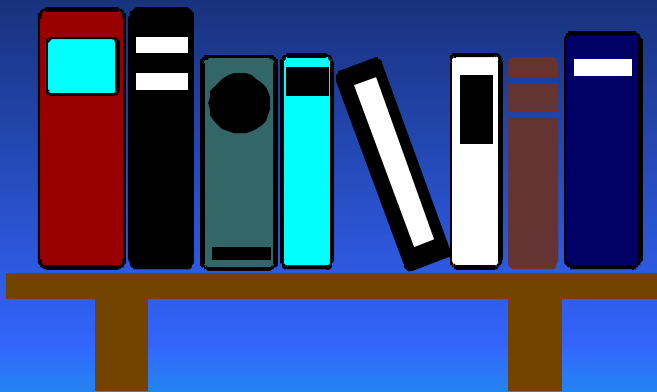


B. Historical-Critical Method

Evaluating modern scholarship



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Reading Assignments

- Optional:
 - Marshall, *New Testament Interpretation* 11-18.
 - Rise of historical-critical method, Berkhof, *Principles of Biblical Hermeneutics* 28-39.

1. The Nature of "Historical Critical Method"



Definitions

- Key term: “historical-critical.”
- To many scholars it mean careful research.
- Antisupernaturalism affects the mainstream.
- “Historical-critical” includes antisupernaturalism.

Definitions

- The key term is “historical-critical.”
- To many within the mainstream of scholarship, it connotes simply careful, controlled scholarly research.
- But since the Reformation a long history of antisupernaturalism affects this mainstream.
- At Westminster, “historical-critical” denotes the dominant framework of 19th and 20th century biblical research, including the presuppositions of an antisupernaturalistic worldview.

Antisupernaturalism

- Ernst Troeltsch's principles of historical investigation.
 - Criticism. Only probabilistic judgments.
 - Analogy. Present and past are alike.
 - Correlation. Closed continuum of causes.

History is brute fact, without miracle.



Common but
erroneous.

Antisupernaturalism

- Summarized in Ernst Troeltsch's view of principles of historical investigation.
 - Criticism. Only probabilistic judgments.
 - Analogy. Present and past are alike.
 - Correlation. Closed continuum of causes.

Assumes history is brute fact, without miracle.



Common but
erroneous.

Historicism

- “Historicism” is antisupernaturalism plus recording pure objective facts.



Historicism

- “Historicism” combines Troeltsch’s antisupernaturalism with the view that historians should record facts with pure objectivity.



