

Thirteen Essays: Exploring Communication and Journalism from a Biblical Perspective

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PREFACE

The following essays (with the exception of #13) were written over a period of two and a half years at CBN University (now Regent University). They are designed to stir thinking among professionals and students over the relationship between God, Communication and Journalism.

It is my desire to see these essays developed by faithful men and women who shall be able to teach others also (II Timothy 2:2). Consequently, I trust that Journalism and Communication professionals will assist people in seeing all of life from God's perspective to the degree it is humanly possible.

If you are reading these for the first time, it may be helpful to consider Essay Twelve and Thirteen first. This will permit the reader to obtain a perspective on the subject as well as gain an appreciation of the struggle over truth ever present in the University and the profession.

The reader is also advised that a Faculty Forum on "Truth in Journalism" was held at Regent University on January 15, 1988. A video cassette of this Forum was produced and is available for viewing through the University Library.

Finally, I extend my gratitude to my wife, Elizabeth Morgan, as well as Dr. Cliff Kelly and Herbert Titus, Esq. for their encouragement during the development of these essays.

Essay 1
Spring 1985

Jesus: The Word

(Jn 14:6 - Jesus: The Way, the Truth and the Life)

The Standard

The Bible says, "In the beginning was the Word . . ." and the Word became flesh in Jesus Christ (John 1:1 & 14). Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth and the life" (John 14:6). Translated into communication language, Jesus declares that 'I am the Word and the Word can be broken down into process, content and purpose.'

No matter which discipline within communication we are dealing with, the Bible must be examined with respect to these three aspects of communication. For instance, Mass Communication from a Christian perspective must look to the Bible for its definition of process, content, and purpose. Not just any process of mass communication or any content or purpose will do. The same is true for the other communication disciplines.

This essay attempts to sketch some of the ramifications of Jesus' statement that he is the way, the truth and the life with respect to communication, journalism and news. The first principle focuses on Jesus as the Truth. The second principle focuses on Jesus as the Way and Life.

Truth

Truth requires the journalist to render a factual account as well as to give the sense or significance of the account. This duty is based in part on Luke 7:18-35. In that passage Jesus describes the nature of His ministry and gives the import or meaning of his work. In response to the inquiry of John's disciples who were doing some investigative reporting for their chief, Jesus says in verse 22, "Go back and report to John what you have seen and heard;" then Jesus tells them the report, "The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor."

These are the facts, but he also gives the import or meaning, the sense or significance: "Blessed is the man who does not fall away on account of me." He elaborates on this in verses 24-35 for the people after the "reporters-disciples" leave. Nehemiah 8:8 also notes the importance of giving the sense of the report and not merely the report itself. "They read from the Book of the Law of God, making it clear and giving the meaning so that the people could understand what was being read."

The requirements are strikingly different from the prevailing journalistic perspectives in which:

- 1) The reporter renders a factual account of reality but ignores the sense or significance of the event, in order to be 'objective' or 'fair;' or

- 2) The reporter renders competing factual accounts of reality but fails to resolve the accounts in order to be 'objective' or 'unbiased.'

Jesus condemns an example of the first deficient perspective in Matthew 16:2-3. The Pharisees and Sadducees came to Jesus and tested him by asking him to show them a sign from heaven. He replied, "When evening comes, you say, 'It will be fair weather, for the sky is red,' and in the morning, 'Today it will be stormy, for the sky is red and overcast.' You know how to interpret the appearance of the sky, but you cannot interpret the signs of the times. A wicked and adulterous generation looks for a miraculous sign, but none will be given it except the sign of Jonah."

The Pharisees and Sadducees failed to render or report a proper interpretation of the times, even though they had the facts. They did not perceive the true nature of the event they were seeing, specifically that Jesus was the Messiah; thus they could not render a true account of reality. It is crucial to note that Jesus put a premium on interpretation as an essential ingredient in rendering a factual account.

An example of the second deficient perspective is given in Matthew 16:13-17. Jesus does a little questioning of his own. When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his Disciples, "Who do the people say the Son of Man is?" They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets."

Jesus, however, was not satisfied with a report of competing factual accounts. He wants resolution and so he asks, "But what about you, who do you say I am?" Jesus commends Peter for reconciling competing reports of who Jesus is by his answer, "You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God." Both Peter (v. 16) and Jesus (v. 19) give the sense of the account.

Way and Life

The *way* requires the journalist to refrain from bearing false witness as well as to refrain from bearing witness in a false way. The *life* prohibits the journalist from holding his neighbor in contempt. Jesus said He came to bring life and life more abundantly. When the reporter considers the purpose of the report, it must conform to the object of bringing life and life more abundantly. This does not mean "good news" in the popular sense. Jesus is good news, but to some He is the cornerstone upon which many stumble. Life and life more abundantly has to do with the object or purpose of the report, not necessarily its content.

These two aspects of Jesus as the Word are reflected in Exodus 20:16: "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor." God prohibits false declarations of fact as well as declarations or misrepresentations of fact in a false way. He also charges the journalist to maintain a proper disposition toward his reader or listener, that is, toward his neighbor.

This requirement is contrasted with two false perspectives in which:

- 1) The reporter represents the truth in a false way accompanied with contempt for his

or her neighbor (his readers, viewers, etc.), or

- 2) the reporter may represent the truth in a proper way but with a contemptuous view of one's neighbor.

Rejection of the first is noted in an example found in Mark 7:6-13. Quoting Isaiah, Jesus said, "These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. They worship me in vain; their teachings are but rules taught by men." The Pharisees honored and worshiped God, but they did it in a false way--in vain, not in spirit and in truth. The reporter must not only declare true content, but must do it in a true way, not in a vain way or one which does not assist the reader in understanding life and life more abundantly.

Jesus notes that it was not enough to honor God with a good report where the reporter's heart was not properly turned to God. Jesus warned against laying aside the commands of God, in the compilation of the doctrines or reports of men. Paul also reflects a correct understanding of persuasion and how it fits into the "process, content and purpose" scheme.

In II Corinthians 5:11 he says, "Since, then, we know what it is to fear the Lord, we try to persuade men. What we are is plain to God, and I hope it is also plain to your conscience." Paul is indicating that the purpose of communicating is not to persuade, but that persuasion is a method used to guide men toward God and His creation. The purpose is not to draw all men unto Paul. He goes on to reject the manipulation approach to persuasion, by stating that he hopes what he is, is clear. Manipulation, on the other hand, lacks clarity and is generally associated with some subterfuge. He reiterates this in verse 12.

The reporter must constantly be reporting with the 'purpose' of directing the recipient toward God, God's creation and God's principles. Whether the context is 'religious' (which it is generally not) or 'secular,' it is still God's creation. The reporter should not seek to draw all men unto him or herself, but impart life and life more abundantly to his readers or listeners. They must avoid "that kind of persuasion (which) does not come from the one who calls you," noted in Galatians 5:8. A little bit of this persuasion "works through the whole batch of dough." Its ingredients include rejection of the rightful purpose of communication--to impart life and life more abundantly, to do so in a manner consistent with loving one's neighbor in the right way which involves true content. Persuasion is a by-product of the communication, not its purpose. Its purpose is to bring about life, and life more abundantly.

Criticism of the second false perspective is given in Luke 10:25-37. This is the parable of the Good Samaritan. In that parable the expert in the Law gives a correct account of the law concerning the obligations owed to one's neighbor. His heart, however, is not turned to God with respect to exactly who his neighbor is in practice. Jesus specifically wanted to know how the lawyer interpreted the law. "How do you read it?" he asked. For Jesus and the lawyer, it was not enough to simply know what the law required and discuss it in a 'neutral' fashion.

This parable illustrates among other things, that the individual has a responsibility for his or her

knowledge. It requires something of them. The push for a 'flashy headline' or a 'ratings buster' must always be critiqued in light of the requirement that it be consistent with loving one's neighbor and that one's heart is correctly positioned even if all other prerequisites are satisfied. Paul also expressed the correct view on this subject without accommodating the truth in I Corinthians 9:19-23. "I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some." Paul does not mean "by every conceivable means irrespective of its propriety." He means by every appropriate means.

Conclusion

In concluding, it is crucial that Jesus--as the process, content and purpose of communication--be acknowledged. Such a perspective generates fixed results. In communication it results in the overall duty of the reporter to render a true account of reality as defined from God's perspective. The way such a report is to be rendered must not reflect a false means. The reporter's heart must also be correctly positioned before God. The object of such a report should be to lead to life, not reflecting confusion or competing false perspectives.

Questions

1. Is Jesus as the way, truth and life a correct insight into understanding journalism and communication the way it was designed by God?
2. Can you articulate another insight which gives guidance about how to 'do' journalism or communication?

Essay 2
Spring 1985

The Spirit and False Perspectives

(Jn 16:12-15 - Making known Jesus, who is the Word)

The Standard

“I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. He will bring glory to me by taking what is mine and making it known to you. All that belongs to the father is mine. That is why I said, the Spirit will take from what is mine and make it known to you.” (John 16:12-15).

The Objective

The objective of Essay Number 2 is to consider the work of the Holy Spirit in taking that which Jesus said and is now saying, and making it known (John 16:12-15). Several false perspectives of communication inconsistent with His work will also be considered.

We have already established that Jesus (the Word, in communication language) is the process, content, and purpose of communication. Derived from this proposition are at least two Biblical principles:

1. Christian communication is a function of rendering a true account of reality from God's perspective. The Christian communicator has a duty to sufficiently ascertain and render such an account. Rendering includes giving the sense or meaning of reality.
2. The work of the Holy Spirit is to make the truth about God and his entire creation known in a truthful way. He is the One who is going to say to us today, what we could not bear yesterday. The purpose of His work is to restore the culture to a correct perception of life and all of life equally. The Christian communicator has a duty to seek the Holy Spirit's way and purpose for all of life, in ascertaining and rendering such knowledge.

