expulsions, turned out for Europe. If you take into account the catastrophic history of the Third World with this, then there is little left in European Post-Modernism of the glad, hopeful feeling of life one found in Modernism and of the promise that the world will get better.

However, it would be a rash conclusion to reject completely the political history of freedom in its very different forms and processes from a Biblical-theological perspective. Firstly, though, it should be stated clearly that Post-Modern individualism has as its basic presupposition (precondition) modern political freedom (emancipation). And just as certainly as egotistical individualism must also be criticized theologically, so the Modernism's decision for human rights and thereby also for religious freedom and freedom of conscience must be greeted as theologically indispensable because the essence of the freedom of faith is deeply anchored in New Testament thought. The early Christian Church evangelized as a small diaspora congregation in a world critical of Christianity and increasingly hostile to it, and struggled for her future. Her message proved to be quite a dynamic power sociologically for ancient times, for example, in view of overcoming slavery. And the impetus of many of our European spiritual forefathers who emigrated to the U.S. for reasons of conscience, and not just for economic reasons, came from the idea of freedom. They wanted to be able to simply live out their faith freely in the New World. They had reflected on their courageous step of emigration within the horizon of the New Testament ideal of freedom, which was not without political

consequences. Just how important the question of religious freedom is can be seen clearly in Wolfhard Pannenberg's analysis of modern secularism. Pannenberg shows that secularism in Europe got its first major thrust as a result of the Thirty Years' War. Through the experience of politico-military intolerance the first great alienation of broad classes of the European population from the Christian faith occurred. Religious freedom is a prized treasure which evangelicals should also support politically. They should stand on the side of those who demand civil tolerance, and thus at the same time making a mark for the content of the Biblical message in doing their missionary preaching. The command to do missions virtually affirms the essence of the freedom of religion, which, according to the New Testament, is an indispensable part of the preaching of the Gospel, and does in no way do away with it.

Seventh Reflection: Learning to Think Discriminately (Making Critical Distinctions)

The fact that one intellectual development has led to disastrous mistakes should not lead theological education into falling into a black and white kind of thinking. Every heresy gains its attractiveness because it also contains elements of truth and good. Thinking discriminately (making critical distinctions) helps to distinguish between truth and error, according to the admonition to "test everything. Hold on to the good." (1 Thes. 5:21)

In view of our topic, "Modernity", this means that, for good reasons, even Christians do not want to do without the advances made in technology and medicine made possible by the European Enlightenment. The same is also true for the development of democracy and human rights which were not realized as such in the Pre-Modernism of the so-called Christian West. Theological education must provide a foundation for showing which impulses of modern thinking are compatible with the Bible and which are not. How can one affirm the certain positive potential of an approach to thinking and yet, at the same time, avoid its wrong developments with clear reasons?

2. The Relativizing of Truth: From Pre-Modern Certainty About Faith to Modern Autonomy of Reason and To Post-Modern Relativism

In the first section of our historical analysis we have sketched the way from Pre-Modern theocentricity to Modern Anthropocentricity to Post-Modern individualism. The succeeding sections are about showing the connection of Western Pre-Modern certainty about faith to the Modern autonomy of reason, and finally, to Post-Modern plurality of truth.

2.1. Pre-Modern Certainty About Faith

Pre-Modern times started with theology as the most important main university discipline. Theology was recognized not only in number, but also in principle as the first of the university disciplines at the universities founded in the High Middle Ages. Thomas Aquinas' *Prolegomena* to his *Summa Theologica* laid the foundation for theology as an traditional academic discipline. His method of argument is based on proofs from Scripture, Patristic quotes, and, finally, on ancient philosophy where Aristotle is given the prominent place as the quintessential philosopher. As to its subject matter, theology, therefore, lays claim to the foremost position among all academic disciplines and sciences because its knowledge goes beyond that of human reason (ratio). Aquinas, along with Medieval theology as a whole, considers reason (ratio) as definitely being a basic anthropological ability which is capable of penetrating reality and making knowledge about the inner world possible. But there it reaches its limits concerning knowledge of God and the way to salvation. Here, all academic and scientific efforts are dependent on theology with the light of revelation. In spite of this interplay between faith and knowledge, however, man at this time was still aware of human helplessness in view of the dangerous phenomena of nature, and quickly tended to relate unusual appearances with miracles. Scientific research remained basic and open at all times for supranaturalistic explanations.

Eighth Reflection: Showing the Freedom and Obligation of Faith for Theology

(Many of the didactic remarks explained in the first part of the paper can be applied by analogy to the second part.)

An Evangelical seminary assumes that one recognizes the authority of the Scriptures and, in part also, special church creeds in doing academic work. This, though, provides the foundation for a basically Pre-Modern world in a highly pluralistic Modern

and Post-Modern world. However, because this presupposition has been radically called into question by scholarly and philosophical criticism since the Enlightenment, the foundation of faith over against the Modern world must be grounded in theological education. This doesn't mean every Christian active in church has to be able to do this, but certainly every full-time preacher, teacher, counselor, or missionary who serves in the Church of Jesus Christ should. Regarding theological education, this requires a certain balancing act on the part of the teachers. On the one hand, it must remain clear that every theology teacher must be anchored in faith and Biblical teaching. The Evangelical teacher should not be a person who, as many liberal theologians are, is a representative of doubt and uncertainty, but, rather, help, and security. On the other hand, students should also, however, experience an atmosphere of intellectual freedom in which they may honestly and openly ask all questions which arise among them in the encounter with modern criticism. If this freedom is not allowed, then we are educating young people to be hypocrites and we are not helping them at all to overcome the problems of doubt in a Scriptural way. If they have not learned it at seminary for themselves, then they won't be able to help their church members who have temptations, nor can they really convince people of other religions or unbelievers of the message of Jesus.

2.2. Modern Autonomy of Reason

Modernism presents itself as an Enlightenment against traditional knowledge and science and supranaturalism, the triumph of pure reason. The metaphor of light is, interestingly enough, already implied in the term "Enlightenment". In the German term "Aufklärung" and the French "siècle des Lumières" the image of light also appears. The Age of the Light claims to overcome the dark Middle Ages with its traditional sciences, that is, with its dependency on literary authorities which had been wrong more than once. The Medieval university, according to the Enlightenment, could not really bring the truth to light with its presuppositions. Kant, though, called the Enlightenment "the breaking out of self-inflicted mental immaturity". The promising character of the Modern Age shines forth in this context as well: we will be able to penetrate everything with reason. The conviction of the 18th century was that reason could take you a lot further than Christian tradition. Finally, people posited the following simple idea: why shouldn't reason, if it has tried

true in temporal things, also not have the final word in the area of religion, regarding the ultimate questions of life? Kant's concept of a "Religion within the Bounds of Pure Reason" must be understood in this sense. Altogether, it deals with a comprehensive secular claim to truth with which theology is confronted much more critically.