Evaluation from *Lex Christi* Framework

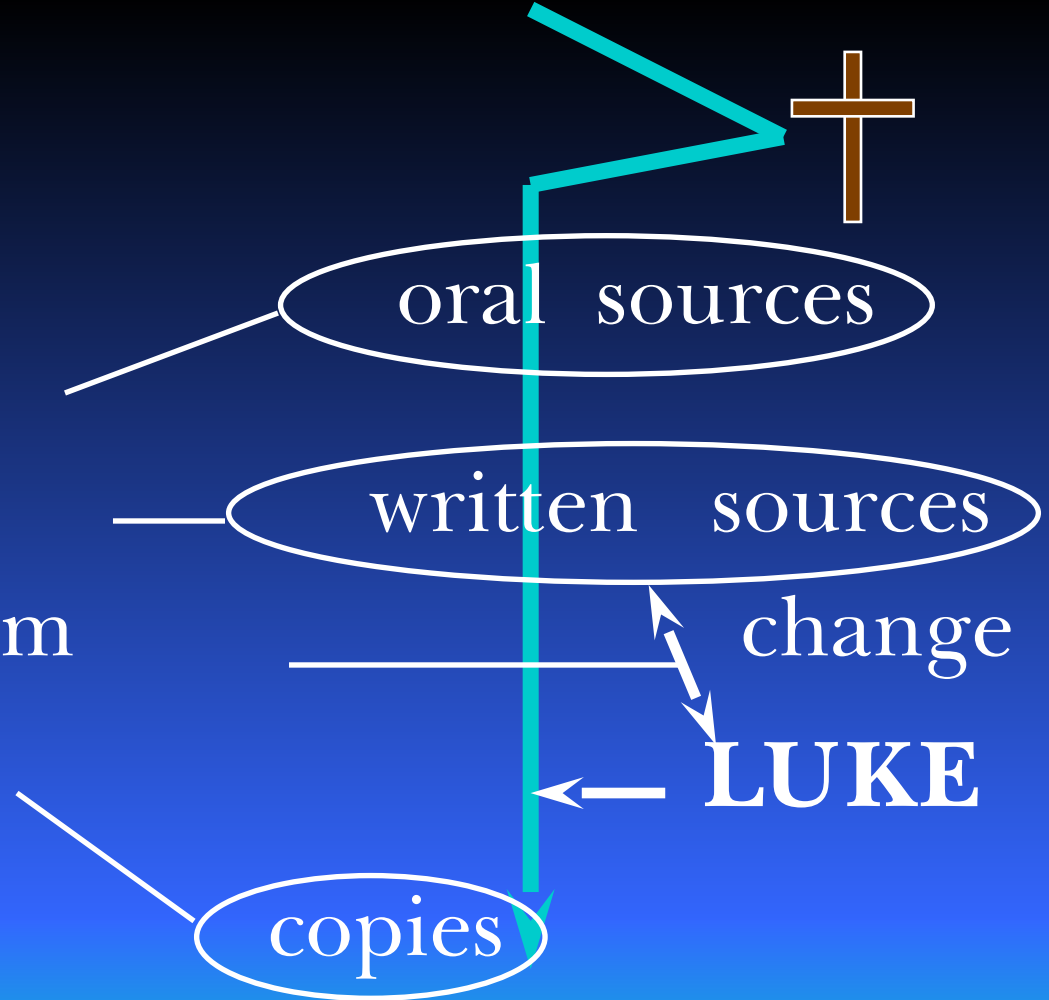
- Critical (antithesis): h-c method discounts divine work (4C) and divine presence (7C).
- Critical (antithesis) 2: critics may slander the orthodox, accusing them of naiveté and of being "unscientific."
- Positive points (common grace): h-c method asks for attentiveness to history (4C) and language (9C).

2. Tools from Historical-Critical Method



Main Critical Tools

- Form criticism
- Source criticism
- Redaction criticism
- Text criticism



Potential of Critical Tools

- Text criticism valuable for autograph.
- All others involve legitimate questions.
- Useful for apologetics.
- Reconstruct OT/NT environment (a contribution to “introduction”).

Potential of Critical Tools

- Text criticism is justified by our focus on the autograph.
- All others involve theoretically legitimate questions expressing human curiosity.
- Useful now and then for apologetics.
- Reconstruct OT/NT environment (a contribution to “introduction”).

Problems with Critical Tools

- Highly speculative.
- Skeptical because of antisupernaturalism.
- False principles of reconstruction.
- Even if they worked, so what?

Problems with Critical Tools

- Highly speculative.
- In practice, overly skeptical because of antisupernaturalism.
- In practice, using false principles of reconstruction.
- Even if they worked, would they pay off?
The meaning of a text is what it says, not the history of its origin.

Irrelevance of Sources

- The meaning of a text is what it says,
not the history of its origin.

Read it!



Implications of *Lex Christi*

2C implies we treat God's communication as holy, radically distinct from surrounding human communication (including noninspired sources or derivative texts).

