

THE CHURCH IN A PLURALIST SOCIETY

School for Ministers
Feb. 15-18, 93
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1. INTRODUCTION

1. GROUND RULES:
- TRUST ONE ANOTHER'S COMMITMENT TO CHRIST
 - NO FOOLISH QUESTIONS
 - INTERRUPT TO COMMENT OR CLARIFY

2. FOR NOT A NEW QUESTION

- 1 COR 2:1-5 - Context = diversity
- problems of pluralism
 - problems of messy churches

3. CONFRONTING PLURALISM:

3.1 FACT OF PLURALISM

- TORONTO - NO MAJORITY - ALL MINORITIES
- BOSNIA - HERZEGOVINA
- USSR
- LOS ANGELES
- HAWAII

3.2 MENTAL MAPS OF PLURALISM

• neighbors are Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs.

- Evangelize - They evangelize our children

• SINGAPORE -

• BOOKS - 1. Buller.

3.3 PAIN A PICTURE OF 3 STAGES IN RESPONSE TO PLURALISM

- IMAGERY OF PETER BERGER.

1. THE FIRM GROUND OF PROGRESS: 1800-1970S

- ~~POSTMODERN~~ MODERNITY - POSITIVISM.

• WHY IS PLURALISM A QUESTION NOW? HOW DID WE HANDLE THE ISSUE 50-100 YEARS AGO - AFTER ALL PLURALISM HAS BEEN AN ISSUE FROM TIME OF BABEL



1. AGE OF PROGRESS: SCIENCE & CIVILIZATION

1.1 Advances in science: Superiority of West
- Others primitive, prelogical, uncivilized

- Steam Engine
- Gun
- Microbiology
- Physics & medical science
- Airline, T.V., Car, Computer - modernity

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1.2. Colonial Expansion: Conquest by West
- white man's burden.

1.3 MELTING POT IMMIGRATION

- became like us. - English, Protestant, educated, scientific

1.4 FOUNDATION!

1.4.1 SCIENCE IS FACTS = REALITY = TRUE

• Objectivity: Feelings, Values cut off. as Subjective

• Absolute: Unified, universally true

FIRM GROUND!

• EVANGELISTIC!

2. Age of Systematic Theology

2.1 Theology & Science

• Objective knowledge. Faith = mental assent to propositional truth.

• Absolute: - ALL OTHER RELIGIONS ARE FALSE
FIRM GROUND - OTHER PEOPLE ARE 'PAGANS' Don't need to listen to them.

3. POSITIVE ASPECTS

- 3.1 ^{WORLD} Benefits of modern science, would all want these.
- life, health.
 - comfort.
- 3.2 ~~METHOD~~ Church: STRONG SENSE OF TRUTH & ABSOLUTES
- Theology central place - debates over baptism, eschatology, ecclesiology - take beliefs seriously
- 3.3 MISSIONS: AGE OF MISSIONS - sacrifice, commitment.

4. NEGATIVE ASPECTS

- 4.1 Disillusionment with Progress - Science
- new problems - nuclear destruction
 - ecological "
 - chemical "
- Scientific American*
15,000,000 new chemicals!
- 4.2 CULTURAL & THEOLOGICAL ARROGANCE
- Ethnocentrism - bad word.
- 4.3 CHRISTENDOM CHRISTIANITY = WESTERN CULTURE ^{CIVILIZATION = COLONIALISM.}
- New Christians → like us. foreigners in their own land.

II RIVER OF RELATIVISM: 1950 — POST MODERNITY — INSTRUMENTALISM

1. MISSIONS: Encounter from AFAR

- MISSIONARIES FIRST STRUGGLED WITH OTHERNESS.
- THEY DISTURBED US — SOMETHING HAPPENED TO THEM → US UNEASY
- SAID PAGANS NOT ALL EVIL, IDEAS NOT ALL SUPERSTITION.

2. AT HOME:

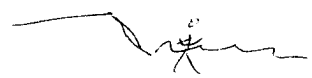
- Neighbors near Muslim, Hindu, etc.
- MT LAKO MINN. 25 families of Vietnamese.
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3. ATTACK ON OUR WORLDVIEW

- what right do we have to deny truth?
- how can we live harmoniously together.
- how can we as Christians evangelize others?