In this context, the Enlightenment must be considered, of course, as an intellectual movement in Europe, and careful distinctions must be made, in spite of all things in common with which it changed Europe as a historical-ideological power. The French Enlightenment had an atheistic orientation through its connection to the French Revolution and thus stood in strict opposition to the Church. This attitude is summed up in a pointed way in Voltaire's dictum "Ecrasez l'infame", get rid of the infamy (outrageous), namely, the Church. The encyclopedists Diderot and d'Alembert fought against Christianity as empty madness.

In England, the Enlightenment was strongly influenced by Deism, the idea that, while there is a Creator God, He refrains completely from having to do with the world of history. Instead, deists looked for an early form of monotheism which presented the actual religious-philosophical concerns of the representatives of the English Enlightenment. They wanted to get behind the concrete positive religions to a common origin in order then to distill out the moral aspects in each one of the different positive religions. Miracles of nature, they argued, did not merit attention, but rather moral miracles must be aspired to. If people improve their character through education and moral renewal, then they are on the way to the true religion. This must be striven for as the religion of reason. The overall goal of the deists was to purify the Christian faith of all "unreasonable" ideas such as belief in miracles and to eliminate all dogmas offensive to reason such as that of Christology and the doctrine of the Trinity in order thereby to establish a universally applicable, morally-oriented religion of reason.

In contrast to the French and English Enlightenment, a "pious" Enlightenment developed in Germany at first which, in the sense of physical theology, strove to show the traces of divine omnipotence and omniscience in the events of nature as well as in the course of history. The hymns of Christian Fuerchtegott Gellert are representative of this piety movement positively influenced by the Enlightenment, which, at first, held

to the fundamental tenets of Christianity. In Gellert's hymns are spiritual and Biblically based lyrics in which the Enlightenment is brought as close as possible to the Christian faith, even though you can also tell that he is trying hard to penetrate the doctrine of faith from the standpoint of reason and morality.

In the course historical development of ideas in philosophy, science, and society, Protestant theology tried then to keep pace with Modernism in ever-new ideas of mediating theologies. A mediating theology, in this context, is understood as any effort to mold faith with the respective dominant philosophies or ideologies with regard to form and content in as unproblematic a way as possible. For the sake of truth in this, the missionary motive should not be overlooked which was often behind such approaches of mediating theologies. Modern theologies wanted to make it easier for their contemporaries to come to faith by getting rid of everything they thought to be offensive. In this context, of course, it soon became clear also that the process of accommodation to the respective dominant ideology of the day led to very different, even contradictory theological ideas in their basic structures. If we ask for a theological evaluation at the beginning of the 21st century, then it becomes quite apparent that Modernism, in the progress of the historical development of ideas, has taken on very many different forms. Along with this, the different philosophies and ideologies come and go in ever quicker time periods. And it is this very change of interpretive systems and their replacements which is, in itself, one of the most basic characteristics of the rise of Post-Modernism. The transition from Modernism to Post-Modernism is shown everywhere in a very diffuse way and can be separated only with great effort from its 'parent'.

Using my own terms I would like to explain in the following the intensive correlation between general cultural development and (Post)-Modern history of theology in their fluid overlap. The deep problems which are visible in this accommodation process will be shown along the way. The second half of the 20th century is practically a classic example for the susceptibility to ideologies and intellectual / spiritual self-destruction of Protestantism. We can look at the National Socialist ideology of the German Christians (*Deutsche Christen*) in the Thirties and Forties. After World War II came the hermeneutics of the existential interpretation by Rudolf Bultmann and his school under the influence of German and French Exis-

tentialism, combined with the program of demythologizing the New Testament. At the end of the Sixties and beginning of the Seventies with the political involvement of students, a Marxist-revolutionary oriented materialistic exegesis was used which was devoted to liberation theology. Yet, with time, political theology proved to be not enough spiritually because it did not accommodate the religious needs of man. Therefore, "spirituality for combat" was developed in the context of the 5th General Assembly of the World Council of Churches in 1975 in Nairobi. In the wake of the growing interest in a psychologically experienced reality of faith, German Catholic theologian Eugen Drewermann developed his turn to the exegesis of deep psychology which ultimately went hand in hand with the rediscovery of myth, and led to a remythologization of the religious in the sense of Carl-Gustav Jung. Today feminist theology has taken up into itself a multi-faceted spectrum of variation of Modernist as well as Post-Modernist mediating theologies. Ultimately behind these theological models which respective to certain eras of time is the fundamental conviction of Modernism that the autonomous object of reason is in the right against the claim of inspiration and can therefore put faith into different new forms. Despite all honorable good intentions which each stand behind these efforts to accommodate to the contemporary situation, the entire enterprise of modern theology has become a tragedy, and its problem is clearly demonstrated by Berthold Brecht's story about Mr. K.. Brecht relates:

"Mr. K. looked at a painting which gave some objects a very original, unconventional form. He said, 'In looking at the world, some artists are like many philosophers. In working on the form, the substance is lost.' I once worked for a gardener. He handed me a pair of hedge-clippers and told me to trim a laurel tree. The tree stood in a pot and was rented out for special occasions. Therefore, it had to be cone-shaped. I immediately began cutting off the wild branches, but, regardless of how hard I tried to get it into this cone shape, the more it wouldn't let me succeed in doing this. I had pruned away too much on several sides. When it finally took on the shape of a cone, the cone was very small. Disappointed, the gardener said to me, 'Well, it's a cone, but where is the laurel?'" (Berthold Brecht, *Form and Substance, Stories About Mr. K.*)

Ninth Reflection: The Importance of Discriminate Learning and Modelled Learning Examples