False Perspectives

Presently there are four perspectives of communication which differ from a Biblical perspective in one degree or another. I have tried to refine the essence of these four perspectives, and subsequently to discuss their inherent conflict with a Biblical perspective:

- 1) Christian communication is a Christian reading a news release verbatim. (PRIVATIZATION).

- 2) Christian communication describes themes which are discussed principally within Judeo-Christian circles. (TRADITIONAL CHRISTIAN).
- 3) Christian communication focuses on the process of communication and communication technique. (TECHNOLOGICAL).
- 4) Christian communication reports significant events and opinions from a variety of perspectives, occasionally with resolution. (INFORMATION).

Each of these perspectives is inconsistent in some degree with one or more of the Biblical principles previously outlined.

PRIVATIZATION

The PRIVATIZED perspective suggests that whatever Jesus may have said about being the truth (content), and whatever the Holy Spirit may have to say about the way (process) in which God would like His perspective about a given account represented, it is irrelevant to the public sector or inconsequential to national events. The privatized view holds that God, if he exists, has nothing to say about public life and events. If Jesus is the Word, he has nothing to say. If the Spirit guides us into truth, he may not do it publicly.

The primary objection is not that religious words are avoided. The primary objection is that God's perspective of the account is avoided. The problem is not that the report comes from a secular source *per se*. The problem is that such a report is written from the perspective that everything can be explained without an Infinite Personal Creator. It sees reality through a pair of glasses (perspective) which have been designed specifically to perceive a given event as though God's existence, or his authority over Creation, plays no account.

The primary result (purpose) of this perspective is to prompt the hearer into melding his perspective on national events and affairs (which may or may not be Biblical) with a humanistic viewpoint. The privatized perspective of communication does not lead its hearers to life and life more abundantly, but cajoles its listeners into a false perception that life and living are adequately described by the status quo.

The issue is one of perspective. The problem is not the form (process). The problem is the perspective, which distorts the content and produces a harmful effect (diminishes life more abundantly).

TRADITIONAL CHRISTIAN

The TRADITIONAL CHRISTIAN perspective is the twin brother of the privatized perspective. While the privatized view holds that--if God exists--He is publicly and nationally irrelevant, the traditional Christian view says that God does in fact exist, but is relevant only to private and religious life or events. This view has the effect of denying the Lordship of Christ over all of life

and all of life equally. It reduces Christian communication solely to communication about traditional religious discussions (content).

As far as it goes, this perspective does render a true account about reality from God's perspective, but it is a reality and perspective confined to traditional religious concerns. It is defective because this perspective represents God's breadth of interest as extending only to the personal and private religious life of its viewers. If it seeks to impart life and life more abundantly, it does so only in respect to religious or personal life. It may impart a limited restoration to the viewer's religious life, but the balance of life, or reality, is left unclaimed.

This deficiency is an unintentional result. Nevertheless, the logical consequences of the traditional Christian perspective is to fabricate a restriction of the Lordship of Christ. Thus, Christian communication is limited to a treatment of those themes which are discussed principally within religious circles.

The problem is not that religious themes are presented. The problem is that these things are presented from a perspective which boxes Jesus (the word) into an airtight container marked 'Spiritual,' while the rest of creation (which God created and called good) goes unclaimed. If 'the Word' which is 'the life' is reduced to religious issues only, then content (truth) is limited to religious content alone. This leaves Christians irrelevant and their God inapplicable to any other aspect of life.

Within this framework the Spirit cannot make known all truth unless He first comports with an arbitrary standard of what is religious or spiritual. The issue is one of perspective. The traditional Christian perspective of what constitutes Christian communication is not Christian. The truly Christian perspective is founded on Jesus as the Word (always pointing upstream to God as the Creator) and the implications which flow from the Word's declaration that He defines communication process, content, and purpose.

TECHNOLOGICAL

The TECHNOLOGICAL mentality is the younger brother of privatization and traditional Christian communication. Privatization reflects the involvement of content, but it is not content as defined from God's perspective (truth). The traditional Christian approach also deals with content, but it is circumscribed by a false view of spirituality. The technological perspective has no content component. It takes on all comers, drawing no inherent distinctions as to content.

In this framework, the 'ethical' use of technology is what makes it Christian. The result of this perspective is to elevate process. It accepts either privatized or traditional Christian content and measures 'Christian-ness' in terms of the ethical use of the medium. The ethical use of the medium, in turn, is always a function of secular definition.

The technological perspective is deficient principally in regard to the first element of communication (way). The indicia of process are derived from contemporary sources under the titles of ethics and

neutral media. They are not based on the Biblical norms of process as outlined in Essay 1. With respect to content (truth) and purpose (life), the technological perspective is inadequate for the reasons outlined under 'privatization' and 'traditional Christian' communication.

The problem is not that the technology is used ethically. The problem is that the ethical use of the technology is a function of fluctuating culture circumstances. Such a shifting scale is not consistent with Biblical norms of truth and falsehood in rendering a true account of reality.

INFORMATION

The INFORMATION perspective is the modern day parent of all the false perspectives. It combines each of the perspectives, in varying degrees. The information perspective, however, goes beyond the other false perspectives. It presents a wide variety of perspectives which may or may not include a Biblical one. Occasionally there is a resolution of the account (life).

The problem with the information perspective is not that it presents a wide variety of perspectives including a Biblical one. The problem is that it includes the Biblical perspective as simply one among many. The correctness (truth) of the Biblical perspective may be acknowledged, but its correctness is not based upon an objective standard (the Word became flesh). The correctness of that perspective is only based upon a subjective standard (what has been said). Or to say it differently, the fact that God exists and created the world is considered equally valid as the idea that He does not exist and did not create the world. The reporter is conditioned to act as though they are indeed both valid.

The manner of presenting the account (way) is generally a function of the technological perspective and is defective on that score as previously indicated. Similarly, the purpose (life) of processing information leads to a perception of reality which is not consistent with God's perspective. Those who receive the report operate in their day-to-day life with the wrong perception of what is happening. As a consequence, they go about life and living indoctrinated with a wrong set of assumptions about how the world works.

If the 'privatized' perspective is employed within the information perspective, the result is to do nothing from a Christian point of view because logically Christianity has nothing to do with the information. If the 'traditional Christian' perspective is employed in the same manner, the result is a confirmation that Christianity is limited to a narrow sphere of life falsely called 'spiritual.' It also produces an apathetic response to world events because such events presumably fall outside any legitimate sphere of Christian concern.

In the Biblical perspective, however, resolution (life) must be on the basis of an account that is objectively true, not merely worthy of notice. Resolution must also be based on the view that Jesus is Lord of all of life, and all of life equally. The information perspective fails because it is simply information. The debate is not a choice between advocacy and being descriptive. Advocating a subjective viewpoint is no better than describing an event if neither is conditioned upon a true perspective of what constitutes fixed norms of process, content and purpose. Jesus as the Word,

cannot be conformed to contemporary social ideas of objectivity.

Essay 1 is fully applicable to critique this perspective. We are not called upon to render significant reports or opinions from a variety of perspectives. We are called upon to render, in a true way, a true account of reality from God's perspective. When God's perspective gives diversity in rendering a true account of reality, then rendering should not be limited. When God's perspective is uniform with respect to a given account, then the report must not give conflicting accounts for the sake of "objectivity."

In concluding, it is essential to remember that the Spirit does not say just whatever He believes to be correct. He does not speak of his own volition but renders an accurate account of what God tells Him. God tells the Spirit "speak Jesus." Jesus is the Word. The Word is the way, the truth and the life. Jesus is our personal salvation, but he is also Lord over all of life, and all of life equally. As God, He defines all of reality, not just religious reality. He gives it its objective meaning. The duty of the reporter is to ascertain this meaning by consulting the Author and His perspective. Once His perspective on content (truth) is ascertained, the reporter is under a duty to render it by a proper process (way) with a proper purpose (life). What is proper is always a function of fixed Biblical perspectives and not of the apparent exigencies of the moment or of popular demand.

If the Journalist or communicator seeks to make Jesus known through the Spirit as outlined in these working essays, it is essential that he or she have a unified perspective on what constitutes communication, news or journalism, and that they be directed by the Spirit with respect to rendering that unified perspective. It is imperative that he or she ascertain and practice a true perspective as well as reject the false perspectives identified in this essay.

Questions

1. To what degree, if any, does local Christian radio reflect the privatized perspective?
2. What is the responsibility of the Holy Spirit in communication? Is His work confined to the communicator's personal life or does it encompassing all of life, not merely all of religious life?
3. "Words are symbolic, they change with culture." What perspective does this quote reflect? Would the word "God" mean the same thing as, say, the word "lawnmower" if the culture agreed? How about the word Satan? Why?
4. Charles Kraft has written a book entitled "Toward a Christian Theory of Communication." After reading that book, consider what theory, if any, expressed therein Kraft actually articulates.
5. To what degree, if any, does The 700 Club or CBN News reflect the information perspective?

Essay 3
Summer 1985

News & Newsworthiness

(Heb 13:8 - Jesus: The Same Yesterday, Today and Forever)
(Jn 8:31-32 - Abiding in Jesus: The Word & The Truth)

Introduction

The purpose of this Essay is to focus on what is news, based on a Biblical (and therefore objective) Worldview. The discussion will include: 1) a Biblical view of history which is consistent with Hebrews 13:8, "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever"; 2) its direct implications for ascertaining what is news; and finally 3) some comments on newsworthiness in accordance with John 8:31-32, "If you hold to my teaching, you are my disciples. Then you will know the truth and the truth will set you free."

This Essay is built on the foundation laid in Essays 1 and 2 and should be read in sequence with them.

History

In the widely held Information perspective, as outlined in Essay 2, current events are considered news, merely because they are current, not because they are true. This belief hinges on a chance view of history.

In a Biblical perspective, however, what is news (and therefore newsworthy) is a function of God's true perspective of history. Thus, reporting current events qualifies as news only when it is in line with God's standard of truth.