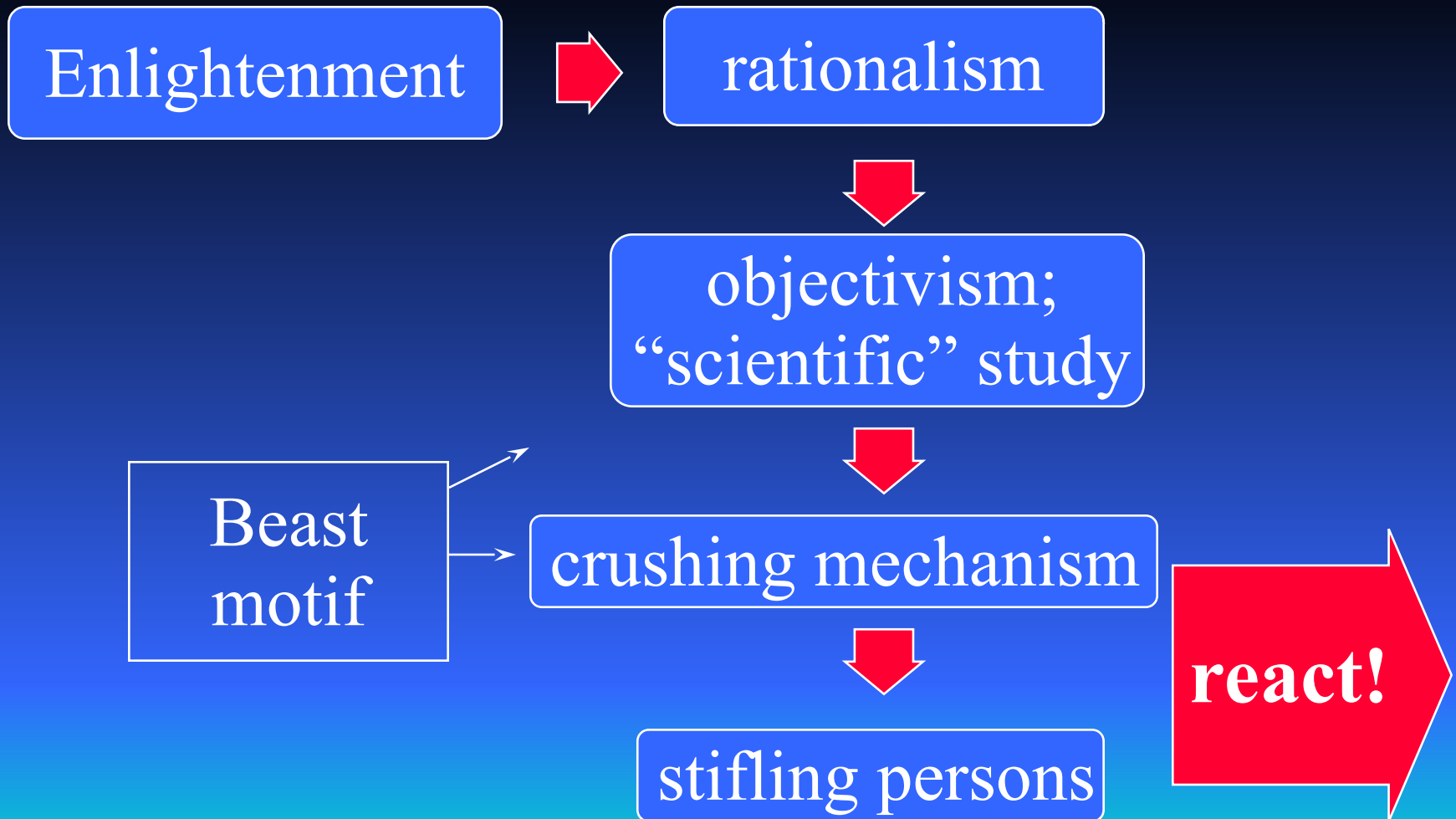
C. Situationist and Subjectivist Hermeneutics



1. The Motive: Reaction to Rationalism



The Road to Reaction



Modern Subjectivism

irrationalism;
Harlot motif

I am free (unrestrained), above law



free meaning:
reader creates

free ethics:
existential

free truth:
relativism

free
religion:
whatever
works

Sounds familiar.



2. Marxism

including liberation theology

Variations of Marxism

- Classic Marxism (Cuba)
- Theology of liberation
- Political correctness movement



Not yet dead.