4. FUNDAMENTALIST REACTION

- taste pluralism & back off



→ ISOLATIONIST MENTALITY

- FORTRESS MENTALITY
- CONVERSION OF A FEW WILLING TO JOIN OUR CAMP
- IRRELEVANT TO THE WORLD

5. POST MODERN RELATIVISM: Live and let live

Easiest response. Each group does its thing.

- HOMOGENEOUS COMMUNITIES
- HOMOGENEOUS CHURCHES.

5.1 BACKLIVIZATION

- Fragmentation of culture
- only minorities
- coexistence & harmony TOP VALUE
- Ethnocentrism CARDINAL SIN
- Bibb, MOSMIC MADNESS 1991

5.2 DECONSTRUCTIONISM

- NO central truth - your Truth, my truth.
- NO central story - Mosaic story, Lutheran story, Muslim story
- FRAGMENTED THEOLOGIES
 - TABOR EXPERIENCE

5.3 PRAGMATISM: No Truth → what works

- SOCIAL SCIENCES REPLACE THEOLOGY AS FOUNDATIONS OF ANALYSIS
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5.4 RELATIVISM: INSTRUMENTALIST EPISTEMOLOGY

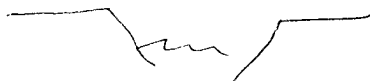
- Assume all truths
- Evangelism, Missions TABOO.
- WORLD PARLIAMENT OF RELIGIONS

III THE FIRM GROUND OF REVELATION

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• 1 Cor 2:1-5

PAUL IN ATHENS — not a success: USED RATIONAL LOGIC.
NOW PREACH CHRIST.



• THERE IS AN OTHER SIDE

1 Cor 2:1-5

1. RECOVERY OF REVELATION:

1.1 AS HEARING

General ~~Script~~ - Private = Singularity
Analysis Implied:

1.2 AS TRUTH AND TRUTHS

1.3 AS DISCIPLESHIP

Hear Feel Obey
Obj. —> Subjective.

CHRIST IS CENTER ALL ELSE IS PERIPHERA

• Unity not in ideology
not in ecology,
not in style /
But in Christ of Scriptures.

DIVORCE GOSPEL FROM OUR CULTURE
OR THEOLOGY

2. RECOVERY OF CHURCH AS A HERMENEUTICAL COMMUNITY

1 Cor 2:6, 7
3:11

REVELATION HEARD AND UNDERSTOOD AND OBEYED 1 Cor 2:
2.1 TRUTH IS DISCERNED

2.2 REVELATION LEADS TO WORSHIP & ~~REPENTANCE~~

REVELATION LEADS TO KOINONIA & KINGDOM LIVING
ALLOW DIVERSITY IN UNITY (in CHRIST not in church).
~~REVELATION LEADS TO PROPHETIC MISSION~~

2.4 COUNTER CULTURAL PROPHETIC COMMUNITIES
POSITION OF COUNTERCULTURE (ALIEN), AMBIGUOUSNESS,
BODILY

3 RECOVERY OF MISSION

3.1 PRO PROCLAIMING THE GOSPEL (WITHOUT APOLOGIS OR SHAME)
WITH TRUTH AND LOVE

3.2 — PROCLAIMING IN HUMILITY (Paul I came with fear & trembling, warbling)