The Christian journalist and other people of good will who are interested in news take their view of history beginning and ending with God. Everybody else starts somewhere else, (usually the impersonal, chance universe) and consequently ends up with news as despair or news as utopianism. Both are in the area of fiction. To define news as merely current events, without seeing the world from God's perspective (as best empowered), does nothing more than define a fiction. These are the only options in an Information perspective. The Christian journalist who does not have a Biblical view of history, is not able to consistently represent a true account of reality (an event or story etc.) and is bound to be systematically used to perpetuate an anti-Biblical view of life (contrary to the purpose of communication).

God's Authority Over History

The first controlling principle of history is that God acts in history. He is not outside of it, nor is it out of his control. If news is defined so as to exclude the perception that God is involved in the

event, then either the reporter is advancing a deistic perspective (the fiction that God is there but he is not involved) or advancing a humanistic perspective (the fiction that God may exist, but his existence is irrelevant.) Both ignore basic biblical themes.

Both Jesus and God state they are the Alpha and Omega (Rev. 22:13 & 1:8) The claim is exhaustive when it comes to history. They also claim history in between. Jesus says He “is the same yesterday, today and forever,” and God said “I am.” What is happening in the world (news) always reflects something of these declarations.

News is not separate from history and history is not outside of God's involvement. History is something which God said He defines and to which Jesus is going to lend cohesion and continuity (Hebrews 13:8). It is incorrect to talk about news as simply current events or some sort of neutral declaration of facts. A sparrow doesn't fall to the ground without God taking notice. How can that concern be a neutral fact? Such talk reflects a very different set of assumptions about God and history and are contrary to a Biblical view of God in history.

Man's Part

A second principle of history is that Man can affect history significantly. He is not a robot living in a deterministic closed causal system. Although he is not almighty God, he can substantially affect history. This is because “God is so infinite that he could create a significant Man, in a significant history, without putting chance back of himself.” Significant means that man's choices are meaningful, not meaningless.

This principle is important because man's choices affect history for good or for evil. Defining news as a neutral assertion of today's facts is absolute nonsense. If news is reporting 'neutral facts,' then man's choices are meaningless. If a reporter indicates the 'neutral fact' “A” or the antithesis of “A” or does not report “A” at all, it does not matter because if his choices were really neutral, it would be because they were meaningless. To report news in this way perpetuates the false view that man is ultimately meaningless.

Claiming to report facts in a 'neutral way' entails the same error. First, it must be remembered that “facts” themselves are not neutral. Secondly, it suggests that news is outside of history. This view implies that a news report has no effect on the culture or on history. It is a specious way of saying that news is not advocacy. Reporting of news is a part of history and therefore cannot be neutral.

News

Building on this view of history--which includes a Sovereign God and Man whose choices are meaningful--several conclusions about news follow:

- 1) News must be perceived from God's fixed perspective (essay 1);
- 2) News must reflect the truth in a truthful way (essay 1 & 2);

- 3) News must reflect what God and Man are doing in history downstream of 1 & 2. (This rejects 'doing news' in all the false ways that are pointed out in Essay number 2); and
- 4) News must reflect the continuity which Christ the Word brings to a given event or report. (This is the historical context in which the event takes place; news must reflect the wider context--yesterday and forever--as perceived from God's perspective, and not simply describe current or isolated events.)

This means that news is not: 1) simply current information or events; 2) neutral facts; 3) false communication perspectives (essay 2).

Newsworthiness

“If you abide in me and my word abides in you, you shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free” (John 8:31-32).

This scripture gives some insight into what is newsworthy. It provides the added dimension between news and newsworthy items. That dimension involves the need of the people or culture to be set free in the truth at precisely the point where they are being deluded. It takes spiritual wisdom and discretion to perceive at any given time the point of conflict or bondage.

Newsworthiness is not perceived by surveying a list of current events. Nor is it necessarily a function of polling to find that which is of sufficient interest to the general public to thereby warrant its reporting. It involves seeing from God's perspective, with a renewed mind, the precise point where the real battle is being fought. This is emphatically not a plea to engage in spiritualizing physical events into some sort of metaphysical mush. It is not a ready-made pretense to buy into any of the utterly false forms of communication examined in essay 2, which Christians are so prone to embrace.

Some conclusions follow:

- 1) Broad liberty in the selection of content is given because all reality is under the created authority of God.
- 2) Any limitations on content are found upstream in God's perspective on that content. What is newsworthy in its final form may not express content which is inconsistent with rendering a true account of reality, in a true way, as defined from God's perspective (way, truth).
- 3) God's perspective on the reality He created, and God's perspective on man's meaningful acts are fully newsworthy. This is not to say that presenting another perspective is impermissible. Another perspective, however, must always be presented in light of God's true perspective.

- 4) What is newsworthy does not include reporting God's perspective and any other perspective as equally viable options.
- 5) What is newsworthy is a function of the struggle for truth within the culture. It is a function of the need for freedom within the culture. (Essay 1 described this as life, the third aspect of Jesus' declaration of the purpose of communication.)

Questions

1. What is a Biblical definition of “news”? Of “newsworthiness”?
2. To what degree, if any, does CBN News correspond to this definition? CNN? ABC? etc.

Essay 4
Fall 1985

The Reporter v. The Repeater

(Mt. 11:2-6 & Lk 7:29-35 - Testifying from God's Perspective)

The Reporter of Truth

When John heard in prison what Christ was doing, he sent his disciples to ask him, “Are you the one who was to come, or should we expect someone else?” Jesus replied, “Go back and report to John what you hear and see: the blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised and the good news is preached to the poor. Blessed is the man who does not fall away on account of me! (Matt. 11:2-6).

The Repeater of Information

To what can I compare this generation? They are like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling out to each other: We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; We sang a dirge, and you did not mourn. For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say 'He has a demon.' The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say 'Here is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners.' But wisdom is proved right by her actions. (Luke 7:31-35).

This Essay should be read in sequence with the three preceding essays since they form the basis upon which this essay is structured. The general proposition that a communicator, reporter or journalist must seek to present God's perspective, however broad or narrow it may be, is dealt with in those essays.

This Essay, however, focuses on the major issue every journalist, communicator or reporter must address--credibility. I want to focus on what credibility is from God's perspective and how the reporter deals with credibility. But first I want to examine the present complicity of journalists with false Christian and secular perspectives, inevitably leading to bearing false witness or a true witness in a false way.

A Brief Review

To review briefly, prior essays pointed out that Jesus is the Word. As the Word, He defined the process, content and purpose of communication. The journalist, communicator or reporter is under an obligation to render an accurate and truthful account of reality, in a truthful way, as defined from God's perspective, as broad or as narrow as it may be (way, truth). The journalist is also under an obligation to provide resolution of the account (life). This is an advantage for the Christian journalists; they can provide resolution because they can see in a sufficiently accurate manner from

God's perspective (mind of Christ). The reporter is not to lie, or present the truth in a false way. The reporter has an obligation not to leave his viewers in two minds (life, purpose). The reporter must ascertain what is news and what is newsworthy. This determination is based on that point in culture where truth is either advancing (Matt. 11:12) or is being subverted (Eph. 6:12). (This aspect produces far greater liberty in ascertaining what is news than is presently understood by anyone).

Truth: Sufficiently Knowable

The issue of the knowableness of truth was also raised in a collateral way. Jesus' claim to be the same yesterday, today and forever--in light of himself as the word--gives to words and language a fixed, knowable and adequate meaning which the reporter should ascertain and reflect. Jesus' declarations are a clear rejection of a multi-perspectival approach, which the discipline of communication has embraced, including Christian communication. This approach has been built on its accompanying philosophical premise - the unknowableness of truth. I am not saying that the reporter can know every fact in an exhaustive sense. That is not the issue. I am saying that the reporter can know God's perspective sufficiently with respect to the facts which he has ascertained.

To embrace the idea that language is in a constant state of flux or evolution, however, results in using words as though they can never have a fixed meaning. Whether we use the communication terminology of multi-perspectivalism or philosophical terms such as subjectivism or popular journalistic phrases such as information and objectivity, these ideas and their results flow downstream from the idea that truth cannot be known. This perspective cannot be legitimated, using Biblical terms to communicate non-biblical concepts. Synthesis of Biblical and other perspectives are impermissible options for the journalist, reporter or communicator. These options, if embraced, are sinful. I can make this statement because we exist in an objective universe created in such a way that we can know our Creator.

Credibility

Focusing on credibility, the premise is straightforward. Credibility is not obtained by compromising or accommodating Jesus: 1) the process (how you communicate, rendering an account in a truthful way); 2) the content (what you communicate, rendering a truthful account); or 3) the purpose (why you communicate, to provide life and life more abundantly to your audience by the resolution of conflicting accounts or appearances). These factors are defined from God's perspective, broad or narrow as the Bible delineates.

Credibility is not gained by appropriation of Biblical words, religious phrases or spiritual mush. Credibility is never separated from truth. Those who are credible are capable of relating the truth in their reporting.

Credibility should not be confused with acceptance. Acceptance comes from a consensus approach to truth. Or if one believes that truth cannot be known or that there is no truth, the issue becomes one of agreement about information. Agreement does not require truth, though truth may in fact be present. Agreement only requires consent. Since consensus or acceptance is the principal criterion,

the issue of truth is not generally raised.

Who is the credible reporter? It is the one who testifies to both God and men, from God's perspective. If we do not testify in this capacity, we are repeaters of information. Though seeing, we do not see; though hearing, we do not hear. As journalists we testify to God and to men and thus we must comport to His standards. We never merely testify to men.

The Bible

John's disciples reported both what they saw and heard. Jesus pointed out that as a result of their reporting, those who did not fall away on his account were blessed. Now if John's disciples said; "Hey, let's report this to John and the rest of the world in an objective and neutral sort of way," and we in turn suggest that Jesus didn't really object to this sort of journalism, then it would be senseless for Jesus to say at the end of it all, "Blessed is the man who does not fall away on account of me." For what reason would men fall away from Jesus, if after listening to John's disciples, all they heard was some basic information in an objective, neutral sort of way? It's a different story, however, when the audience is confronted in a true way and for the right purpose, with Jesus the truth.

A major problem today, however, is that after hearing a report, people don't respond. Their reaction is to do nothing. I think this is because they have been given information rather than an opportunity to hear the truth. Mere information requires no response. It draws no distinction among views. It is not unusual therefore that the people respond like children in the marketplace. They hear a joyous song but do not respond with a dance. On hearing a dirge, they do not respond with mourning. They saw John and reported to the world that he had a demon. They saw Jesus and reported him to be a glutton. Their responses were distorted because their perception was distorted. Their perception was merely human. How different from Jesus' declaration that John was a prophet from God; that among those born of women there had not risen anyone greater than John the Baptist, and that he was the Elijah who was to come. But the people, being without sight said he had a demon.

Are both true? Did both have the facts? The people had the facts that John came neither eating nor drinking. So did Jesus. But He saw reality as it really was and reported it faithfully, not 'neutrally.' My point is that Jesus could see the picture from God's perspective and he charged John's disciples with the same responsibility. That is a very crucial point. Jesus charged the disciples with carrying out this responsibility. It wasn't something that only He could somehow do. We can do it as well.

As for the people of 'this generation,' Jesus likened them to children who did not understand what they had seen or heard. They were repeaters of information and yet they were not even accurate.

The repeaters of information will be ever hearing but never perceiving, for their hearts have become calloused. They hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their heart and turn, and God would heal them (Matt. 13:14-16; Isa. 6:9-10). We should aim to report the truth and avoid merely repeating information. The truth is as broad as all of life and all of life equally, apart from sin. Truth is not confined to religion nor should our reports about truth be thus limited.

Questions

1. What is the difference between credibility and acceptance?
2. Do you think credibility is often employed as a euphemism for compromising a report?

Essay 5
Fall 1985

The FCC v. Jesus

(Jn 18:19-23 - Information and Neutrality v. Truth)

John 18:19-23 (Biblical Version)

The high priest questioned Jesus about his disciples and his teaching. "I have spoken openly to the world," Jesus replied. "I always taught in synagogues or at the temple, where all the Jews came together. I said nothing in secret. Why question me? Ask those who heard me. Surely they know what I said." When Jesus said this, one of the officials nearby struck him in the face. "Is that any way to answer the high priest?" he demanded. "If I said something wrong," Jesus replied, "testify as to what is wrong. But if I spoke the truth, why did you strike me?"

John 18:19-23 (FCC Version)

The high priest questioned Jesus about his disciples and his teaching. "I have always conducted myself," Jesus replied, "as a proxy with obligations to present those views and voices which are representative of the community and which would otherwise not be heard." When the officials heard this, they commended Jesus openly. Then Jesus said to them, "Where the discussion of public issues is concerned, I seek only to assure that both sides be given fair coverage." Thereafter Jesus was granted a license to preach and teach information in an objective way, wherever he went in the land.

Introduction

The purpose of this Essay is as follows: 1) to briefly outline the extent of the FCC's regulatory and censorship scheme as it applies to broadcast media; 2) to contrast this scheme to the Biblical principles outlined in prior essays; and 3) to offer concluding remarks.

The FCC

The present regulatory and censorship policy of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) is founded on the idea that a broadcast licensee is a fiduciary or public trustee. Practically speaking, a trustee is one who acts on behalf of another, to which the trustee owes a high degree of care and confidence. The FCC requires the broadcaster-trustee to:

- 1) Act in the Public Interest, and
- 2) Act in a Fair Manner.

More recently these obligations have been required on the additional ground that broadcast media

are a pervasive influence in society to which access is inherently limited.

Public Interest

The First Amendment does not prevent governmental insistence that a licensee “conduct himself as a proxy or fiduciary with obligations to present those views and voices which are representative of his community and which would otherwise, by necessity, be barred from the airways [due to scarcity].” Red Lion Broadcasting Company v. FCC, 395 U.S. 367, 388-90 (1969).

The public interest means in practice that the television spectrum is allocated according to tradition and the current political climate. In order to renew a license, the broadcaster's track record on adherence to tradition and compromise with the prevailing political climate must necessarily be considered.

This requirement is based on an Information theory of communication. The requirement that the broadcaster present those views and voices representative of the community is the mainstay of information theory.

Fair Manner

The FCC has for many years advanced “the requirement that discussion of public issues be presented on broadcasting stations, and that each side must be given fair coverage.” *Id.* at 369.

The fairness doctrine requires the broadcaster to be “objective.” This means that differing points of view or 'both sides' must be presented. Objectivity in this sense is the key star in the information theory constellation.

The FCC v. Jesus

Essay 1 indicated that the Bible held up Jesus as the word. Jesus defined communication and its sub-disciplines, including television broadcasting. Essay number 2 illustrated how present communication practices within and outside of the Christian community are built on various communication theories which are inconsistent with the Bible and Jesus as the Word. (Essays 3 & 4 focus on Newsworthiness and a reporter's duty).

It is clear that the FCC is advancing “information” and “objectivity” (as defined and discussed), by threatening non-renewal of a license. Information theory is not value-free. Objectivity is not neutral. Both concepts are value-laden and project a worldview inconsistent with and antagonistic toward a Christian worldview. The antagonistic nature of these ideas is defined and discussed in Essay 2.

Simply put, the principal defect of Information theory is that truth is not an essential component. Information is concerned only with differing views and voices, not necessarily accurate or true views communicating significant events or views defined from God's perspective. What is representative

of the community is not necessarily in accordance with God's fixed perspective. The FCC's requirements are based instead upon "evolving standards of decency" in an increasingly complex society, in which only the voices reflecting the information perspective will be permitted to speak. The broadcaster is also bound to the requirement that both sides of an issue be presented fairly. This view of objectivity is based on the idea that its implementation will produce the broadest possible freedom to choose among competing ideas. Consequently the widest possible spectrum of interpretation is expected from the broadcaster.

Sadly, however, a liberal-humanistic perspective does not constitute the other side of a conservative-humanistic perspective. Countervailing political opinions built on the same perspective (if God exists, he is irrelevant) do not fall into the category of objectivity. Objectivity is not a choice between countervailing humanistic mis-perceptions, but is rather a direct function of God's perspective on a subject as broad or as narrow as it may be.

Remarks

In the final analysis, a Christian broadcaster is not the mere fiduciary acting in the public's interest as the FCC has insisted. Certainly a Christian broadcaster should have a concern for the culture. Essay 1 pointed out that Jesus, as the purpose of communication, was to impart life and life more abundantly. Imparting that life does not consist of presenting countervailing humanistic ideas or of reducing broadcasts to any of the pseudo-Christian theories addressed in Essay 2. Moreover, the concern for restoration of the culture must draw its guidance from the Bible and not from other sources or perspectives. In a Biblical perspective the broadcaster is under a duty to its neighbor and may not include intentional disinformation for the sake of FCC objectivity. Further, it may not include an unresolved broadcast of both sides of an event merely because those viewpoints accurately reflect social awareness, surveys, or proven mass marketing techniques designed to pacify viewer demand.

Information and objectivity must be recaptured and viewed as they come into play downstream of basic Biblical principles of communication. As they are presently understood, however, they must be rejected.

Conclusion

The requirements of the FCC with respect to television broadcasters is directly contrary to the Biblical obligations of a Christian broadcaster to render a true account of reality in a true way from God's perspective with resolution. Jesus spoke the truth in an open way so that his word and work would go forth. He did not shirk this duty in order to comply with the insistence of the high priest of communication that he communicate according to their standards. ("Is that any way to answer the high priest?" he demanded.) Instead, Jesus said that the key issue was truth. ("If I spoke the truth, why did you hit me?") Truth is the issue, not the relative requirements of the FCC.

This conflict will be resolved in time one way or the other. Either the broadcaster will set the standard, or it will be set for him and he will be required fully to submit to it. A legal strategy needs

to be developed which will extricate Broadcasters from this impermissible state of compromise.

Questions

1. How is the information philosophy of the F.C.C. used to control the content of religious and non-religious broadcasters? Give an example.
2. Did God give jurisdiction over the airwaves to the civil government?

Essay 6
Fall 1985

The Journalism Graduate (2 Tim 2:2 - Shaping Journalism)

There is a Scripture mounted over the entrance way of the Administration Building at Regent University. It states: "And the things that thou hast heard of me, among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also." (I Timothy 2:2). I'm sure the students have seen it on the back of their I.D. cards.

What is it that has been committed to us? What will we teach others also? I believe that those questions can be answered in one of two ways. We have either been taught and will pass on information, or we have been taught and will pass on truth.

Information or Truth

These two options are completely at odds with each other--no man can serve them both. They represent the conflict between two completely contrary worldviews. To have been taught information only about one's discipline reflects the cultural drift of the 1980's, which pays no heed to the truth or falsity of information. Graduates who simply pass on information perpetuate a cultural disregard for the objective existence of God and the equally objective existence of truth which flows from Him. They have exchanged some bit of current information for something which is sharper than any two-edged sword. Merely to pass on information about one's discipline or to reduce one's discipline to transmittal of information is neither Biblical nor practical.

To have been taught truth, however, leads one to affirm that the beginning of all things, including knowledge, is God. He is objectively there, and He created an objective reality. A graduate begins to pass on truth about that discipline by saying, "I know what a Biblical view of my discipline looks like and here are the steps I am going to take in order to implement that true perspective at my job." That is something that every graduate should be able to say when he leaves this campus. As a student, a responsibility existed to seek truth in the classroom. As a student there was a responsibility to challenge the professor to think Biblically by asking, "I want to know a Biblical view of my discipline--I want to know how the Bible shapes my discipline."