Marxism as Compassionate and Zealous for Justice

- Looking for suffering minorities and socially and economically disadvantaged people
- Looking at ways in which the powerless are exploited by those in power

Marxism as Counterfeit

- Theology
- Sin
- Gospel
- Church
- Deliverance
- Consummation
- God
- Dialectical materialism
- Economic oppression
- Marxist call to workers
- Communist party
- Communist revolution
- Communist utopia
- Abstract laws of history; “humanity”

Marxist Biblical Interpretation

- Antithesis: “hermeneutic of suspicion” sees economic motives, not meaning.
 - Rejects opponents’ arguments a priori, because they have wrong motives.
- Common grace: impose Marxist motifs on all literature.

Marxist Biblical Interpretation

- Antithesis: “hermeneutic of suspicion” examines economic motives behind texts, rather than straightforward meaning.
 - Rejects opponents’ arguments a priori, because they have wrong motives.
- Common grace: impose Marxist motifs on all literature.

Marxist Epistemological Release

truths of history

blocked by ideology
(corporate “sin”)

illumination of
communist “gospel”



Now I can
critique
ideology.



Marxist Epistemological Dilemma

truths of history

universal ideology

supposed enlightenment
masks new oppression



Now I can
critique
ideology.



So I
can seize
control.

Marxist Ethical Satisfaction

- Alienation
- Meaninglessness
- Disorientation from multiple views
- Guilt over privilege
- Identification with a cause
- Purpose of “salvation”
- Exhilaration in superior understanding
- Righteousness in commitment to justice
 - righteousness by works

Watch out!



Ethical Bankruptcy

- Ultimacy of material universe (god).
- Any ethics?
- Historical law worthy of allegiance?
 - Fight against it, as existentialists?
- Man, chance protoplasm, worthy of allegiance?

Ethical Bankruptcy

- Ultimacy of material universe (god).
- So where do we get any ethics at all?
- Why should impersonal historical law be worthy of my allegiance?
 - Why not just as well fight against it, as existentialists propose to do?
- Why is man worthy of allegiance, if he is a chance product of protoplasm?

Theology of Liberation

- Finds liberation in the Bible.
- Marxism as tool for social ills.
- Biblical liberation for Marxist “sins.”
- Marxism distorts biblical teaching.
(find Marxist motifs anywhere).

Theology of Liberation

- Finds liberation motifs in the Bible.
- Uses Marxism as the fundamental tool for analyzing social ills.
- Applies biblical liberation to Marxist “sins.”
- In the process, Marxist counterfeits distort biblical teaching. As with generic Marxism, it can find Marxist motifs anywhere.

Political Correctness as Variation

- Analyze by gender, race, economic class.
- Restructure society to achieve righteousness.
- “Hermeneutics of suspicion.”
- Ethical self-righteousness.

Political Correctness as Variation

- Analyze people, movements, communication, etc., in terms of membership in social classes: gender, race, economic class
- Restructure society to achieve righteousness
- “Hermeneutics of suspicion”
- Ethical self-righteousness

3. Feminism



Feminism as Compassionate

- Concern for women's value and distinctiveness

Feminism Parallel to Correctness

- Specializes political correctness to gender.
- Analysis by classes of male and female.
- Deliverance through alteration of power.
- Appeals to compassion for the underdog.
- Evaluates texts for class motives.

Feminism Parallel to Correctness

- A specialization of political correctness to the issue of gender.
- Analysis by class membership, specifically now the classes of male and female.
- Deliverance through alteration of power relations.
- Appeals to compassion for the underdog.
- Evaluates texts on the basis of class motives.

Feminism as Counterfeit

- Theology
- Sin
- Gospel
- Church
- Deliverance
- Consummation
- God
- Egalitarianism
- Oppression of women
- Maleability of gender
- Egalitarians
- Remove past stereotypes
remove authority
- Universal freedom
- Humanity

4. Other critical frameworks

- Scientific sociology
- Critical sociology
 - Generic: morally committed
 - Critical theory
 - Critical race theory

5. Evaluation



Positive Aspects

- Identify some real sins.
- Unconscious sins and corporate sinful ideologies.
 - Sins against the weak unnoticed.
- Asks new questions:
notices new aspects.
- All are in God's image.

Positive Aspects

- Identify some real sins.
- Promote awareness of unconscious sins and corporate sinful ideologies, including what takes place among Christians.
 - Sins against the weak tend to go unnoticed.
- Asks new questions of texts and leads to noticing new aspects and new details.
- Egalitarianism feeds on the truth that all people are created in God's image and deserve respect.

Negative Aspects

- Misidentifies sin.
- False way of salvation.
- Reads what is not there.
- Rebels against differences:
age, personality, sex, wealth, skills, culture,
giftedness, and status in authority.

Negative Aspects

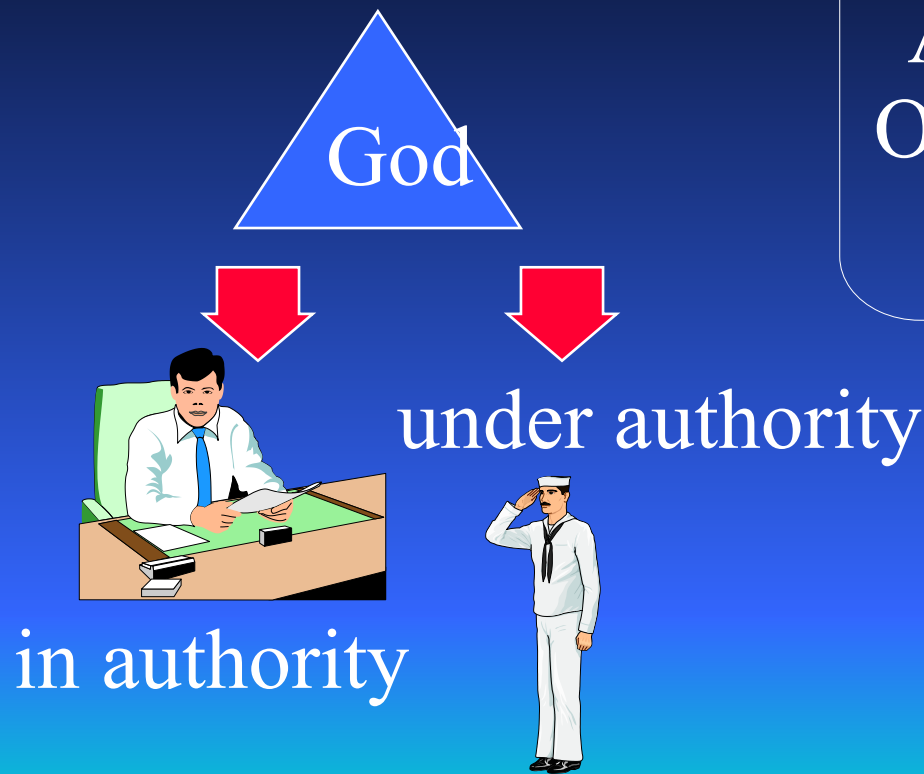
- Misidentifies some things as sin.
- Offers false, easy way of salvation.
- Can read into texts what is not there.
- Egalitarianism rebels against the many differences that God has ordained: age, personality, sex, wealth, skills, culture, giftedness, and status in authority.

Implications from *Lex Christi*

- Critical analysis (antithesis): 5C implies recognizing authority appointed by God; 8C implies recognizing property given and appointed by God.
- Critical (antithesis) 2: 9C: Marxism slanders people not belonging to the right class or way of thinking
- Positive point (common grace): 5C and 8C indicate the possibility of powerful people using power exploitatively.

Mystery of Differences

- Intellectuals deny nonrational difference.