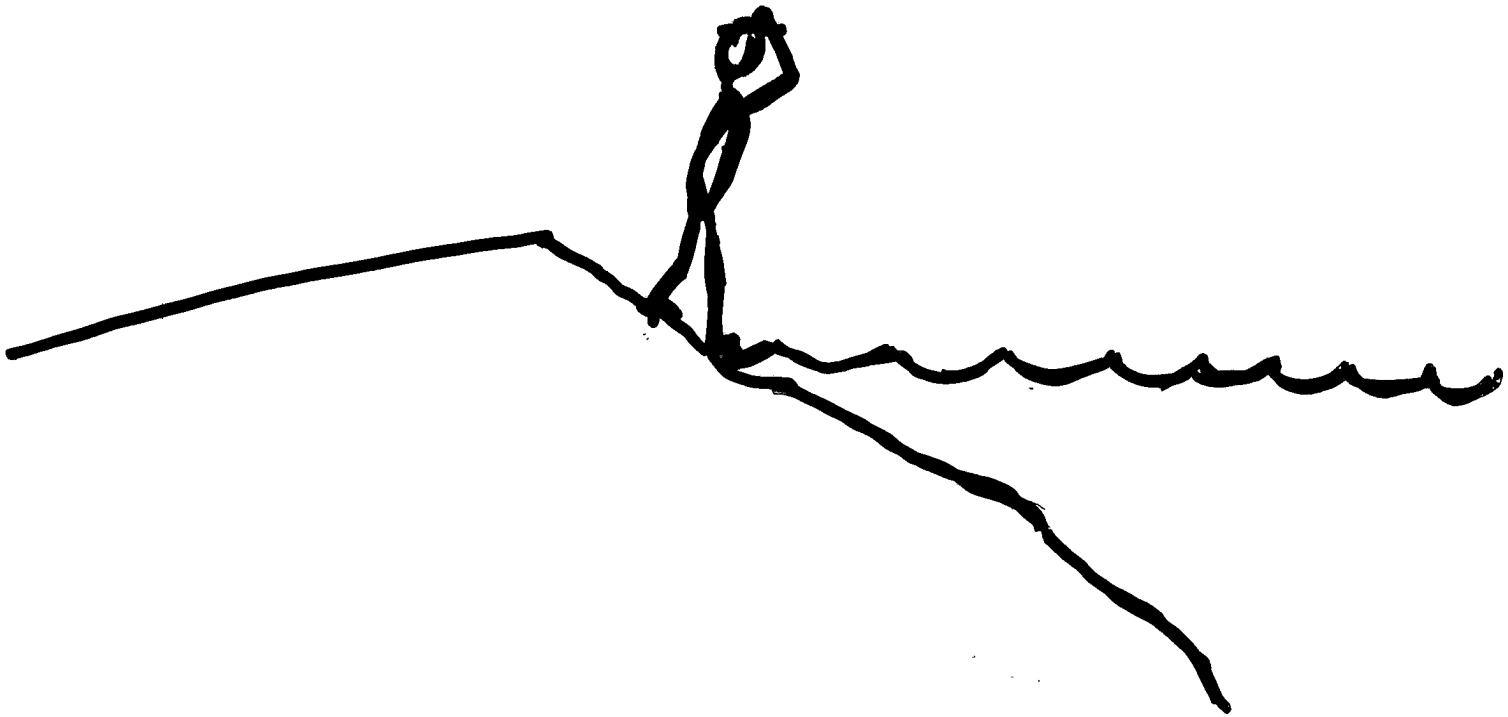
3.3 NOT COERCIVE

3.4 NOT ATTACKING OTHER FAITHS ISSUE IS PERSON NOT (PROPOSITIONALLY) TRUTH

3.5

• Allow all to hear story/stories
Allow all to tell story/stories
Accountability

II. THE RIVER OF RELATIVISM

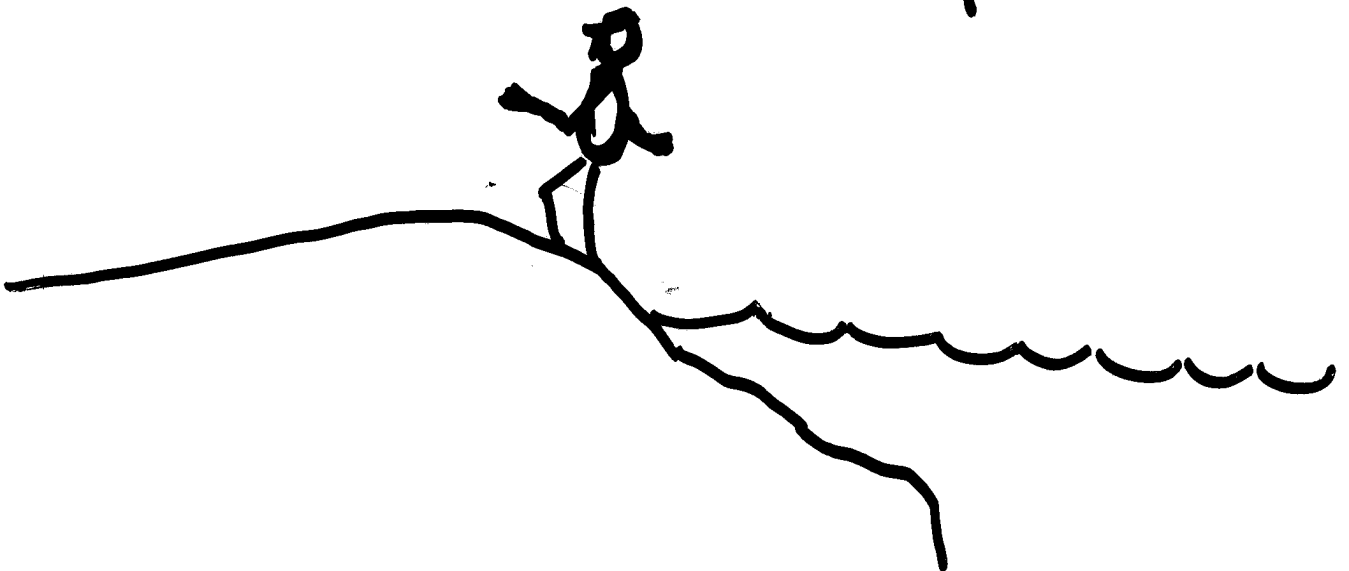
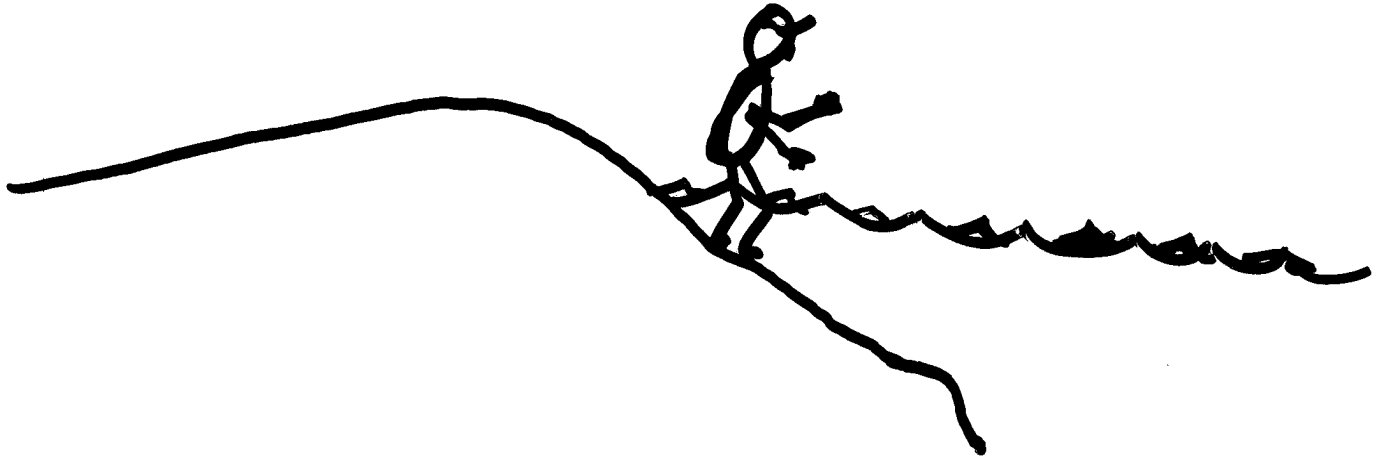