A graduate who has not learned to ask these questions can expect to be conformed to a discipline which lacks the salt and light he or she could have brought to it. Lost will be the opportunity to speak prophetically to a discipline--and by extension, to a profession--desperately in need of renewal.

Now when I say 'speak prophetically,' I don't mean using religious words *per se*. I mean speaking the implications of God's existence and who He is with respect to one's discipline or profession, in order properly to shape and define it from God's perspective.

Two Graduates

Each Graduate is faced with a choice. He or she can either be a Christian who graduates or a Christian graduate. A Christian who graduates does not know, and therefore cannot pass on, God's truth about the discipline, though he or she may be personally Christian. A Christian graduate, however, can pass on truth. He can shape the culture significantly because he has been taught that the Bible not merely has something to say about his discipline; but indeed it defines the entire discipline. That graduate is not bound to the professional articulation of popular information or ideas which do not prove to be worth their weight in salt.

As Christian graduates we must not trade Truth for mere Information--information which reflects the decline of a discipline as it falls away from God's fixed perspective. We must be committed to the truth first and then be willing to shape our discipline from that perspective, without accommodation to popular theories. Let us be Christian graduates, not graduates who are personally Christian, but who have no idea how Christianity impacts their profession.

Essay 7
January 20, 1986

Unclean Lips
(Thoughts on Isaiah 6:3-5)

And they were calling to one another: 'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of His glory.' At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke. 'Woe to me,' I cried, 'I am ruined, for I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty.' Isaiah 6:3-5.

Remarks

The first thing I want to point out about this passage is that the six-winged creatures were calling to one another. They were speaking among themselves. They were declaring truth to one another. Their declaration was: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty." This is not mere religious gobbledygook. This is a declaration of truth. And it was not merely a religious declaration, but it was a declaration about all of reality: "The whole earth is full of His glory."

My first thought is, how much of our journalism today reflects that the Lord is holy? And more significantly for the issues which face us today, how much of our journalism reflects the fact--that is, the objective, true, verifiable, known fact--that the whole earth is full of His glory?

The result of this declaration of truth among these six winged journalist is noted in verse 4: "At the sound of their voices, the doorposts and thresholds shook, and the temple was filled with smoke." When truth went out and the glory of the Lord over all of the earth was acknowledged, things began to happen. The doorposts and thresholds shook.

Sometimes we think that God just did this, that He made the doorposts jump up and down and he had a smoke machine with which he filled the temple. When they declared the truth, particularly the truth about the Lordship of Christ--the objective, factual, true reality about the whole earth being full of God's glory--that the thresholds and doorposts shook. The culture was shaken. The whole area, the building itself, shook. What a marvelous declaration of the consequences of truth.

Moreover, Isaiah's comments in verse 5 show conclusively to me that when truth is declared, not only is the culture shaken in awe, but the people are convicted. He cries, "Woe to me . . . I am ruined, for I am a man of unclean lips." Isaiah recognized that the Lord is holy, that His glory is in all of the earth. And that true declaration, that communication between these six-winged creatures, shook the place. It had that effect. Then immediately he became convicted that he was unclean, that his ways were not God's ways. He also recognized that the culture around him was, like himself, in need of reform.

This is very important. What I am suggesting here is that when truth is spoken, individuals--and the culture as a whole--are convicted and brought to their knees. This is the real salt of journalism. The declaration of truth need not be offensive. In the passage from Isaiah, for instance, there is a simple proclamation of the abiding reality of God's glory in His creation. On the other hand, the truth may cut sharply. Jesus did not shy away from direct confrontation (though still speaking the truth in love) when he called the Pharisees a generation of vipers.

In conclusion, I think we need to very clearly recognize that the whole earth is full of His glory and not to discount that when we present facts. In other words, when we represent something as factual and it does not reflect the over-arching reality of God, perhaps what we are representing is ideology rather than facts. Of course, based on my previous essays, I am not saying that we have to use religious terminology or that we have to cite Scripture, although that is our liberty if it is appropriate to do so. But our reports of factual reality need to represent, and be downstream of, this truth: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty. The whole earth is full of his glory."

Essay 8
March 17, 1986

How to Write the Story

Rules of Christian Journalism

1. Write the news story as if God did not exist or is irrelevant. (This is the other world view.)
2. Write the news story based on the fact that God exists as described in the Bible. (This is the real world view.)
3. After 1 and 2, determine as best you can what is true. (Remember John 16:13.)
4. Write your final story.

An Example

If we were assigned to cover Pat Robertson and his possible presidential candidacy, and we were to follow the rules expressed above, we would first write according to world view number 1. God's attributes, of course, would not be mentioned. Instead they would be ascribed to an impersonal universe, energy forces, the lapse of time, or chance occurrences.

The first report might look something like this:

MINISTER TO TAKE CHANCES IN POLITICAL ARENA

Television evangelist Pat Robertson is on the verge of deciding whether or not to seek the 1988 Republican presidential nomination. Though Robertson cited "the Lord's leading" in this area, political experts speculate that "a combination of social forces" could step up his announcement to as early as January of 1987.

A spokesman for Robertson's political action committee (PAC) said, "It is only a question of time before this country sees what it's missing."

Indeed, that seems to be the case. Robertson's burgeoning cable T.V. company, which now reaches over 25 million consumers, has pursued an aggressive marketing posture, placing Robertson's face in every household in the country.

Noting their financial success, an executive from CNN told reporters, "They were fortunate enough to be in the right place at the right time. I guess it's the way you play your cards in this business that counts."

Asked if he thought he had a chance to win, Robertson replied, "If I run, it will be to win . . ." And win he may, considering the topsy-turvy character of the American electorate these days. A recent Gallup poll showed that Americans are more conservative, undoubtedly in reaction against liberal sentiments of the 60's and 70's. Pollsters confided, "These things are cyclical; in the 1990's the liberals will be back in power. It's part of the evolution of politics."

Given the evolution of politics, the institutional and political forces working within our society and at least five more years of political stagnation within the Democratic party, Robertson may really have a chance.

Others inside the camp, however, have their doubts. "Imagine that," mused one of his T.V. supporters, "it would be a real miracle if he was elected."

If we were to write the above story according to world view number 2, here is what it might look like.

MINISTER CONSIDERS PRESIDENTIAL OFFICE

In a recent T.V. interview, Rev. Pat Robertson told reporters that he was serious about the presidency. Citing the internal struggle which accompanies every significant human decision, Robertson told newsmen, "this is a very serious matter for myself and for CBN. We are all asking for the Lord's leading on this. It's common sense to consult the best authority."

Not everyone, however, is convinced that God has anything to do with it. Robertson's potential bid is dependent upon "a combination of social forces," political experts suggest. But Robertson says different: "Sure we are looking at the culture, why shouldn't we? Our founding fathers looked at the culture and then looked to God for guidance. I don't think we were let down with the advice He gave them."

A spokesman for Robertson's political action committee (PAC) noted, "It's only a question of time before this country sees what it is missing." If CBN's cable T.V. operation continues in favor with the American public, Robertson's message will be heard in more than 25 million households. Noting the widespread acknowledgment that CBN's message has hit home, a CNN executive said, "They were fortunate to be in the right place at the right time. I guess it's the way you play your cards in this business that counts."

Robertson thinks it has nothing to do with chance. "My goodness, if that's what guides the American people when they pull the lever, then I'm going to fire my entire political action committee," says Robertson, grinning a bit. "If I run, I run to win, because I'm willing to faithfully execute the office of the President, and preserve, protect, and defend the Constitution, just as the Constitution requires. That's the only reason anybody should ever run for political office."

Pollsters claim their data show the trend toward conservatism will peak in the next five years, and that's got Robertson worried. "These things are cyclical, you know. That's part of the evolution of politics." Professor Jones of the School for Public Policy, a conservative think tank, disagrees: "Neither politics nor history is cyclical. Political change is a direct result of a change in ideas; what the people have in their minds and hearts and what they want out of life beyond the material realm, such as 'life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.' That's what people wanted two hundred years ago. I think that it's their desire again today. That's not cyclical, it's choice."

Given the constant desire of the people, their ability to govern themselves and the emerging presence of constitutional leadership in this country, Robertson might be the man the country is looking for.

Some people do not have any doubts: "Imagine that," mused one of his T.V. supporters, "It would be a real miracle if he was elected."

At this point, we would have to look at both the first and the second article and decide what is true. If we believe that there is no fixed truth or that truth cannot be known, then the result is obvious. Either one of these articles could do. For all intents and purposes, being a Christian journalist means nothing in terms of the ultimate conclusion or the final story. If there is no standard to gauge a good or bad article, or a right or wrong article, then the determining factor is merely the editorial policy of the paper.

In my opinion, of course, the idea of the unknowableness of truth is completely indefensible from a Biblical perspective. But if the writer believes that, then consistent with that belief, either article could do. It is important, however, if one believes this, not to deceive himself into believing that being a Christian makes any real difference in this respect. It doesn't. Moreover, a magazine, newspaper, television network, radio station and/or university that holds this position has no right to be called "Christian" (unless it is clearly understood that the use of the word Christian merely identifies the personal relationship to God of the people who work at the facility). If we cannot know what truth is or if it's merely a subjective impression, then we are indeed to be pitied because we have declared somehow to the world that we are different and have not been able to deliver the goods.

Not surprisingly, I would submit article number 2, since it reflects a Biblical perspective. You may have a different view of the subject based on your reading of Scripture or on something you perceive to be true that I have neglected or otherwise asserted improperly. Fine. At least at this point we have a common basis from which to discuss whether or not a given paragraph or phrase is true. That is, we both can turn to some objective standard called creation and the Bible and then discuss it accordingly.