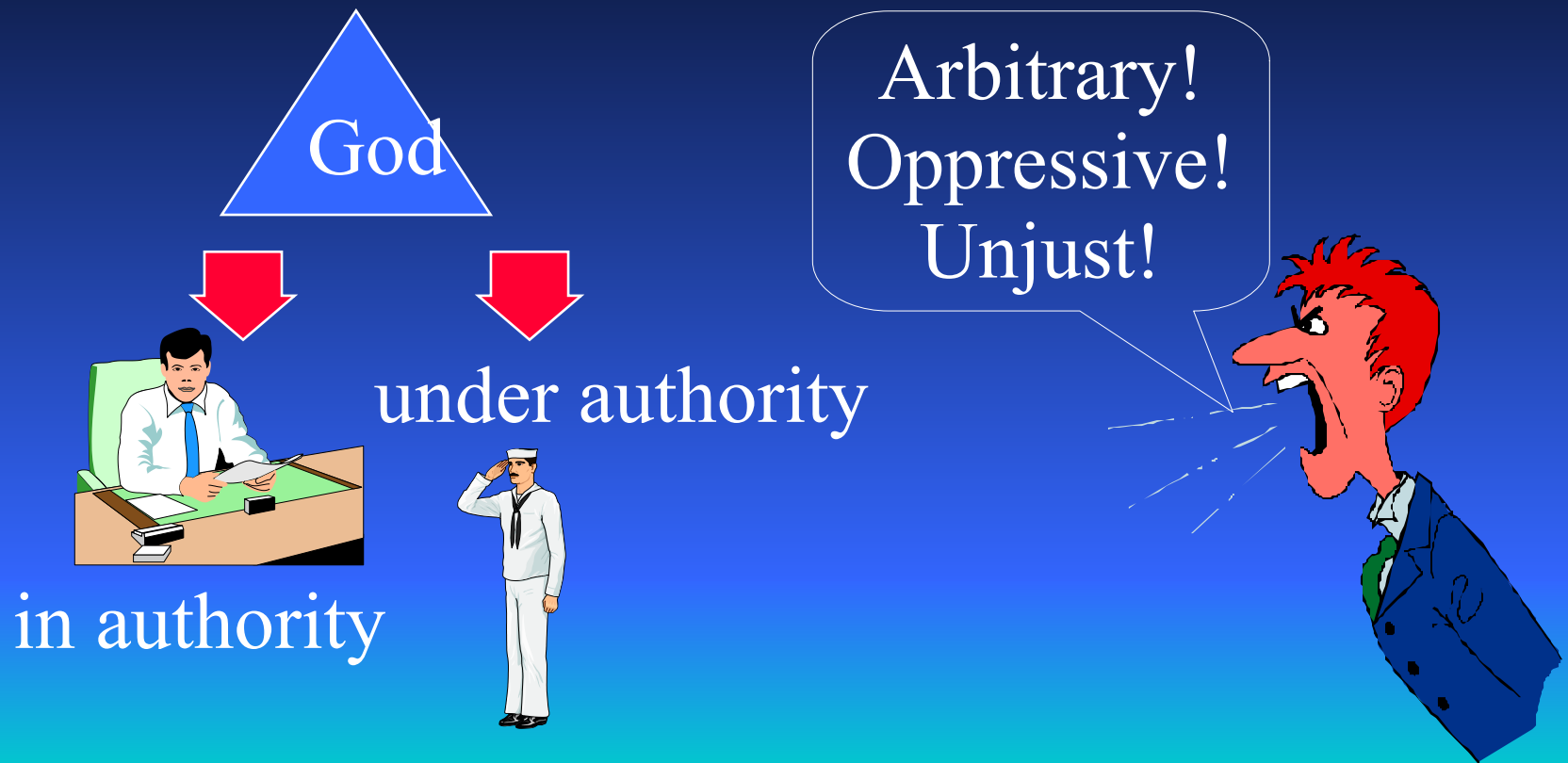


Arbitrary!
Oppressive!
Unjust!



Mystery of Differences

- Intellectuals lack a rational bottom for differences, and so want their disappearance.