The differences between the character which the European Enlightenment in France, England, and Germany of the 18th century took on are an further interesting model for learning how to think critically in theological education. The same intellectual approach in thinking can, in different historical situations and with different cultural preconditions lead to very different consequences. The later is becoming increasingly true in a global world with adversely different cultures. Using as a thinking experiment how the acceptance of the rationalistic presuppositions of the Enlightenment in an Islamic, Hindu, or animistic culture would work and which effects this rationalism would have on the evangelization of such cultures can be a very fruitful theological exercise in a seminar class. It has been justifiably emphasized, especially by Evangelical theologians in the Third World, that dealing with the diverse theological ideas of the West such as Rudolf Bultmann, or Paul Tillich presents a senseless foreign infiltration into theological education. They say students should learn more about the intellectual conflict with their own cultural context. One can only agree with this demand. Of course, because of the strong influence of Western theology, the challenge remains of studying thoroughly the position of at least one of the most important liberal theologians of the Modern Age. As senseless as it is to work on all of modern theology, it is just as helpful to require in education work on the individual representatives of this theology as models for intellectual analysis. If the student has understood and thought through this example of liberal theology, he can also see through other theologies and overcome them biblically.

2.3. The Post-Modern Relativization of the Question of Truth

The specifically post-modern lies in the identity crisis of modernism, whose claims to a comprehensive universal truth of reason have not stopped. The passionate conflict for absolute truth was characteristic for the transition from the Pre-Modern to Modernism. It is exactly this struggle for the truth which Post-Modernism has given up, in part, out of resignation, in part because of agnosticism. Either one has let fall the possibility of being able to know a universally and eternally valid truth or one starts quietly from its non-existence. This characteristic of "quietness" is important

for the intellectual situation of Post-Modernism. One goes on over in an unspectacular way to the pragmatic handling of daily business and lets the question of truth alone. A discussion of it seems meaningless and fruitless. Everyone may maintain whatever his own individual truths and ethical values are for himself and may live them out in the context of his particular submilieau. But this has no relevance for the public at large. In a pluralistic society there can be no normative worldview monopoly or interpretative authorities binding on all. Politically, this demand is indispensable and inalienable for a democratic state. But Post-Modern man interprets, as we have said earlier, the idea of tolerance basically agnostically, that is, as the abolition of any universal claim to truth.

The French philosopher Jean-Francois Leyotard, who, along with his countrymen Foucault and Derrida was one of the main proponents of philosophical Post-Modernism, starts out basically with the criticism of the so-called meta-stories. In view of the classical meta-stories of Judaism and Christianity, but even that of Marxism, one takes as a starting point that these stories, with their teleologically oriented interpretations of history, are no longer trustworthy. Their ideas are therefore replaced by much more modest stories of a biographical or group-specific nature. The universal span from the Garden of Eden across a centuries long history of salvation to the eschatological Kingdom of God is filed away just like the Communist view of history. The latter view leads from a early society without property to a series of economically based revolutions as dialectical processes finally to a classless society.

The presumed failure of all great concepts of history is a characteristic of Post-Modernism and redounds the relativizing of the question of truth. The experience of the immanent self-dissolution of reason is tied to this. In the context of central philosophical questions such as what, namely, reason was able to accomplish, even Kant realized that certain unavoidable questions still pressed man, such as "Where am I from?", "Where am I going?", "What should I do?", "What may I hope for?". These classical questions are impressed on the individual. In his analysis of the human ability to attain knowledge, Kant realized, however, then, in view of the power of pure reason, that answering these questions is impossible in the realm of empirical knowledge, or science. One can find no answer to the elementary basic questions of the transcendence of human existence and human

hopes on the basis of pure reason. Therefore, with respect to the questions of meaning and existence, Kant takes the path to individual inner reflection and morality, man's private spheres. By virtue of his analysis of practical reason he looks for and finds in the process of stating the questions the elementary values of freedom, immortality of the soul, and God. Yet, these matters cannot be known, but the individual can definitely gain them subjectively in practicing his reasonable religious faith. In the result of this faith in reason, there is still no basis for certainty which would be comparable to that of empirical experiences or logical deductions. The postulations of practical reason deal with the reasonable, yet ultimately fictitious boundary limits of being which are set in order to solve the existential riddles in this way satisfactory to the intellect.

Romanticism's distinguishing of itself from the Enlightenment is very instructive and in our context is interesting historically for the critical relationship between Modernism and Post-Modernism. The Berlin Romantics like the Schlegel Brothers, Novalis, and even Schleiermacher felt very uncomfortable towards the cold rationality and civil morality in the 18th century Enlightenment philosophy handed down to them. Claiming to put feeling, artistic intuition, ingenious creativity, and mystical religiosity back into their rightful place, and to elevate them as the central matter of spiritual / intellectual life, the Romantics rejected the encompassing claim of validity of pure reason just as decisively as rationalism had done in its time to the basic tenets of faith of orthodox supranaturalism. Sociologically, there are also some surprising parallels between the 19th century Romantics and the Post-Modernism of our day for example, with respect to the lifestyles and the very complicated relationships between the sexes.

The Neo-Kantians at the juncture between the 19th and 20th centuries and the philosophers of critical rationalism and analytical philosophy have thus created in some respects a similar starting point for Post-Modernism just as the Enlightenment of Kantian provenance had done for Romanticism. Ludwig Wittgenstein emphasizes at the end of his famous *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* the failure of the rational basis for the world and meaning in classical philosophy when he writes:

"The right method of philosophy would be this: To say nothing except what can be said, i.e. the propositions of natural science,

i.e. something that has nothing to do with philosophy: and then always, when someone else wished to say something metaphysical, to demonstrate to him that he had given no meaning to certain signs in his propositions. This method would be unsatisfying to the other-he would not have the feeling that we were teaching him philosophy-but it would be the only strictly correct method."¹

Consistent with this Wittgenstein ends his analysis then also with laconic seventh sentence of the tractate: "Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent."² But, this keeping "quiet about" is painfully related to the whole area of questions which press man, as Kant has correctly shown. Man cannot solve this problem using his reason. The solution Kant himself suggested as the postulate of practical reason is, however, so fragmented and fictitious that it is unconvincing and led ultimately to the agnosticism of analytic philosophers such as Wittgenstein and others. In this respect many Post-Modern philosophers are in a similar basic intellectual situation as the Romantics were almost 200 years ago.