A few things need to be explained here. I hope it is evident that in the first article everything that was of significance could be attributed either to an impersonal energy force or to a lapse of time or simply to euphemisms for chance. In the second article, I tried to reject all of those ideas as they

are inconsistent with a Biblical framework and tried to identify God and the way He set reality up as the factor behind what happens in culture. I may not have done this well, but this is what needs to be done. Any lack of skill on my part should not cause the rejection of the principle.

Second, where a quote was used that was obviously untrue, then the burden fell to the reporter or writer to find someone who had an accurate and therefore Biblical perspective on the subject. Thus, where Pat Robertson declares that politics is cyclical and evolving, I considered a quote from Jones which would show that to be nonsense. My attempt was not to leave the reader in two minds, but to show him that Biblically there is only one way of looking at history and it is not cyclical. Now we can argue over whether you believe that or not, or whether it is true; but I am using this to illustrate the duty of the reporter with regard to quotes that are erroneous.

Thus, the reporter need not engage in editing all false quotes, but he needs to be circumspect in their use as well as to secure additional sources which understand the situation correctly.

Third, some quotes that are used inappropriately--such as "If I run, I run to win" and "If he wins, it will be a miracle"--are self-explanatory. With respect to the first quote, it is clear that the most significant part, the reference to the Constitution--was edited out. And with respect to the second, it is clear that the reporter reversed the meaning by changing the phrase leading up to the quote. These things are dishonest and wrong, although if one holds to the position that there is no fixed truth, then article number one cannot be criticized on this basis.

The Christian who does believe that truth exists and can be known sufficiently has an adequate basis to call the use of these quotes into question. They are either out and out lies, misrepresentations, or an attempt to bias the reader toward the reporter's own perspective. Please note that the problem is not that the reader is influenced by the reporter's perspective; the problem is that the reporter's perspective or bias bears no relationship to the reality that is, to what Robertson said, or to what the intent of the financial supporter was when the declaration about miracles was made. Again, it is not the subjective bias which makes it right or wrong; it is whether or not that bias conforms to the reality God created. The second article, of course, tries to place these matters in an appropriate light.

I realize that some of this is largely hypothetical and I have had leeway to devise ideas and simulate quotes to suit my purpose. I have done this to illustrate the several points which I wanted to make. I would recommend that this kind of test be implemented in a situation involving an actual media story. The fact that my example is somewhat hypothetical, however, does not alter the fixed guidelines, principles, or 'rules of Christian journalism' that I am trying to express.

Essay 9
May 7, 1986

How Not To Do Journalism

“Be merciful to those who doubt.” (Jude 22)

“If you were blind, you would not be guilty of sin; but now that you claim you can see, your guilt remains.” (John 9:14)

Analysis

For my viewing pleasure I had an opportunity to watch “West 57th” on Wednesday, May 7, 1986. “West 57th” is a production of CBS news. After extended reflection I concluded that “West 57th” was supposed to be a news show. The credits gave it away. The content did not.

Let me describe the 'news story' I tuned in to. The first segment by Pauline Canny focused on a tragedy turned to joy. Or more precisely, a tragedy turned gay. A little baby girl had apparently been infected with AIDS through a blood transfusion. The blood had been sold to the hospital by a somewhat thoughtless individual who professed and practiced 'liberty' in his sexual practice. That is the tragedy. Though Ms. Canny noted this liberty in a round about sort of way, she failed to comment about God's objective standard in this respect.

The joy in this story, as it turns out, is revealed in the child's mother overcoming her hatred of the homosexual community. This, of course, is commendable since hatred destroys people. To overcome the ostracism she feels because none of her friends will visit her and her deteriorating child, she turns to the homosexual community, who now regularly visit her and her afflicted child. They provide the 'love and attention' which society will not provide. A more helping community cannot be found. We are not told whether the Christian church or community is doing anything for this woman and child.

Had this story been presented objectively according to the Biblical view of reality, the viewer would observe that people who destroy innocent children are guilty of sin and crime. The journalist should point this objective fact out and call for appropriate remedies.

Instead, the viewer is led to believe that the slow death of an innocent child due to the attack of the virus on her central nervous system is really no one's fault. The real culprits are those who fail to reach out to the mother and the child.

Admittedly, the maxim “love thy neighbor” is advanced. “West 57th” properly establishes a standard of compassion for the downtrodden. Unfortunately, the family's friends fall short of it. But if compassion is an established virtue, it has also generally been acknowledged that deceit, sodomy and unmitigated hedonism--not to mention murder--are not virtues. In fact, they fall into the arena

of moral and criminal vice, whereas a failure of compassion does not. This fact “West 57th” fails to note.

Certainly, murder and sodomy are criminal. Murder and sodomy violate the universal law of nature observed in the creation as well as the law of nature's God revealed in scripture. More plainly, they wrongly destroy people made in God's image.

With all the talk about morality and standards, God's standards should be considered. “West 57th” made an appeal to a standard of right and wrong by pointing out the shortcomings of people who fear infection. How much more is the Christian journalist to apply the standard to those who practice the destruction of themselves, their victims and the culture in which they live.

Who is the neighbor in “West 57th”? Do they show contempt for some and not for others? Do they pick and choose a standard of conduct and select the application to fit their ideology even though it does not reflect the reality God set up? Have they established the truth on this issue in part only? Does the report encourage the viewer to take in life and life more abundantly?

These are a few of the questions which must be raised. The Christian journalist should be able to identify and articulate the precise portion of the report which corresponds to a Judeo-Christian perspective--“I got over my hatred of homosexuals”--and that portion which operates from an anti-Christian perspective--“It really doesn't matter how people act in private just as long as we love one another.”

We must be merciful to those who doubt God's perspective. Those who reject its standards, however, must carry their own guilt, the burden which the story thrusts upon them personally. Not only does a story from a non-Christian perspective not produce life more abundantly in the viewer, but it weighs down the journalist with guilt and eventually despair.

This essay is written to provide an example of how to critique non-biblical journalism, to establish its bias and lack of objectivity, and to articulate a true perspective.

Essay 10
April 1986

Multiple Reality Journalism

“Let the prophet who has a dream tell his dream, but let the one who has my word speak it faithfully.” (Jeremiah 23:28)

“The tongue of the wise commends knowledge, but the mouth of the fool gushes folly.” (Proverbs 15:2)

For the journalist, there are ultimately two ways to see and report everything. The first sees reality from God's perspective. Since God created reality, it is logical that He has insight into the way the world is put together. The second perspective, however, sees reality from the point of view that either God does not exist or that He is irrelevant. One's world view is the crucial factor in journalism.

Some of the previous essays have discussed seeing reality from God's perspective. This essay reemphasizes the false views discussed in Essay 2. One variety of this false perspective can be described like this: “If God exists, he is irrelevant to journalism.” God is assumed to be of no consequence to the reality being reported by a journalist.

Another variety of this second perspective is a belief in multiple reality, i.e., that reality is what you think it is. “I think, therefore I am” is an expression of this perspective. Contradictory realities are permissible with this outlook. The key aspect of this view is that we begin with what we think, not with what exists. In philosophy this is regarded as existentialism, in the social sciences, autonomous theory.

For the journalist who believes that “God is irrelevant if He exists,” the event observed and reported will not relate to God and is biased in that respect. For the journalist who believes in multiple realities, differing and conflicting accounts of the same event are acceptable since there is no fixed standard of reality by which to exclude false perspectives. If there are multiple realities, the journalist must endeavor to report as many versions of an event as possible. Of course, he cannot record all possible realities since he himself is limited, and therefore his report is necessarily biased according to his own assumptions. He will inevitably leave out someone's “reality.”

An additional variety of this false perspective is that there are multiple realities but God is relevant to some areas. This is the position presently held by most Christian journalists.

In those areas which are “religious,” the journalist who holds that God exists and may play a hand in an event, might include Him in the report in some way. Though this journalist believes that God exists, he also believes in multiple realities. He is under an obligation in this framework to report differing and contradictory perspectives on what part God may have undertaken in the event being

reported. Because multiple realities are assumed, even though God is included, there can be no consensus on what He is doing or why He is relevant.

One predominant variety of so-called Christian journalism is built on this sandy basis. The Christian journalist believes in God and in multiple realities in general, but there are two exceptions where multiple realities are rejected--they are the areas of religion and morality.

If the story is on something religious, then what God says controls. This is because in religious cases, the Christian journalist rejects multiple realities. Thus if the story is on a murder, a moral question, it is reported as wrong because God said it was wrong. If the story, however, is on what went on today at Town Hall, or some non-religious, non-moral area, it is back to multiple realities. Here the journalist seeks to be 'objective,' thus reporting multiple and contradictory realities of today's events in government.

Another variety of the false perspective involves the Christian journalist who "respects the beliefs of others." When he or she reports an activity or a situation, and another's beliefs happen to be involved, he or she reports them as equally viable options with God's perspective. Now if they happen to be true, there is no problem. And if they happen to be within the area of liberty which God has established for that belief, there is similarly no problem.

I am not talking about a journalist who wants to force others to believe what he believes. What I'm talking about is a journalist who, because he "respects the beliefs of others," no matter how much they do not conform with the liberty God has given us, or the reality which He created, reports such beliefs as true. The objection, however, does not lie in the fact that he reports the belief. The objection lies in the fact that he reports the belief as true without resolving whether, in fact, it is or is not true.

The net effect of this type of reporting, because the reporter happens to "respect others beliefs," is that the reporter does a disservice to his neighbor. The reporter places by his report in the observer's mind, that competing and antithetical propositions about reality can be consistently held in one's mind. He reinforces the proposition in his reader's mind that there is no objective standard for truth, or if there is an objective standard for the truth, it is not within the province of the journalist to comment on. If there is no objective standard of truth, then the journalist who is a Christian has denied the first principle of journalism from a Biblical perspective. That principle is that, "in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was God." That proposition is an objective truth. When Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life," that was a declaration of an objective truth. That truth has certain implications. It means certain things. Because we believe in antithesis, it does not mean exactly the opposite thing at the same time.