Appeal for Relief

- Everyone is guilty about sex and money.
- Everyone has been sinned against.
- Sin is deep, painful, and complex.
- Promise simple relief:
 - “Let us solve your problem.”

Tempting.



Appeal for Relief

- Everyone is guilty about sex and money.
- Everyone has been sinned against.
- Our entanglement with sin in these areas is deep, painful, and complex.
- Promises of simple relief are attractive.
 - “Let us, the elite, take the problem off your hands. Let the government decide who gets the money and who has what sexual privileges.”

Tempting.



Particular False Solutions

- Strong husbands dominate
- weak abdicate leadership.
- Strong wives push “rights”
- weak just conform.

Eph. 5:22-33 and Matt. 20:25-28 advocate Christ-like servanthood. Destroys selfishness.

Particular False Solutions

- Strong husbands dominate
- weak abdicate leadership.
- Strong wives push “rights”
- weak just conform.

Eph. 5:22-33 and Matt. 20:25-28 advocate being a servant after the model of Christ. This destroys the selfishness and idolatry in false solutions.

Breaking Chauvinism and Egalitarianism in the Family

God is Husband to Israel

Hosea



Christ is Husband to church

Eph. 5:23, 32



Husband is head in love

Eph. 5:22-33

marriage expresses
love, not domineering
or identity of roles

Breaking Chauvinism and Egalitarianism in the Church

God is Father to the Son



God is Father to saints



church is family of God 1 Tim. 3:15



family has fathers (elders)

1 Tim. 2:11-15; 3:1-7

God-centered
salvation.



family expresses
love, not
identity of roles

6. Postmodern Contextualism



Features of Contextualism

- Humans dependent on language and culture
- Inaccessible transcendent truth
- Solution to cultural conflicts by banishing dogmatism

