

THE NEW THEOLOGY VS. BIBLICAL CHRISTIANITY

Definition of Concepts
in New Theology

Biblical Christianity

Characteristics and Definition of Terms

The characteristics of the new theology is that it is essentially man-centered, focusing on the things which make us human - history, culture, subjectivity, sensitivity, secularity and style of life - persons and their relationships.

Modern christian thinking must be stripped of supernatural elements and made relevant to the thinking of the day.

The Good News of Jesus Christ is that it is man-centered because it is God-centered at its source. It is God-centered as the creator of the universe uniquely reveals Himself to man in history, in Person as God-Man (Christ), and in His written communication, the Bible. It is man-centered since God created man in His own image with the possibility of containing divine life to mediate His Kingdom on earth, living with authority and dominion. "That you might have life (zoe) and have it more abundantly"

John 10:10

The good news does not have to do with theological facts or historical facts. Christian truths are existential rather than historical revelation of God's truth. The new theology shifts from supernatural theism to existential humanism, e.g. "the existential truth of 'a resurrection' occurs in us upon hearing the gospel", not the actual bodily resurrection of Christ from the dead.

It is non-intellectual to believe in a personal God who could reveal himself in a personal way. God did not disclose Himself in the person of Christ in history.

The pronouncements and substance of the Bible are factual in a non-subjective and historical sense as well as having application as existential truth to individuals. The facts recorded in the Word of God make God as a Person real to us and His love and forgiveness available to all men. Thus, "a resurrection" does occur in man upon hearing the gospel because the actual resurrection of Christ from the dead made it possible and without the historical fact it would be humanly impossible.

The New TheologyDefinition of Concepts
in New TheologyBeliefs about God

The God of the Bible as a rational relevant option is obsolete. A new understanding of the divine emerging within man himself will bring about the reappearance of god - an intelligible god - because IT (sic) is no longer a transcendent supernatural being. The new theologian with his "radical openness" argues that terms like "Heavenly Father" must be understood symbolically or existentially not as an objective fact. And, if it seems that God has died, then what seems to have died is the old conception of him since the traditional doctrinal statements about God are no longer relevant or even intelligible to contemporary man.

The Biblical revelation of God is not rational to the new theologians who define God as an IT within every man. Therefore, the one who knows God best is the one who knows Him least. Man-thoughts are more valid than God's facts.

Biblical Christianity

The God of the Bible is a rational, personal God, or there is no Source, no purpose, no order. Divine life logically stems from the Divine Creator. Human reason can only produce humanism.

The term "Heavenly Father" must be understood experientially because of the fact that God is there. If it seems He has died, it is because man has not believed and cannot know One he has not experienced personally.

The only way man can ever know the divine image within himself is first to know the facts about the Divine God who created him. It is only as we know about God through Christ through His written revelation, the Bible, that we can say He has disclosed Himself to us in a personal way. It is illogical to say that God is intelligible without His personal factual revelation. Personal encounter necessitates a personal disclosure by a person. God is a Person (we are created in His image) who wants to be the One "in whom I live and move and have my being" and is concretely real and distinct in the Person of Christ. In Christ, he is "God focused in man for a time". Man cannot intelligently formulate an existential god without factual information about him.

Beliefs about Encounter with God

Knowing God is something lived or experienced rather than merely thought. God reveals Himself, not information about Himself. "Truth as encounter" (Buber, Brunner) implies no particular ideas or doctrines at all - not even a meaningful use of the word God. "We know God existentially as encounter rather than propositionally as fact", says Brunner. Therefore, with the doctrine of 'truth as encounter' (existential truth) the new theology is free to consider any belief, or no particular belief, as 'Christian'. Being Christian is a 'style of life', not Biblical facts or beliefs.

God is so unknowable and so impersonal that it is impossible and unnecessary to know about Him. Make up your own mind about Him, encounter Him in a way that is meaningful to you, and create a 'Christian' life-style. In this way the 'divine spark' in you will become meaningful to you.

Knowing God is something lived and experienced because the mind of man has an Object Who is able to be thought about. God reveals Himself based on information about Himself.

'Truth as encounter' can only result from knowing the Word of God, the Bible. When God encounters man, He encounters him in history, in nature, in the written Word, and in the Living Word, Jesus Christ. All these encounters are personal and true. We know God experientially and existentially only because we believe in Him as an absolute revealed fact. Indeed it is imperative for a man to know facts and truth about a person before he can commit himself to that person with any degree of honesty and integrity.

Being Christian is a person who has invited the Living Christ into his life and is being transformed by the Holy Spirit into His image. (11 Cor.3:16). Without God's very life in a person as the source, any other 'style of life' is mere human initiation.

Beliefs about Encounter with Man

The New Theology presents Christ as a person who empties himself for the sake of others in a kind of 'self-giving' that is the model for human existence in contemporary society. This style of life is to be dominated by a loving concern for others which frees us to be our real selves. This living is rooted in persons and how they relate to one another (a Jesus-modeled humanism without the Divine resource which makes this kind of living possible). In this style of living we see God in everyone.

The Christian life becomes one of trying to live up to the current theological code of good deeds and not by God's absolute standards. This "code of good deeds" is dictated by the particular interests of the religious establishment currently in power, which promotes protest marches, draft evasion, situational ethics for moral values, rather than God's absolute standards.

The Biblical position is that in order for man to have a meaningful love relationship with other persons it is necessary to first have a love relationship with God.

First, a person comes to know God and respond to His love (first command).

Second, God enables us to love our neighbor (second command). This is the Good News of Christ. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." John 3:16 And, by having Christ in me I am a "new creation" (1 Cor. 5:17) who can "love just as Christ has loved" (John 13:33-35 (1 Cor.13)). This encounter is centered in the Person of Christ. He keeps it alive and real.