If the reporter reports something which is a matter of liberty, and the belief is within the area of liberty which God has granted to us, and that is a very broad area, then this objection does not apply. But if the reporter reports it as something which can be considered of equal validity with a true perspective, then the reporter violates the liberty he has been given as a Christian. He turns his liberty into license which is wrong.

He does wrong because his content is not true in the final analysis. He also does wrong because he has not employed his professional capacities to bring life and life more abundantly to his reader. Instead, he has brought death and death more quickly to his reader.

What do I mean when I say “death?” By death I mean he has either reassured his reader that God has not constructed reality in the way in which He said, or he leads the reader into that proposition. He puts a stumbling block in the reader's way. If the reporter is responsible for what he writes, then he must consider the effect it has upon the reader. And though he cannot be ultimately responsible for the reader's action, there is a Scripture which says “Woe to those who cause these little ones to stumble. It were better that he was not born.” This should provide encouragement for journalists to examine closely what is written.

Thus, the Christian who fails to stand up for an objective standard of truth in his reporting because he “respects the beliefs of others” is just a Christian journalist, that is, a journalist who is also a Christian. But journalism and Christianity shall never meet.

In practical terms, the journalist must ask himself when he advocates this doctrine of “respecting the beliefs of others” whether he in fact “respects the beliefs of God.” If that's too much for the journalist, then at least he can ask himself, “What is this report doing to my neighbor? Is it helping my neighbor to become aware, or is it altering the way my neighbor sees what's happening in the world so that he begins to deny that God created it, that He is involved in its day to day affairs.” Does it lead my reader, in certain instances to come to accept that black is not also white, that right is not also wrong, and that truth is not also falsehood?

The truly objective reporter will want to see reality from the Creator's perspective as best as he can. That is something that we all struggle with, but because we struggle with it does not prove the popular notion that it is totally beyond our reason and we can know nothing of it. The fact is that we can know sufficiently certain propositions and we have a duty to be responsible to the knowledge that we have been given. Not all reporters possess the same knowledge, but they are responsible for that which they have been given.

One final comment. No Christian journalist has the liberty to sacrifice Biblical principles of journalism for religious unity. We mustn't go out of our way for disunity, as that would violate basic Biblical principles. But we have to realize that we have no authority to set aside the commands of God to honor the traditions of men. Not even good religious men. Jesus expressly rejected the elevation of religious tradition over the commands of God (Mark 7:8). Every man must judge for himself, but the fact that every man judges for himself is not to say that every man will not also be judged according to an objective standard. Sketching what has been said looks something like this:

1. God's perspective - Jesus the way, truth, life
2. Other perspectives
 - a. The one reality is the physical, material world - God is irrelevant,

- b. Multiple realities - God is irrelevant and is not one of the realities,
- c. God is relevant - multiple realities in all areas, God's perspective is one among many,
- d. Same as (c) but in morality and religion there is only one reality as per God's Word,
- e. Same as (c) but all realities are not objectively real. The task for the Christian journalist is to identify and reject every variety of option 2, develop option 1 and practice it. That is the challenge for a Christian university and the schools of communication and journalism --to let the one who has God's perspective speak it faithfully (Jer. 23:28).

Essay 11
January 1987

Deceit

“He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth.” (1 Peter 2:22)

“Whoever would love life and see good days must keep his tongue from evil and his lips from deceitful speech. He must turn from evil and do good, he must seek peace and pursue it.” (1 Peter 3:10-11)

Authority and Deceit

The scope of this essay concerns itself with the following question: What authority does a journalist have, and is that authority broad enough to include deceit?

It has been argued that in certain limited instances a journalism may employ deceit in order to get at the truth. This question and argument present an interesting inquiry into the scope of the journalist's authority. Acknowledging that God has not left us without sufficient guidelines to enlighten our thinking upon this subject, several Biblical principles apply.

The question of what authority does a journalist have is not quite the right question. The question which precedes it is a simpler one. That question asks, What authority does a human being have? Biblically, man is created in God's image, male and female. Accordingly, God endows men with certain rights and duties. God created the office of man and empowers men to discharge the obligations of that office. Broadly speaking, the duties of this office include loving God with one's heart, soul, mind and strength, and loving one's neighbor as oneself. We are speaking here of man individually, not as man in any other collective capacity. In other words, I am not discussing at this time the office of man as a husband or wife, nor am I referring to the office of man as an elder or deacon. Likewise, I am not referring to the office of man which is civil in nature. In other words, free to exercise the civil power of the sword to punish those who do wrong.

At this point I am simply looking at what each one of us as human beings created in God's image have liberty to do as human beings. As the requirements of the moral law to love God and our neighbor are laid down at creation, all men everywhere are bound by them. Concomitant with that law is the liberty which we enjoy to fulfill the requirements of that law.

The basic rule in this instance is that men should avoid sin. The Old Testament records many of the items which should be avoided, including the list in Exodus 20 prohibiting men from giving false testimony against their neighbor. Likewise the New Testament contains a laundry list of sorts, Romans 1:28-31 among them. These include several common sins which the Scripture exhort us to avoid, including sins of the mouth, such as strife, deceit, gossip, slander and boasting. Beyond this the Christian faith grants a tremendous breadth of liberty, for what we may do is that which

obedience to God requires.

Now we may return to our original question concerning the authority of a journalist. It is apparent that a journalist by definition is also a human being, and therefore has full authority to exercise all of the power concomitant with the duty and office of a human being as we have noted. It is likewise clear that the journalist by definition does not possess any original authority to act as a parent, a husband, a wife, an elder, a deacon, nor a civil magistrate. Journalism is not an institution of God in the sense that a journalist steps into the shoes of an office which is ordained by God. Like the lawyer or the doctor or the mechanical engineer, journalism is a profession apart from a specific office with a given type of authority. Thus unless the journalist clothes himself with the authority of one of these additional offices, he may not exercise additional power.

There is a great belief today that the duty of a journalist is to protect the virtue of the people. Sam Donaldson has said that since Watergate, the duty of the journalist is to uncover the 'greed and corruption' of government, to show the people that the government is lying.

While many journalists in this capacity are self-appointed, having neither been elected nor possessing an office through a legitimate means, they nevertheless as human beings have the liberty to investigate these matters. But that is the point. Any authority which the journalist claims must be an authority granted to all men everywhere, for by virtue of his profession the journalist does not accrue any inherent rights or duties.

Freedom of the press is the right of the people to print or communicate their views and to investigate a matter which is within their jurisdiction as human beings and with respect to the government as citizens. The freedom of the press presents no special right or privilege which a few professionally trained journalists somehow may possess or claim. Indeed the very wording of the First Amendment proscribes Congress from making any law respecting the freedom of the press. It does not *per se* grant a right to a journalists to the exclusion of others to do this or that. Any right which appertains is accordingly a right given to all men to investigate that which suits them. It is very popular in our day to suggest that lying or deceit may be employed to get at the truth. In other words, deceit and deception are legitimate vehicles for protecting and defending truth. These friends of truth argue that to hold up the high standard of truth, they must deceive their neighbor, who in many cases is admittedly a liar. The question, however, of whether a journalist may lie or deceive his neighbor is one which is essentially a question of whether a human being may lie or deceive his neighbor, for no rights or privileges or exemptions from the law inherently accrue to a journalist simply because of that profession.

If a journalist has a special right or privilege exclusive to journalism, it must be by contract or it must be by agreement or it must be by some other legitimate means by which all men, if they desired, could enter into and obtain. The lawyer, for instance, has a right to represent a client in a case where a non-lawyer would not. The reason is simple. The lawyer has been retained by the client to defend him in this cause. As a matter of fact, the lawyer stands in a less preferred position than the journalist, as lawyers are licensed whereas journalists are not. But simply by being a journalist, he has no warrant whatsoever to act beyond the authority which all men possess as human

beings.

Let's say that a story is brewing and the journalist realizes that unless he lies he is unable to get to the truth. It is on this basis which he therefore concludes that in order to save the virtue of the community, "I must lie." But I ask, what is the virtue of the community? Has not the community spoken to their lawful civil representatives to get at wrongdoing? Have they not entrusted the police with the power to be their representatives to ferret out wrongdoing?

But let's make the hypothetical more difficult. Let us say the police are corrupted and are unwilling to expose the wrongdoing in a community. Then I answer, Is there a Grand Jury which is present? The people by the Grand Jury method have reserved to themselves in these United States a broad investigative tool of which the prosecutor of a given county may employ at his discretion. It is the Grand Jury which will return an indictment if criminal wrongdoing is performed. But let us say that no one will return an indictment on a Grand Jury, that the people in a community do not care, that the prosecutor himself is corrupt.

If all these things be true, what is left of the virtue of the community of which the journalist is now going to lie to preserve? I answer that the community is itself corrupt and the journalist deceives himself, that he is setting a standard of anything by his deceitful conduct. In such a case under such a hypothetical, the journalist himself is part of the problem. It is a sham and hypocrisy to declare that we love truth so much that we are willing to lie to obtain it. This sets no standard. This elevates no virtue.

What can the journalist do? The journalist should be wise as a serpent, but innocent as a dove. I particularly like that reference to innocence. A journalist who goes in and lies and is deceitful in order to obtain his information cannot be innocent. In such a case, there is no difference between being wise as a serpent and the serpent itself. But I posit this: By the journalist's innocence, he will convict wrongdoers in their hearts. And if their hearts be hardened beyond that point, his wisdom will perceive it.

Herein shines the magnificence of this Biblical principle. For the journalist who lies or practices deceit to get at the truth, hardens himself and so hardened, is unable to perceive or discern between right and wrong matters.

"Whoever would love life and see good days must keep his tongue from evil and his lips from deceitful speech. He must turn from evil and do good. He must seek peace and pursue it." This is the mandate for the journalist. I must caution again that the journalist who deceives, with the belief of gaining an advantage, hardens himself so that in the end result, he is unable to see and unable to perceive. This is a Biblical principle in action. Though a short term benefit may accrue, the long term loss is great. And who is our model in all of this?