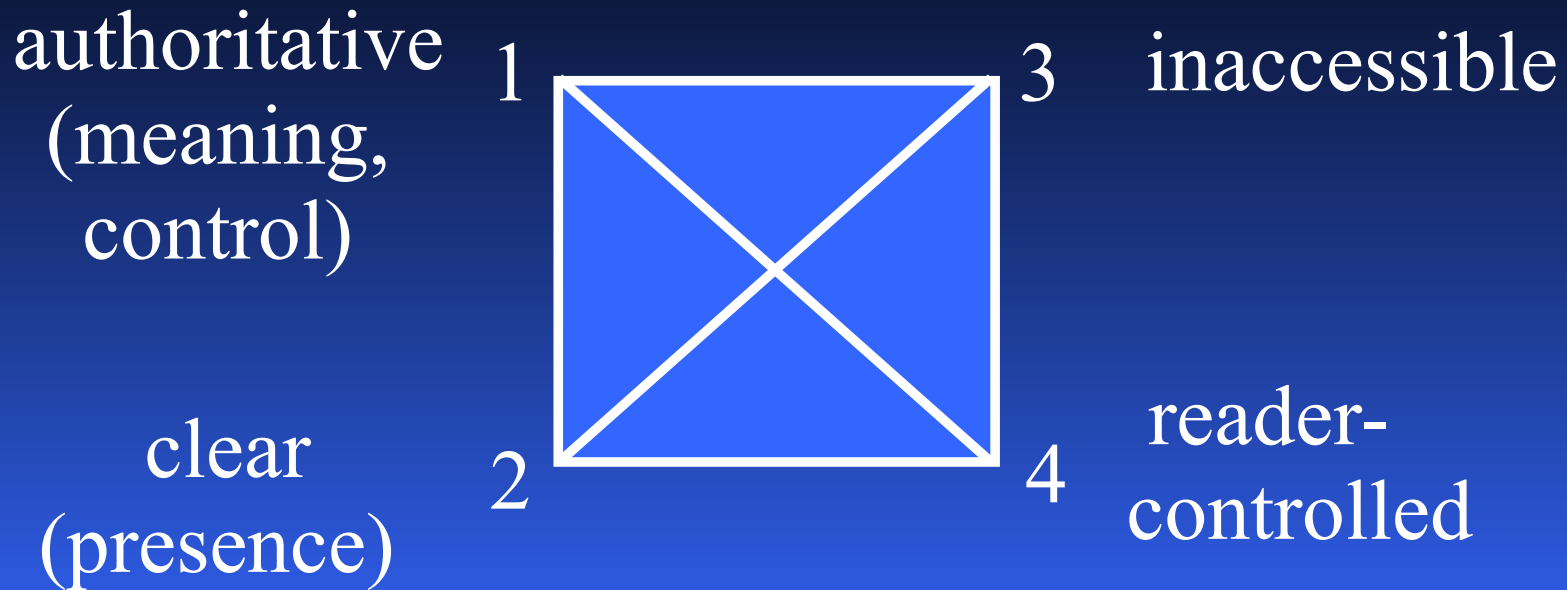
Features of Contextualism

- Humans dependent on language and culture: we think we know because of linguistic and cultural training
- Inaccessible transcendent truth: we experience reality only through the grid of language and culture
- Solution to cultural conflicts by banishing dogmatism

Positive Desires in Contextualism

- No snap judgments about others.
- No forced conformity for other individuals or cultures.
- Desire for freedom for differences.
- Relief from oppressive power.

Epistemology: Frame's Square for God's Word



Frame, *Doctrine of the Knowledge of God*, p. 14.

Postmodern Contextualism as Counterfeit

- Theology
- Sin
- Gospel
- Church
- Deliverance
- Consummation
- God
- Prison of finiteness
- Dogmatism
- Tolerance
- Postmodern gnostics
- Dogma demoted to opinion
- Universal peace
- Humanity

Evaluation

Positive

Notices:

- Finiteness
- Sin
- Corporate aspect
- Diversity in individuals and cultures

Negative

- God absent
- Sin excused as finiteness
- Individual free to create his own morality
- Clarity labeled dogmatism
- Authority labeled oppression

Implications from *Lex Christi*

Critical (antithesis): 1C, 2C: universality of divine truth and divine moral standards.

Critical (antithesis) #2: 9C: it is slander to accuse contrary views without evidence.

Positive point (common grace): 5C, 7C: influence of environment.

Central Challenge

modernism

- universal rationalism (one)
- human sameness
- oppression from reason

postmodern

- reason within local culture (many)
- human differences
- freedom to recreate man

Christian

- divine reason (one and many)
- same and different in the body
- freedom under God

D. Rationalistic Holistic Approaches

What is stirring in the academy within the Enlightenment tradition?

Why?

- Desire for neutrality,
 - including not being obviously driven by political commitments
- Desire for recovering rich interpretation,
 - not merely the fragmentizing and existentially irrelevant ("boring") results of traditional historical/source criticism
- Desire for transcendence,
 - without the cost of surrender of person and will

Popular Approaches That Allow "Neutral" Scholarship

- Literary criticism
- Canonical criticism and theological interpretation
- Retrieval of patristic hermeneutics
- Prosopological exegesis
- "Literature," aesthetics, composition
- Treat the Bible as a single work (a church document)
- What did they do?
- Noticing voices of the persons of the Trinity

Possible for Evangelicals

- Treat text as whole
- Seems compatible with divine authorship
- Evangelicals can participate in the scholarly dialog
- But, as practiced in the academy, evades the divine voice as authoritative for the interpreter (change your life)

The Remaining Denial in "Neutral" Scholarship

- Bible as "literature"
- Bible as a single church document
- What did Fathers do?
- Notice voices of the persons of the Trinity
- Excise historical factuality, divine voice
- Not divine author; church, not God
- Study them at a distance (they believed divine word)
- They did. We study them and pretend.

Conclusion

- Much that is attractive
- A snare, because
- Tempts to "neutrality"
- Tempts to put the divine voice at a distance, virtually discounting it in favor of the human voices of a modern academic "project"
- Cursed for contempt of God--a subtle idol in letting the "program" displace God
- Remember 1C and prologue of 10 commandments