1. MISSIONS:

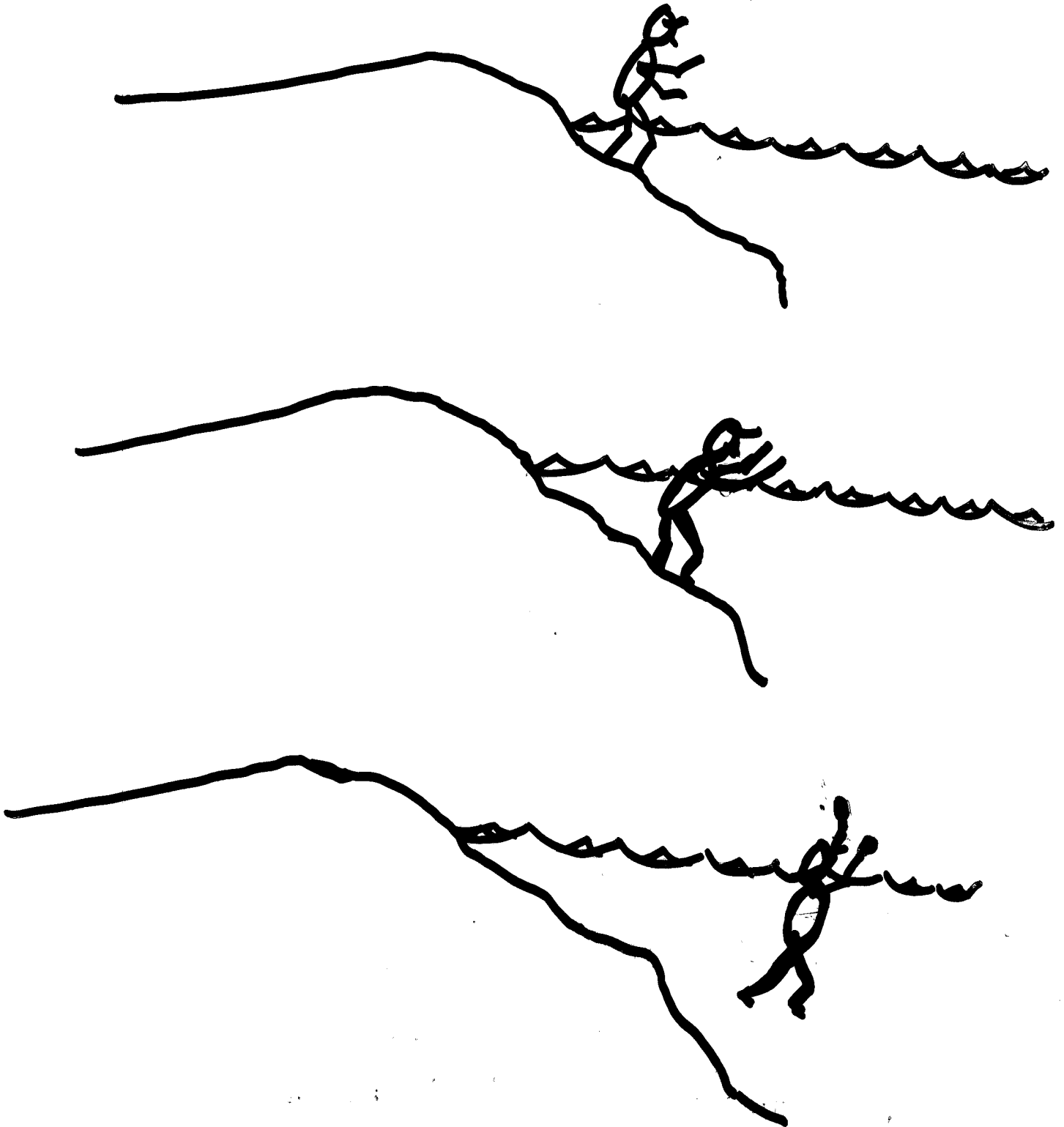
2. HOME COMMUNITIES

- HOW CAN WE CLAIM TO KNOW THE TRUTH?
- HOW CAN WE LIVE TOGETHER?
- HOW CAN WE EVANGELIZE?

IIA MAP TWO: THE FUNDAMENTALIST RESPONSE



II B. MAP THREE: THE POST-MODERN RESPONSE



III. MAP FOUR: THE FIRM GROUND OF REVELATION.



1. RECOVERY OF REVELATION: 1 COR: 2:1-5

- AS HEARING AND STORY
- AS TRUTH AND truths
 - DOES NOT RELATIVIZE truths.
- AS DISCIPLESHIP