In this century, American philosophers have gone in another direction of thinking, just as the Romantics did. For example, William James, one of the founders of American pragmatism, began as a psychologist and wrote a book significant for the psychology of religion entitled "The Variety of Religious Experience". In this work he studies authentic testimonies of conversions, miracle stories, and other religious experiences and compares these to one another psychologically. James assumes as his starting point that such experiences are comparable in principle. He therefore does not take up the problem of the substantive question of truth and does not even want to decide it. With respect to matters of faith, only his work "The Will to Believe" is important. This is each respective subjective preconceived conviction, which I want to admit to and from which I also refuse to let go of. This pragmatically determined truth has its relative justification as my subjective truth, but it, of course, cannot lay claim to any universal validity.

Post-Modernism, in general, the juxtaposition of religious claims to truth, is subject to such subjective will. Just like in a supermarket, every consumer in a pluralistic society can serve himself religiously under the motto "Myths in bags". A "pick and choose mentality" as in supermarkets is dominant which allows everyone to stock up

on salvation articles according to each person's respective individual religious needs, whether it is Christianity or esoteric religions, magic or mysticism, resurrection hope or concepts of reincarnation. Take whatever you like, everything is available.

Tenth Reflection:

The relativizing of truth has never been a pedagogical concept. Just as one cannot educate a small child in an intellectual vacuum without diverse decisions made by parents beforehand, so the question of truth can also not be left open for a long time in an open society. Man is created for the knowledge of truth and he will find inner peace only when he has attained certainty of the truth. Therefore, the foundation of a theological seminary with regard to content in the clear and unambiguously defined truth of faith as a precondition for a successful education is absolutely necessary.

2.4. The Importance of Theological Apologetics in Overcoming Relativism

The elimination of questions of truth with the uncertainty that comes with it has also directly affected us as theologians. Therefore, I would like to make a strong appeal for work in apologetics, remembering the work of German theologian Karl Heim (1874-1958) in this area. In 1905 as the then representative of the German Christian Students' Association in Wernigerode, Thuringia, Germany, he gave an interesting lecture on the topic "Are Unsolved Questions a Hindrance to Faith?". He starts out from the fact that the critical questions of science at that time, especially those of brain psychology and the theory of evolution, but also even the problems of historical-critical exegesis of the Bible presented massive problems of doubt among Christian students. Therefore, he demanded that we do work in apologetics in order to do more effective counselling. Apologetics does not just have its importance as a systematic-theological discipline in the intellectual confrontation with philosophy and the sciences, but also as a discipline of practical theology. It is a matter of responsible counseling of people who have fallen prey to doubt. And so in his lecture Heim applies Jesus' parable of the Good Samaritan (Lk 10: 25-37) in a new way. Like the traveller who has fallen among thieves and is saved by the merciful Samaritan, so the believer needs counselling help in thinking when he falls into doubt.

Based on these thoughts of Heim, I would like to make a remark regarding the present situation of theological education among Evangelicals. My impression is that Evangelical colleges and seminaries by and large stayed on course in view of the challenges of Modernism and Post-Modernity with respect to hermeneutics. In the conflict with mediating ideologies and philosophies we have not allowed ourselves to be corrupted in biblical exegesis, but, rather, have asked, which method of hermeneutics can be derived from the Scriptures themselves? The necessary foundation of biblical hermeneutics has been the primary apologetic goal. Where we certainly have had greater difficulties, because we are caught up in the wake of our own culture, is the comprehensive philosophical debate with the thinking of the Modern Age and currently with that of Post-Modernity. In a multiform pluralistic society which relativizes the question of truth from the very start, a higher and more comprehensive apologetic ability is needed. There is a demand for competence in advancing arguments with respect to systematic theology as well as for the ability to carry on dialogue with respect to practical theology.

I would like to now explain using three examples from the history of philosophy how this apologetic task can be performed. They are from modern philosophers who represent the thinking of Modernism and who each stand opposite to a philosopher who is arguing as a believing Christian. We must consider that, with respect to the substance of their arguments, the apologists of the faith present to their "Modern" discussion partners aspects which, in part, anticipate Post-Modern positions. The current theological debate called for cannot, therefore, simply take over the arguments posited here but must already take into consideration the position of the discussion in the light of Post-Modernity. My interest here, then, in view of the very sophisticated intellectual questions of debate, is more in the exemplary ability to do critical dialogue and in the model way of thinking. I will now give brief concrete examples.

The first example is that of the Frenchman Blaise Pascal who opposed his rationalistic countryman René Descartes (16th-17th centuries), pointing out the fundamental necessity of distinguishing between the "raisons de la raison" (the reasons of reason) and the "raisons du coeur" (reasons of the heart). As a mathematician, Pascal referred to different dimensions of thought which belong to different structures of thinking as well as to different

areas of being. They also lead, therefore, to types of certainty which must be differentiated.

Secondly, two Koenigsberg (Germany) philosophers stand opposed to one another, namely, Immanuel Kant and Johann Georg Hamann (18th century). Hamann appeals to the "veritas hebraica" (the Hebrew concept of truth), that is truth as determined by and with respect to a person. Kant, in his epistemological criticism, had tried to show "pure reason", so to speak, as the distillation beyond all historical, linguistic, or even personal forms of determinedness. He was concerned with the ability to achieve absolute objectivity of thinking and thereby, to claim the universal validity of the results of thinking. Hamann proved that a pure form of reason so isolatable from all biographical influences does not exist. Instead, thinking is, in the Biblical sense, integrated in the personal covenantal faithfulness of God, in the "emuna", which, therefore, can only be a personally founded and responsible truth.

Finally, Soren Kierkegaard (19th century) developed his "Philosophical Fragments", a book title which characterizes the whole intention of his thought, in conscious contradiction to Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel. Kierkegaard decidedly opposed the all-encompassing claim of Hegel's system who, with his dialectical analysis of the historical process, endeavored to penetrate the universality of all reality and to show it as necessary for reason. Kierkegaard, completely modest, wanted to oppose this with his analysis of existence as a philosophical fragment. In view of his fear and despair, the individual must attempt the leap of faith into a personal encounter with Christ in order first really and truly to win his existence.

Eleventh Reflection: The Importance of Apologetics in Theological Education

Because of their spiritual heritage, Evangelical theologians tend to think that a thorough education in Biblical exegesis is enough to qualify one as a theologian. But it is, in fact, the missionary orientation of the Evangelical movement which points to the great importance of apologetics. Christian apologetics tries to understand the thinking of a non-Christian discussion partner, the open questions of his world view, and to connect the message of the Gospel to it. Work in apologetics, which calls for solid faith as well as the openness of a love which seeks, is thereby the directly missionary dimension in theological education.

3. From the Pre-Modern Christian West to the Problems of People in the Modern Age to the Crisis of Meaning in Post-Modernity

In the third and final part of our brief analysis of the way from Modernism to Post-Modernism I would like to show how the atomization of self in Post-Modern individualism and the elimination of the question of truth have led to a comprehensive and far-reaching existential crisis of meaning.

3.1. The Socio-Cultural Changes of the Time-Space Experience

The processes present in the history of idea which are shown here are connected to two socio-cultural basic conditions which are indispensable preconditions for the Post-Modern situation and its feeling of being alive, namely, the compression of time and the acceleration of time. Because time and space as epistemological forms of observable experience first make it possible at all, and, at the same time, they make up our existence as an ontological continuum, the existential paradigm change of Modernism as well as Post-Modernity is directly connected to the change of both of these basic dimensions.

3.1.1. The Compression and Unbounding of Space

The *stabilitas loci*, the clearly defined and also the principally defining stability of spatial relationships is characteristic of the Pre-Modern Age. The *orbs christianus* as the clear realm of Western culture provided both for the ancient Mediterranean world as well as for the Germanic and Slavic peoples north of the Alps a geographical context for life preserved for many centuries. This was blown apart though in the 16th and 17th centuries, in the age of the discoveries. With the discovery of the two American continents, the circumnavigation of Africa, and the advance to East Asia including the Pacific and finally Australia, the truly global dimensions of our planet first came into view. Humanity as a whole created with the diversity of its languages, customs, and artistic and religious traditions the preconditions of modern cosmopolitan and multi-cultural consciousness.

The cosmic problem of modern man is tied in terms of epochs to the experience of completely different cultures. Not only were new continents discovered one right the other during this time, the window to an endlessly far universe was

cracked open by astronomy. The old world meant for pre-modern man an uncontested, spatial center of the universe, which as such, not only served as home and protection, but, at the same time, was the exclusive scene of redemptive history. Now, it turned out to be a tiny planet rotating in a very marginal solar system somewhere among millions of other galaxies. Man thus became, in the words of Jacques Monod, "a gypsy in a remote corner of the universe", a cosmic orphan.

The lifting of both bounds of space in the Modern Age should be summarized in their extensive destabilizing effect: for one, the whole astrophysical emptiness of our world falls upon man, which arouses a basic feeling of lostness in an unending, cold, and largely empty space universe. The other is that one becomes increasingly aware of the relativity of one's own worldview when cultures meet after a long and intensive phase of the feeling of colonial superiority. The opening of boundaries through astronomy and the global condensation of space create at the same time the typical feeling of homelessness in post-modern contemporary man as a world citizen, who is looking for his way between unbounded freedom and the plague of the void of meaning.

3.1.2. *The Acceleration of Time*

The experience of the acceleration of time is directly related to the condensation and unbounding of space. A look in the Deutsches Museum in Munich or in the British Museum in London makes the process of scientific-technological acceleration clearly obvious. After the development of civilization had advanced quite slowly after very long periods up to the beginning of the Modern Age, a powerful and, subsequent push for innovation began with this age. The weight of the leading sciences moved from mechanics at first to physics, then, in general, to chemistry, and finally to biology. But it has led to groundbreaking changes in all areas of life. In the meantime, the half-lives, in which the entire body of man's knowledge doubles, turn out to be shorter and shorter all the time. The process of modernization has accelerated so much that it can hardly be understood anymore individually, which raises the basic feeling of fear of the uncontrollable new. In this unclarity of the Modern Age lies an important root of Post-Modern skepticism, which is more than the rejection of technological advancement by protest parties such as, for example, the Green Party.

To clearly depict the change shown here I need only to be reminded of the processes of acceleration at work during the lifespan of my grandfather. Born in 1876, he fled as a school boy to the ditches along the streets with his friends when they saw the first bicyclists ride through their home village. When he died at the age of 93, he had experienced during his lifetime via television the first Sputnik orbit, space technology, and the threat of nuclear weapons. In the intercontinental speed of modern mobility and the global networking of communication forms the acceleration of time confronts us permanently and turns this world really into the "global village". When I began my ministry at the Bengel-Haus more than 10 years ago, the rhythm of the day to day business in the office was still set by the arrival of the good old correspondence by letters ("snail mail", as it is called today). Today this rhythm has been replaced by the hectic pace of permanent reachable contact by fax, e-mail, and cell phone. The seemingly unstoppable development of the scientific-technological acceleration of the make up of time is causing, at the same time, along with all the justifiable optimism in view of the progress, a fear of civilization which is accompanying the light of the enlightenment like a dark shadow, because of the rapid changes. The ambivalence of the Modern mood of new progress and Post-Modern resignation, in view of the spirits which one called down upon oneself and set loose, characterizes the feeling about life at the turn of the millennium, because the Twentieth century we are now leaving behind has been marked by absolutely contradictory experiences. On the one hand, an historically unique improvement of life conditions such as health, life expectancy, comfort, etc., has appeared which the Spanish philosopher Ortega y Gasset describes as "the revolt of the masses", in their sharing almost all the privileges of the former elite. The participation in the advantages of civilization has become possible by its spread of technology. On the other hand, though, the Twentieth century as a century has been the stage of the most terrible tragedies through wars, refugees, mass expulsions, and environmental catastrophies, all attached to the symbolic words Holocaust, Hiroshima, and Chernobyl. A Post-Modern messenger of these ambivalent experiences is reflected in a kind of "Prinzessin auf der Erbse" (Princess on the Pea) effect which philosopher Odo Marquard of Giessen defined to the effect that Western society, in its efforts to eliminate all possible causes of suffering, is becoming

ing at the same time more and more sensitive to the last remaining stocks of the same. (The fairytale "Prinzessin auf der Erbse" is about the suffering of a spoiled princess who cannot sleep at night because she feels disturbed by a hard object. Though only a tiny pea is hidden underneath her mattress, for reasons of comfort, she asks for more and more soft blankets to be laid on her bed. Yet, she has become so sensitive that she still feels her sleep is disturbed by a single pea.)

3.1.3. Coping with the (Post)-Modern Crisis of Time and Space Theologically

First of all, the acceleration of time corresponds to certain apocalyptic perspectives of the New Testament as the announcement of end times' phenomena is characterized by the terms "in short", "soon", "having little time", etc. The seemingly steady stream of time is sped up at its end. Yet, Christ still remains the Lord of time because He is the Lord of Eternity. He also determines the accelerated process of end-times events and shortens for his part the time of tribulations and persecutions. In this sense He gives the assurance that "my time is in your hands" (Psalm 31:16) and thereby that He has superiority over time. In view of global mass communication and the increasingly shorter half-lives in the doubling of knowledge it is existentially important to have a spiritual center. Christians in general and theologians in particular must find their roots in getting to know and meditating on the Scriptures which give orientation and security in the accelerating flood of information. In view of permanent change divine revelation means concentrating life and thought on the most essential. In knowing what will happen at the end, wisdom is important in dealing with the next to last things.

The hurt which modern man experienced through the astronomical research of Galileo Galilei in view of the spatial destabilization of his existence is put into a new light which provides meaning by the Biblical teaching of covenant election. The geo-centric view of the world was posited as logically necessary in pre-Modern theology by reason of the unique position of man in the whole of creation and redemptive history. The central position in the cosmos must befit man as the crown of creation as well as the planet Earth as the stage of Biblical redemptive history and the history of the Church proceeding from it. This theological prejudice was based on the deepest human conviction that divine election was expressed in a dominant

and prominent, astrologically-fixed positioning of the Earth in space. However, looking at the criteria of divine election in Scripture makes it quickly clear that God bestows His incomprehensible love on the lowly and despised. This is true with respect to Israel as the lowliest among the peoples as well as the Christian Church, which do not belong to the high and mighty of this world. This is the same respecting God's elective grace to individual prominent figures of redemptive history such as Abraham, David, Paul, etc. It is thereby implicitly underscored that our planet as a tiny grain of dust at the edge of an unendingly vast universe has just exactly the position in the creation correspondent to it. The incomprehensible relativity of the world in the physical cosmos corresponds theologically to its unique election as the place of God's revelation.

The reduction of our world to a "global village" with all the challenges of a multi-cultural society resulting from it runs against, finally, the nature of the Church and her commission. Christ has placed His disciples of all nations in a global fellowship of diaspora congregations and sends them to all peoples with the Great Commission. The spiritual ecumenicity of the Church of Jesus Christ corresponds by nature with the international scope of her mission. Globalization at the threshold of the third millennium after Christ's birth compresses the modern experience of space in the sense of the intensifying of the mission.

Twelfth Reflection: The Importance of the Scriptures as the Intellectual / Spiritual Center of All Theology

Because missions have gained completely new horizons in a global world society which has become relativistic, the apologetic task of theology has become almost boundless so that the question of the real core of theological studies plays an increasing role. We have already referred several times to the function of learning, using models. Because our world has become so complex and multilayered, the danger is quite easy for students to lose themselves in the boundlessness of the teaching material. It is impossible to become completely acquainted with all religions, philosophies, and theological ideas. In the Information Age, it is important to have a strong intellectual center for studies. The Scriptures are this for us. In the inflation of words, we ask for the one eternally true word. "Blessed is the man . . . his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night." (Psalm 1:1-2). The study of theology

must be structured according to a hierarchy of priorities. Therefore, in the center of studies must be the very intensive study of the entire New Testament for all students, then the thorough and broad knowledge of the Old Testament, next, the foundational creeds and documents from church history, followed by solid knowledge of some conservative, Biblical theological systems. Only thereafter comes the acquaintance with a liberal method using models showing its consequences. Finally, besides basic overview knowledge in philosophy and comparative religions, knowledge of the most important cultural influences of the geographic area is also important where one will later serve as a pastor or evangelist. Theological studies which are not clearly structured in their curricula in a hierarchial way lose themselves either in all kinds of things, that is, they have no real organizing center of knowledge, and fundamental deficits will show up in later practice. Connection of theoretical knowledge to the abilities needed for practical service should be guaranteed by close dovetailing of academic education with practical phases of proper length and well-guided supervision.

3.2. Dionysan Nihilism In View of Post-Modern Absurdity

Arthur Schopenhauer founded a kind of pessimistic nihilism based on the primary religions of East Asia which saw the fundamental human task as having compassion on all creatures. His philosophy of life, "The World As Will and Perception", was intended to affect Enlightenment rationalism as well as the idealism of the Modern Age, and thus it may have supported the rise of the Post-Modern period. Friedrich Nietzsche took up this vitalistic idea too, yet make more radically into an absolutely Dionysan concept of world mastery and world pleasure. His nihilism presumes modern atheism as the cold-blooded murder of God and bases the re-evaluation of all values on this horrible act. Compassion becomes the mere resentment which the weak implant on the strong on the detour of Christian socialization, thereby corrupting life itself. And so, in Nietzsche's opinion, the West has been cheated out of the fruits of the ancient pre-Christian pagan world. For this reason, Nietzsche announces the Post-Modern Age in a poetic hymn. The end of all the foundations of Pre-Modernism and Modernism is prophesied with prophetic pathos in Nietzsche's work, *The Gay Science*.

The madman. – Have you not heard of that

madman who lit the lantern in the bright morning hours, ran to the marketplace, and cried incessantly: 'I seek God! I seek God!' – As many of those who did not believe in God were standing around just then, he provoked much laughter. Has he got lost? asked one. Did he lose his way like a child? asked another. Or is he hiding? Is he afraid of us? Has he gone on a voyage? emigrated? – Thus they yelled and laughed.

The madman jumped into their midst and pierced them with his eyes. 'Whither is God?' he cried; 'I will tell you. *We killed him* – you and I. All of us are his murderers. But how did we do this? How could we drink up the sea? Who gave us the sponge to wipe away the entire horizon? What were we doing when we unchained this earth from its sun? Whither is it moving now? Whither are we moving? Away from all suns? Are we not plunging continually? Backward, sideward, forward, in all directions? Is there still any up or down? Are we not straying as through an infinite nothing? Do we not feel the breath of empty space? Has it not become colder? Is not night continually closing in on us? Do we not need to light lanterns in the morning? Do we hear nothing as yet of the voice of the gravediggers who are burying God? Do we smell nothing as yet of the divine decomposition? Gods, too, decompose. God is dead. God remains dead. And we have killed him.

