



COHERENCE THEORY

Week 3

HOW CHRISTIANITY IS DYING
and why it is a good thing.

HOW CHRISTIANITY IS DYING

and why it is a good thing.

Romans 1:25 They exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator.

Evangelicalism is trying to fight a war on many fronts about pluralism, sexuality, error and compromise. We want you to have a coherence to be able to filter everything, so you can understand our culture better.

- Genesis 1:1 ***“in the beginning God Created...”***
The scriptures start with a distinction between creator and creation.
- Genesis 1:26 ***Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.***
God works through His days of creation and culminates in making man. God says He will make mankind in His likeness so we would rule the fish of the sea, birds of the air, over livestock and creatures of the earth
- Genesis 1:27 ***So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.***
Our God is the preexisting, self sufficient creator.

He creates us in His image and likeness, when God makes us in His image and he bestows on us dignity. This dignity was also to result in a HUMILITY. The root of the concept of the word humility means “to know your place.” Genesis starts the way it does so we would KNOW our place in the scheme of things.

Humility understands that we are beneath God, but above lower creation, we occupy the “between.” Confusion comes when we are lifted too high, or pushed too low, but humility comes when we know our place.

What is our place? Image bearers. When God uses the language “image” and “likeness” it means that we are mirrors. God is glorious, we are His image, and we are to reflect, to mirror, that glory by showing forth His goodness and greatness to creation. It is **His glory, our joy, and others good.**

- John Calvin says that our job is to “make the invisible God visible.”
- John Piper says that “God is our treasure.”
- Harold Best defines us as creatures who were made *for* worship, but not only *to* worship.” *It is strategically import therefore to say that we were created continuously outpouring. We were created in that instant Imago Dei.”* (the image of God). *“Our God is marked by unceasing outpouring. From eternity past the Father, Son, and Spirit are unceasing in their outpouring of love, communication, adoration, and affection one to the other.”*

We are all living, mirroring, to the glory of a person, thing, cause, status, or an experience. *“Worship is the continuous outpouring of all that I am, all that I do, and all that I can ever become in light of a chosen or choosing God.”*

- Genesis 2:7 ***then the Lord God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature.***

To be an image bearers is to be a worshiper. This is where the HS was placed into mankind. God's intent is that:

- **WE would bear His image**
- **WE would worship Him**
- **Our unceasing outpouring would be to His glory**
- **Mankind would be priests, the earth the temple**

By virtue of being created in the image and likeness of God we BARE the likeness of God. We don't need to DO anything to get it. In Genesis 3 we believed the lie that we weren't like God, but we could be, and we sinned. In that moment we transferred from becoming worshippers to being idolaters; we transitioned from the truth to the lie that we can do something to be like God.

In Genesis 1-2 you see God is a God of DISTINCTIONS.

God separated

- **light from dark,**
- **water from land,**
- **day from night,**
- **men from women,**
- **mankind from animals,**
- **God from mankind.**

Monism tries to obliterate all distinctions so ALL are one (all religions, all people, all beliefs). Today culture is erasing distinctions between God and mankind, mankind and animals, mankind and the rest of creation, God and creation, men and women, Jesus and other religions.

Idols are what we focus on today to give us strength and life...sin is the worship act. There is continued, unceasing outpouring, but it is for the lie and not the truth; it is for created things rather than the creator. The church today is dealing with all the effects of idolatry in people. In 1 Corinthians 10:7-8, 14 Paul gets to the root of the issue. Paul says *"the eating problem, the drinking problem, the pervert problem is ultimately the result of one problem, the idol problem."*

Humanity IS unceasingly outpouring:

- **Gluttony is idolatry,**
- **being a drunkard is idolatry,**
- **fornication and friends with benefits is idolatry,**
- **adultery is idolatry,**
- **pornography is idolatry.**
- **Substance abuse is idolatry**

The world we live in is passionately committed to pouring itself out for created things and not the creator God.

Tim Keller (commenting on Soren Kierkegaard says): *Sin is the despairing refusal to find your deepest identity in your relationship and service to God. Sin is seeking to become oneself, to get an identity apart from him. . . . Most people think of sin primarily as "breaking divine rules," but Kierkegaard knows that the very first of the Ten Commandments is to "have no other gods before me." So, according to the Bible, the primary way to define sin is not just the doing of bad things, but the making of good things into ultimate things. It is seeking to establish a sense of self by making something else more central to your significance, purpose, and happiness than your relationship to God.'*

Romans 1:25 **they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator...** 2 world views, 2 ideologies: The truth or the lie.

- **The truth: There is a creator and He is to be worshiped by those of us who are created**
- **The Lie: That we should worship and serve created things in the place of God.**

The average evangelical in America is more closely aligned with paganism than the gospel of Jesus Christ. In America (link at the bottom).

- 92% of American believe in (a) God.
- 70% Believe many religions lead to eternal life
- 55% believe in a guardian angel
- 52% believe in prophetic dreams
- 67% have had spiritual experiences..