"He committed no sin and no deceit was found in his mouth." It was Christ who could discern whether men were lying; whether their lips spoke the truth because He himself had no deceit in His mouth.

I will admit that there have been some general discussions about a passage in the Old Testament where spies were sent into the land into which Israel was to go, to spy it out. But this has nothing to do with the present discussion, for spies sent by a civil government in the legitimate exercise of its power to maintain foreign relations or obtain that which has been given to them as a nation differs in kind than the present discussion.

Essay 12
January 15, 1988

The Present Challenge

Introduction

Truth in journalism should stand at the core of The 700 Club, CBN News, the School of Communication and Institute of Journalism. The University's statement of academic freedom testifies for truth. It declares that "the truth which makes men free is God's revealed word in the Holy Bible." The University's purpose is to find the truth which makes men free. That includes the truth which makes journalists free. Indeed, the Bible is the truth which governs the University's various disciplines and schools. The Bible gives us the universal truths which define each of its disciplines, including communication.

The Bible is the true and objective standard by which the University's disciplines can be measured, by which they can be found consistent, and by which their shortcomings can be gauged. It is the Bible which is the plumb line of truth, for it contains what God has clearly spoken--spoken about news, journalism and communication, both for the University and the Network.

I want to make three points. First, I want to tell you how and why I came to write these essays. Second, I want to tell you briefly what these essays say. Third, I want to offer some concluding remarks on why we as a University cannot afford to sacrifice the minds of our students to the philosophy of our age - a philosophy which renders God incapable of clear objective communication to his own creation - man.

Background

In 1983 I was faced with a choice--attend a university in the midwest or attend CBN University (now Regent University). I chose CBN University because it held out the promise of articulating a Biblical view of government, law and rights. I already possessed a non-Biblical view.

When I graduated from law school, I looked around the Christian legal community for a hint of the relationship between law and the Bible. I found Christian lawyers who loved Jesus; they had a desire to do what was right. I also learned their minds were unrenewed on the subject of law, government and rights. They thought like evolutionists, like positivists, like relativists, and so did I.

I did not come to the University because it was a spiritual refuge or for religious experience. Far too many of our students come here for that purpose alone, and much of what we do as a community wrongly perpetuates this image. No, I came to the University to change the way I think about law and government. What I came for, I obtained.

When I arrived here, however, I also learned there was no unity of knowledge which existed among the different schools. The vision to define the disciplines of law, policy, education, business, counseling, communication and Biblical studies upon a Biblical basis was not really accepted; it was not widely discussed and it was not championed. The rigors of academic inquiry guided by the Holy Spirit gave way to prayer before and after class with a plethora of non-Biblical theories squeezed in between. A superficial unity of the Spirit - an undefined mystical and often anti-intellectual approach to academics - did business for renewing the mind.

As a joint Public Policy/Communication major, I decided to try my hand at developing a Biblical view of communication. As my professional training is not in this area, I had no expectations as to what such a Biblical approach should look like. I went in and sat down with the Bible and wrote the essays now before you. I turned (as Thomas Jefferson would say) to neither book nor pamphlet while writing them. I did not consider it as any part of my charge to invent new ideas. Indeed, I sought to express the common sense of the subject from the scripture, in words so plain and simple as to command their common assent.

The Essays

Now what do these essays say? They are founded upon three propositions: first, “God has spoken clearly to men through His word;” second, God has spoken clearly to men about the nature of communication and journalism; and third, that what God has spoken is true and adequate, though not exhaustive.

Reflecting this, essay one declares that God's interest in communication lies in not only its process, that is, how we communicate, but also with WHAT and WHY we communicate. What God communicates is truth; and why He communicates is to bring life to all people. Of course, if you don't believe in God, He can hardly be expected to say anything, let alone say it in a given way or for a given purpose.

If you do believe in God, but think He has a problem in saying something clearly, particularly about communication or journalism, then how can you, the creature, the one who is made in God's image, say anything clearly? How can you, the creature, say of the Creator, “God has these ideas about communication in His mind, but alas He just can't seem to find the words.” Indeed, the one made in His image seems to have found the words! And are we to conclude that, “Well, whatever limitations God may have, this man made in His image seems to have overcome them. Indeed, this good fellow has excelled even God in clarity and erudition.” What I am suggesting by all this is that the Christian man who says the problem of communication lies with God, must think himself a great communicator and God a poor one. This I submit is a sin, not a virtue. It is not something to be taught at a Christian university.

Now one may respond that it is “arrogant to assume God would stoop to speak clearly to fallen man.” God, however, gave the scriptures to fallen man for doctrine, correction, reproof and instruction. It is not arrogant to take God at His word. It is arrogant, however, to deny that His word is good for instructing journalists and communicators in what to say, how to say it, and why

it should be said.

Let me move to Essay Two. Whereas Essay One said God has clearly spoken the truth to man, Essay Two indicates that man can clearly know what God has truly spoken. John 16:12-15 is all the proof one needs. Let me read that passage to you:

I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own (that is, from His subjective impressions); he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you. All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will take from what is mine and make it known to you.

For a University such as ours, which professes the Holy Spirit, we are painfully deficient in championing this proposition--that the Spirit will take what is God's and make it known to us without contradiction.

Does communication belong to God? Does journalism belong to God? Is God the Word? If so, then the Spirit will make His perspective on communication and journalism known to us. Our present encounter with the Holy Spirit as purely a means of self-edification or subjective experience, will never fulfill our mission statement--to cover the earth with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord. Our mission, our very reason for existence, will never be accomplished unless we also come to see the Holy Spirit in the sense of John 16:12-15. This second essay shows how that mission can be fulfilled in the area of communication and journalism.

False Perspectives

In the second essay, I also illustrate four false perspectives of communication. I want to emphasize one of these, namely, the information perspective. The essence of this perspective is that Christian communication is the reporting of significant events and opinions from a variety of perspectives, occasionally with resolution.

The problem with the information perspective is not that it presents a wide variety of viewpoints, including a Biblical one; the problem is that it includes the Biblical perspective as simply one among many. Or to say it differently, the view that God exists and created the world is considered equally valid as the view that He does not exist and did not create the world. The reporter must act as though these views are equally viable. This is not Biblical communication.

We are not called upon to render significant reports or opinions from a variety of perspectives. We are called upon to render, in a true way, a true account of reality from God's perspective.

I will not dwell long on the third essay (number ten in the series of eleven), which focuses on the notion of multiple realities. Multiple realities says that every man (or professor) defines reality for himself--that reality is only what is subjectively perceived. Communication theory calls this "being

objective.” Objectivity in this sense is taught at the University and practiced by the Network.

Objectivity as used in the sense of multiple realities means first, that God's perspective is simply one among many, but who's to say what is true or what is false. Or second, God's perspective on religion or morality is true, but His perspective is only one among many in all other areas of life.

This is not objectivity at all. It is man, making God's reality in man's own image. It is man constructing reality purely in terms of his own perception. Objectivity, however, in the Biblical sense is this: seeing all reality from God's perspective. But if objectivity is just presenting a bunch of viewpoints, then God must be the most biased person in the universe. He would hardly be someone to model a University after.

The one who is objective sees all of life from God's perspective, for what may be known about God is plain, because God has made it plain, so that men are without excuse. Indeed, our University is without excuse if it doesn't have a Biblical view of teaching the universals of God's word.

In conclusion, God can talk. He created us to hear His voice. He gave us a mouth to speak the truth to a watching world. Not just religious truth, but the truth of all of life, including truth in journalism.

Essay 13
March 1990

What is a Christian Liberal Arts Education?

Philosophy of a Christian Liberal Arts Education

The fundamental *mission* of any educational institution is to discover and teach Truth. Discovery of truth begins with knowledge of God. It involves an examination of the universe and world He has created. This knowledge is found written in the Bible and is affirmed in God's Creation. Truth can be sufficiently and reliably known by mankind to the extent necessary to rightly order our lives and cultures.

The distinctive *purpose* of a Christian liberal arts education expands on this mission. Such an education applies the truth--that body of knowledge--to every field of academic inquiry. It compares that body of knowledge with prevailing presuppositions. It does its best to understand every field of knowledge from God's point of view and demonstrate the superiority of that unified Biblical knowledge to a watching world. Through intellectual discipline, inculcating habits of study, and by the personal example, the graduate should leave the institution ready to teach others that truth which has been committed unto them.

The distinguishing *challenge* of a Christian liberal arts education in today's world is to discover and teach these matters in an intellectual and cultural environment indifferent or antagonistic to the knowledge of God. Its challenge is to demonstrate to the culture the preserving characteristic and critical need for Biblical truth so that we may rightly order our lives and culture. In order to meet this challenge, a Christian liberal arts education must be concerned with renewing the mind. It must be concerned with development of the "mind of Christ" in each student, administrator and faculty member.

The actual *practice* of providing a Christian liberal arts education includes teaching students differing viewpoints, but not doing so in the broader epistemological context that all points of view are equally valid. Christian education does not involve the synthesis of Biblical truths with false ideas nor the weaving of Biblical principles with un-Biblical philosophies. A Christian liberal arts education should prepare a student to pursue his or her chosen vocation, occupation or profession. The institution, however, should not transform its curriculum into job training.

Finally, an indispensable *prerequisite* for a Christian liberal arts education is intellectual freedom. The discovery and conveyance of truth can be best pursued where intellectual freedom for both faculty and students is observed and where legalism in evaluating differing thought and conduct is eschewed. It is God who made the mind free and it is His will that it should so remain. Where freedom of thought is encouraged in the context of Biblical standards of right and wrong, the Holy Spirit is welcomed to continue the process of renewing the mind of the faculty as well as the student in both a corporate and individual sense. An important high water mark of intellectual freedom is

open debate, free from personal acrimony or mere disputation.

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