How shall we comfort ourselves, the murderers of all murderers? What was holiest and mightiest of all that the world has yet owned has bled to death under our knives: who will wipe this blood off us? What water is there for us to clean ourselves? What festivals of atonement, what sacred games shall we have to invent? Is not the greatness of this deed too great for us? Must we ourselves not become gods simply to appear worthy of it? There has never been a great deed; and whoever is born after us-for the sake of this deed he will belong to a higher history than all history hitherto.'

Here the madman fell silent and looked again at his listeners and they, too, were silent and stared at him in astonishment. At last he threw his lantern on the ground, and it broke into pieces and went out. 'I have come too early,' he said then 'my time is not yet. This tremendous event is still on its way still wandering; it has not yet reached the ears of men. Lightning and thunder require time; the light of the stars

requires time; deeds, though done, still require time to be seen and heard. This deed is still more distant from them than the most distant stars – *and yet they have done it themselves.*’

It has been related further that on the same day the madman forced his way into several churches and there struck up his *requiem aeternam deo*. Led out and called to account he is said always to have replied nothing but: ‘What after all are these churches not if they are not the tombs and sepulchers of God?’

This text, with the poetic force of his Dionysian nihilism, can almost be read as the Post-Modern Manifesto. The madness of the insane person who has gotten rid of God and raised up himself as God in an anti-Christian attitude and thereby lifted all cosmic bounds and moral restrictions, has appeared several times in the 20th century. The Post-Modern promise praised by Nietzsche and a product of his foolhardy optimism, has, in the meantime, shown itself to be an illusory ideology in the numerous historical catastrophes of the age. The high of Dionysus is not just followed by a kind of civilization hangover, but, rather, by the historical and human traumas of Auschwitz, Hiroshima, and Chernobyl with their absolute crises of meaning. It is not entirely erroneous that Adolf Hitler had a place of worship erected for Friedrich Nietzsche in Weimar and even visited it quite often. He had the Buchenwald concentration camp built near Weimar.

In the Fifties and Sixties Post-Modern despair experienced a new flowering of nihilism, especially in the form of French existential philosophy, which came about by going back to ancient mythology and in light of the conditions of life in the presently existing Modern Age. Jean-Paul Sartre describes ‘nausea’ as a basic existing condition of man confronted with himself, the shock of existence as a result of the human nihilistic poisoning of self. His countryman Albert Camus agrees in principle with this shattering diagnosis, yet breaks through evident absurdity with unconditional atheism by allowing the defiant Sisyphus to appear against all despair in daring rebellion.

In Camus’ philosophy of existence, we get a look modern man’s unsolvable problem, namely, the resigned self-despair about the virtually unsolvable basic situation of man worked out savagely in modern philosophy. Camus remarks in his “The Myth of Sisyphus”,

“You have already grasped that Sisyphus is the

absurd hero. He is, as much through his passions as through his toriture. His scorn of the gods, his hatred of death, and his passion for life won him that unspeakable penalty in which the whole being is exerted toward accomplishing nothing. This is the price that must be paid for the passions of this earth. Nothing is told us about Sisyphus in the underworld. Myths are made for the imagination to breathe life into them. As for this myth, one sees merely the whole effort of a body straining to raise the huge stone, to roll it and push it up a slope a hundred times over; one sees the face screwed up, the cheek tight against the stone, the shoulder bracing the clay covered mass, the foot wedging it, the fresh start with arms outstretched, the wholly human security of two earth-clotted hands. At the very end of his long effort measured by skyless space and time without depth, the purpose is achieved. Then Sisyphus watches the stone rush down in a few moments toward that lower world whence he will have to push it up again toward the summit. He goes back down to the plain.”⁴

Here, man, in his basic situation and longing, is thrust back completely onto the physical world. Hopelessness is experienced as absolute absurdity in which reason and experience in the world, the desire for happiness, and powerless subjection to reality can not longer be conveyed, and therefore, every independent idea remains open and arbitrary. Post-Modernism has come into this inheritance. The other side of the existential experience of self, according to Camus, consists, then, as has already been alluded to, of human transcendence as a defiant revolt against fate. In accepting the absurd, man confronts his true self and gains the daring power to resist, which is reminiscent of Nietzsche’s world-affirming nihilism. This is the reason for all of Sisyphus’ secret joy:

“I leave Sisyphus at the foot of the mountain! One always finds one’s burden again. But Sisyphus teaches the higher fidelity that negates the gods and raises rocks. He too concludes that all is well. This universe henceforth without a master seems to him neither sterile nor futile. Each atom of that stone, each mineral flake of that night-filled mountain, in itself forms a world. The struggle itself toward the heights is enough to fill a man’s heart. One must imagine Sisyphus happy.”⁵

Post-Modernism does with Camus’ exalted

heroism and continues on through the absolute world less in proud awareness, and more in numb pragmatism. Post-Modernism considers all lofty ideas to be unnecessary and mere emotional hybris which brings little help to the insanity of daily life. People look for a small bit of happiness only for themselves which everyone may realize just as one pleases. The Modern crisis of existence, therefore, reaches a state of decay in Post-Modernism, whose fragments are used by each person to make up his own provisional world. Sisyphus is less like a rebel in this world than a drunkard. It may be justifiably doubted that this person, when he wakes up, can be imagined as a happy person.

Thirteenth Reflection: The Fruit of the Absurd and the Gift of Truth

Post-Modern relativizing of truth is suited for studying the result of a fundamentally unbiblical way of thinking in its radicalization. Modernity's belief in reason is led ad absurdum through Post-Modernity. At the end of this historical process reason cancels itself out in irrationality, emotionalism, or in pragmatism. In today's Western world, Post-Modernity is seen as the dominant cultural reaction to Modernity. Man cannot, however, live forever in a realm of total absurdity. In view of this situation it should be even more clear in theological education what a gift it is to have truth from the outside, that is, from God's revelation. "The truth will make you free." (John 8:32) The meaning of these words of Jesus can be shown quite clearly in the history of Western philosophy and ideas.

3.3. Christian Faith and Hope Overcome the Post-Modern Crisis of Existence

What is our calling as Evangelical theologians in view of an environment that argues from an agnostic standpoint? Firstly, there are some important aspects to the disillusionment apparent today in the wake of positivism and the analytical philosophy of language. The exegesis of the Pauline epistles, especially Romans and First Corinthians, as well as the study of the Reformation have helped me a lot in connection with this. Using Scripture, and, contradicting the theology of the Late Medieval period, Luther discovered that is impossible for fallen man to save himself by good works. We find salvation only by God's grace, not by moral effort. God justifies the sinner for the sake of the suffering and death of Christ. Christ alone brings reconciliation. This is the message of Romans especially. Parallel to this, it is important now in

our modern world to be aware of the corresponding truth regarding the theory of knowledge of the first two chapters of First Corinthians. According to Paul, it is not only impossible to redeem man through his own moral abilities, but it is also illusory to want to find a definite certainty with regard to the ultimate question of man by means of pure reason. While it is true that man, being in the image of God, is characterized especially by his ability to will and to think, after the Fall, however, both of these basic human possibilities of the will and reason are no longer sufficient to restore the broken relationship between God and man. By pure reason alone man cannot find any certainty regarding faith in any worldview. In spite of this inability, as a spiritual/intellectual being, he is dependent upon a reliable foundation for his life. Therefore, the tragedy of the "animal rationale", as Thomas Aquinas defined man, is that even that strength of intellectual talent is not able to deal with and overcome the problem of human misery "east of Eden". At the beginning of the Modern Age, none less than Blaise Pascal spoke with great clarity and insight about the limitations of our rational understanding in his "Pensées".

It is, therefore, only through God's grace when a person, who, by nature, is entangled in agnosticism, finds a solid basis for his life through the gift of faith. Luther expressed this in an incomparably terse and precise way in his Shorter Catechism:

"I believe that I cannot come to believe in my Lord Jesus Christ on my own intelligence or power, but the Holy Spirit has called me through the Gospel . . ."

In view of the fact that hedonism has become the most influential Post-Modern worldview, we should confront modern man anew with the historical reality of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. In our world of facts, no one may expect that people believe on the basis of myths or just symbols to deal with the difficult experience of death. In view of the problems of human misery, sickness, and death you cannot preach salvation and man's ultimate completion simply in a metaphorical fashion. If you wish to do something about reality, you can only do it by confronting the fact of this world with other facts. Therefore, Paul's method of argument in First Corinthians 15:1-8 is also still very important. Only the historical facticity of the resurrection has the power to move people to seek the risen Christ who is still alive today.

Only people who are not moved by the fear of

death can resist the temptations of our hedonistic society. The conviction Paul expresses in Romans 8:16 enables and encourages Christians to give their lives for their neighbours: "I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us." This hope makes a person open to sharing earthly possessions with the poor. It makes one ready to give of one's own time and energy to those who need spiritual counsel and practical help.

The martyrs of the early Church called into question the Hellenistic world of their day with its speculations about the immortality of the soul through the concrete hope of the resurrection of the dead. I am convinced that we as Christians in our modern world must totally rethink through who we preach the contents of eschatological hope in a concrete way. We should have renewed courage in preaching the Biblical message of Judgement Day without reservations, the promise of eternal life as well as eternal punishment. Only in this way can we gain the real historical context in which the coming Kingdom of God can be proclaimed and demonstrated as relevant and evident. The horizon of time must be discovered anew sub specie aeternitatis.

3.4. Perspectives for Renewal

In the context of the tremendous changes we have experienced in our world since the late Eighties of the 20th century, I am reminded, finally, of an event which took place in 1969. During the period of student unrest in Western Europe a so-called "go in" was organized by students during the German Lutheran Church Convention in Stuttgart as an event in a auditorium with 6,000 people. They unveiled a giant banner where everyone could read the words "Jesus is dead. Marx is alive!". This event was a typical phenomenon for modern secularism. In view of this provocation, Christians then had to ask themselves whether there was still a chance of evangelizing in a Europe defined by socialist utopias. Today, after the collapse of worldwide communism, the slogan "Jesus is dead. Marx is alive!" is presented in a totally different light since Marxism-Leninism has come to its definite end, both politically as well as ideologically.

Therefore, we should study quite carefully the mystery of the Church of Jesus Christ throughout church history. Here, we can see that Christ has protected His Church and renewed her again and again through the centuries. I would like to

elucidate this briefly using three excellent epochs of history.

Didn't all appear to be lost in the first few centuries after Christ, especially in view of the Diocletian persecution? Yet, Christ strengthened the early Church not only to remain grounded in the faith, but showed Himself as the Living One by the fact that His Gospel had penetrated into all provinces of the Roman Empire in spite of all pagan resistance.

However dark and lost the situation of the Church appeared to be in the period of the Renaissance popes, Christ still gave the Reformation for this muddled situation, a renewal of His Church from the top down. At the beginning of the 16th century, no one could have predicted from a human perspective such a profound change in the history of the Church.

The situation was also extremely difficult in the 19th century. The masses followed the philosophical critics such as Feuerbach and Marx. Yet, right at this time, Christ gave the Great Awakening in North America and also a number of revivals broke out in Europe. This resulted in a strong missionary movement worldwide which produced the building of churches in almost all the countries of the so-called "Third World" in its wake.

Therefore, I would like to close with the following hope-filled outlook for the future. Through solid teaching and research as Evangelical theologians, we have been called to help the Church of Jesus Christ of our day better fulfill her calling in the modern world. It is only and will always only be the Risen Christ who can give new impetus and new life to our post-Christian world. He is able to call a movement into being which we cannot yet even imagine under the current conditions. He is the one who shows Himself to be the Sovereign Lord of His Church. His power is even in effect during persecutions and in view of small minorities which seem to grow ever smaller because His word can cause a new revival. Christ is Lord. That is enough to be obedient to His calling in our modern as well as a post-modern world.

Fourteenth Reflection: The Positive Task of Missionary Apologetics

The goal of apologetic work is not primarily contesting non-Christian religion and worldviews using arguments, though, according to II Cor. 10:5, "We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ."

(Cf. Col. 2:15), even this destructive aspect is a part of theology. However, the aim of all apologetics is still to invite people to come to Jesus in a winsome way so that people of other religions find a pleasant taste to the Gospel. Ultimately, theology is always about giving well-founded and edifying testimony to the truth according to the apostolic admonition: "Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have." (1 Pet. 3:15).

Notes

- 1 L. Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, pp. 188-189.
- 2 *ibid*, p. 189.
- 3 F. Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, Book Three, section 125, pp. 181-182.
- 4 A. Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus*, p. 120.
- 5 *Ibid*, p. 123.

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