Of those who claim to be Christians:

- 20% believe there is spiritual energy in mountains or trees.
- 16% believe in the “evil eye.”
- 20% believe in reincarnation

National Survey of youth and religion

- 77% of all young adults believe in God
- 58% say they are protestant
- 16% say they are evangelical

Of those who say they are evangelical

- 74% believe that Jesus is the only way to the Father
- 51% Strongly disagree with moral relativism

DA Carson, (Aaron’s paraphrase), “One generation believes and fights for something, the next generation assumes it to be true, the next Questions it, the next denies it.”

Gary Laderman (chair of the Department of Religion and Professor of American Religious History and Cultures at Emory University) says if you take the traditional concept of religion out of an American culture you can easily insert 3 things and see how pagan it is.

Paganism is the ideology and idolatry is the activity

- **Religious idolatry** - Worship of created things.
- **Spiritual Idolatry** - Vague general spiritism.
- **Cultural idolatry** - Where a culture centers itself on idolatry.
 - A. Overarching myth or a story that defines life
 - B. There is a community that gathers around that myth
 - C. There are sacred rituals they undergo as worship acts

Environmentalism

- **There is the myth that defines life** - that the environment is our mother.
- **There a community that gathers around that**
- **There is sacred ritual** - Bikes, bags, trees.

Film

- **There is the myth that defines life** - Major movie narrative.
- **There a community that gathers around that** - Parties, online, dress-up
- **There is sacred ritual** - Speech, dialog, offering on money

Music

- **There is the myth that defines life** - Theme of a song or album.
- **There a community that gathers around that** - Concerts/fanclubs
- **There is sacred ritual** - Lead singer becomes a shaman

Sports

- **There is the myth that defines life** - Depends on sport.
- **There a community that gathers around that** - tailgating, jerseys, tattooing of names
- **There is sacred ritual** - Know the teams, scores, names of players, rules.

Television

- **There is the myth that defines life**
- **There a community that gathers around that**
- **There is sacred ritual**

Malls (Shopping)

- **There is the myth that defines life** - I need something
- **There a community that gathers around that** - Reviews, who has what, whose is better
- **There is sacred ritual** - spend your money at the temple

Medication (Pharmaceuticals)

- **There is the myth that defines life** - You need this to be happy.
- **There a community that gathers around that** - We are all on it
- **There is sacred ritual** - 9pm nightly, take the pill

Why is it harmful?

- 1) To idolize something you must demonize something else.
- 2) People and things fail as gods.
- 3) You use people and stop loving them.
- 4) Your idol requires sacrifice.

Romans 1:25 *they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator...*

Today in America Christendom is dying; Christendom was a 500 year experiment that included the protestant reformation and the USA as we know it.

Christendom provided a common moral framework:

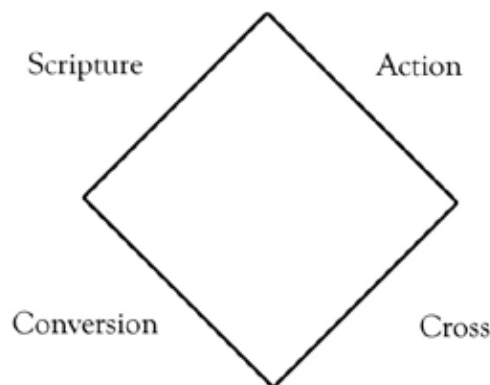
- Marriage was good
- Marriage is for a man and a woman
- Children are blessing
- Sex is for marriage
- Sex outside of marriage is wrong
- Belief in God is a good thing
- Loving God included a commitment to our nation, ancestors and heritage.

Christendom is not Christianity.

Christendom is less about being saved for eternal life and the kingdom of God, and more about living a moral life to build a good society and a great nation. Matthew 7:22-23 ***On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?' And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you...***

Jesus is distinguishing some things about true faith.

- **Possessed** - It is to be possessed (it is internal transformation)
- **Profession** - We testify about Jesus.
- **Practice** - We get baptized to show the death and resurrection of Jesus, we partake of communion to show the broken body and shed blood of Jesus, we go to church to worship corporately, we get married to honor God's intent and design a covenantal agreement.



4 marks of a true Christian

- 1) **Belief in the Bible as God's word**
- 2) **The Cross**
- 3) **Conversion**
- 4) **Activism**

Many surveys will tell you that between 40-70% of Americans consider themselves "Christian." John Dickerson says that THE DATA, based upon the quadrangle, is 7-8.9%. Evangelical Christianity is NOW a minority!

Why can this be a good thing?

When there are no longer benefits to professing a faith you don't possess, we will be able to see who the real Christians are. Less and less people who are not Christians will be willing to call themselves Christians. We will be able to preach the gospel more effectively. We will be able to stop fighting against a Christian sub-culture and firmly step into a culture who needs the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Element has a great hope for our future because we can now strip away the garbage and begin to preach the gospel effectively. As believers our goal should be to take the timeless word of God and to bring it to the timely issues of our day.

Further Reading

A Call To Resurgence: Will Christianity Have a Funeral or a Future - Mark Driscoll

Unceasing Worship: Biblical Perspective on Worship and the Arts - Harold Best

Doctrine: What Christians Should Believe - Mark Driscoll, Gerry Breshears

<http://www.pewforum.org/>

The Great Evangelical Recession: 6 Factors that Will Crash The American Church...and How to Prepare - John Dickerson

My Notes: