

UNDERSTANDING FOLK RELIGION

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INTRODUCTION

In missions we assume Hindus know Hinduism, and Muslims know Islam. The reality is: most Hindus are folk-Hindus, most Muslims are folk-Muslims, and many Christians are folk-Christians.

We come with answers to ultimate questions. When people become Christians and we do not answer their everyday questions, they continue to go to their old animistic ways. The result is split-level Christianity: people who believe in Christ and come to church, but who, during the week, turn to diviners, astrologers, shamans and witch-doctors for healing and help.

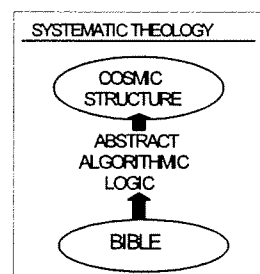
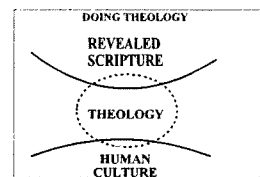
I. DOING MISSIONAL THEOLOGY

1. What is Theology?

- theology is reflecting on Scripture
- theology is done in human contexts

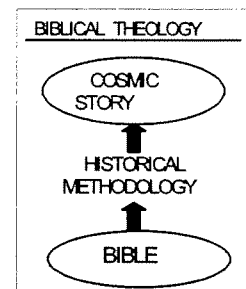
2. Systematic Theology:

- source: Bible
- central question: what are the unchanging cosmic realities?
- central method: abstract, analytical logic applied to the text. Well formed sets and algorithmic logic.
- results: an ahistorical, acultural synchronic structural view of reality.
- goal: to see reality as God sees it.
- contribution: helps us develop a biblical worldview.
- limitations:
 - hard to get from structure to story [diachronic, changing].
 - hard to get from universal to particular.
 - does not allow for mystery, paradox and antinomy.
 - little mission motivation--mission is not its central theme.



3. Biblical Theology:

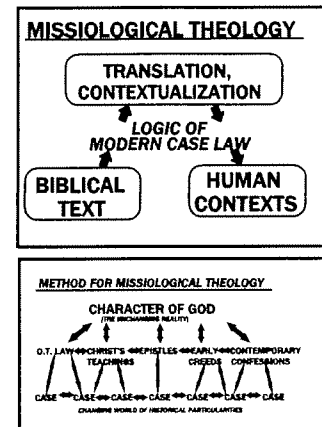
- source: Bible.
- central question: what is the big story?
- central method: historiography.
- results: an understanding of the cosmic story which gives meaning to the universe and ourselves.



- limitations:
 - hard to get from past to present.
 - hard to get from the cosmic to the particular.
 - little mission motivation--mission is cosmic, but not contemporary and local.

4. Missiological Theology:

- source: Bible
- central question: What does Scripture say to humans in this particular setting?
- central method: method of common law
- result: a missiological approach to humans.
- limitations:
 - need to link to cosmic universals [philosophical theology].
 - need to link to cosmic story [historical theology].



The three ways of doing theology are complimentary, not competitive.

5. Steps in Missional Theology:

5.1 Step One: Phenomenology. Study the people's beliefs and practices to understand them. These may not be true and right, but they are what the people come with. The goal is to understand the situation as fully as possible (social, cultural, personal factors etc.)

- avoid judgments at this stage because they are premature, we need to understand before we judge.
- the people are the experts here, and you are the learner.

5.2 Step Two: Ontology:

- Study Scripture to see what it says about the issue at hand.
 - the goal is to understand what God says to us in this situation through Scripture
 - you can lead in this because of your training, but it is more important to help them learn to read and interpret Scripture for themselves.
- Test the old beliefs and practices in the light of Scripture.
 - help the people come to decisions based on their understanding of Scripture. If you dictate the change, it will not last, and you will become a policeman. If they as a community make the decision, they will enforce it
 - much of the old culture you can keep,
 - some you must reject. If possible introduce a functional substitute.
 - some you can reinterpret, using old forms but giving them new meanings.
 - you should introduce new ways to link the believers to the global church [e.g. baptism]
 - you can create new ways using local forms and giving them Christian meanings.

- 5.3. **Step Three: Missiology.** Help the people move from where they are to where they should be through discipling. We cannot expect them to jump from their existing world to the new in a single leap. This is a long process of discipling, teaching, guiding and modeling. Start with areas in which the people consciously struggle with their faith.
- suggest other areas that must be addressed.
 - be kind and gentle, not demanding and harsh. Remember, if they change because of your pressures, it will not last. They must be converted internally if the change is to last.
 - remember deep lasting change is often a slow process and takes time, and constant re-commitment to the change.

6. Developing a Meta-theology:

We need a meta-theology—a way of theologies.

6.1. **Based on Scripture as divine revelation.**

6.2. **Recognizing our theologizing is always done in our context,** and the Scripture, not our theology, is the final authority. Therefore we do it humbly, seeing to understand Scripture, and recognizing the partial and perspectival nature of our theologies.

6.3 **Seeking the guidance of the Holy Spirit.** We must recognize that God guides his people who seek to understand his Word.

6.4. **Doing theology in community.** Theology belongs to the church as the body of Christ, not to experts. They provide specific understandings, but the church must discern what God is saying to it in this situation. The body of Christ includes the living church around the world, and the saints who have gone on before.

II. A MODEL FOR EXAMINING FOLK RELIGIONS

We need a model to examine and understand folk religions.

1. ROOT METAPHORS: We use metaphors to understand complex realities. Two that we all use are ‘mechanical’ realities and ‘organic realities.’

ORGANIC METAPHORS

- like a living being
- use metaphors of life processes: health, sickness, death
- relational
- ethical in nature

MECHANICAL METAPHORS

- like a machine
- use metaphor of impersonal forces
- seek control, formulaic
- amoral in nature

1.1 Examples of ‘beings’:

High god, lesser gods and goddeesses, demons, rakshasas, spirits, jinn, kami, ghosts, ghosts, bhutams, dayams, witches, ancestors, humans, subhumans, half-humans, human-animals, animals, plants, sun, moon, earth, rivers, etc.,

Example: Ashanti tribe in Africa: Onyakopon (high god), Abosom (lesser gods and spirits), Humans (ancestors, living, unborn), Nature Spirits (animals and plants), Earth Spirit.

1.2 Examples of ‘forces’:

Mana, magic evil eye, evil mouth, evil touch, omens, taboos, ordeals, astrology, medicines, gravity, physical forces, chemical forces, electro-magnetism, etc.

EXAMPLES: MANTRA FOR SNAKE BITE: (say seven times for each strip on the viper’s back) *Om namo, bhagavate, sarva peeshachi gruhamulu, nanu dzuchi, paraduzu: Ram, kleem, kshaum, hreem, sam, svaha.*

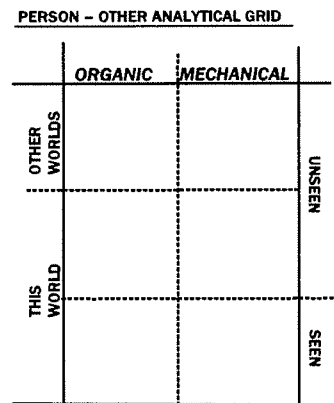
2. SCALE:

We think of reality as consisting of various levels:

- TRANSCENDENT - other worlds
- IMMANENT - this world unseen
- this world seen

3. MODEL:

If we combine the two dimensions, we have an analytical grid we can use to examine folk religions:



Example 1: HINDU BELIEFS

<u>ORGANIC</u>	<u>MECHANICAL</u>
Brahma, Vishnu, Siva	Brahman
Other high gods	Karma, Samsara, Dharma
Rakshasas, YakshasasDharma	
Marimma, micamma, and other local goddesses	magic evil eye
capricious spirits	astrology
ancestors	charms, amulets, talisman
saints, walis, humans	Ayurvedic and Unanni medicines
animals and plants	natural forces

Example 2: MUSLIM BELIEF SYSTEMS

ORGANIC

MECHANICAL

Allah, archangels, angels, devils	quisme
jin, quarina, zar, ancestor spirits	baraka, magic, dhikr, astrology, evil eye, auspicious numbers
Walis, saints, humans animals, plants	medicines natural forces.

Example 3: MODERN CHRISTIAN BELIEFS

ORGANIC

MECHANICAL

God, angels, demons	(fate - not taken seriously)
X	X
humans animals	biological forces chemical and physical forces

Modern westerners have no categories for spirits and supernatural powers of this world, so they do not take demon possession, magic or evil eye seriously. We need to reexamine these in the light of Biblical truth which does take spirit possession seriously.

4. Formal Religion, Folk Religion and Science:

4.1 **Formal Religions:** answer the questions of ultimate origin, purpose and end of the cosmos, our society and myself.

4.2 **Folk Religions:** answer the questions:

- meaning in this life, and meaning of death
- desire for a good life and avoiding/overcoming misfortunes
- need for guidance and problem of the unknown
- desire for justice and order, and challenge of injustice and disorder

4.3 **Sciences:** answer the questions of understanding and controlling:

- nature – natural sciences
- humans – human sciences

4.4 A Comparison of Formal and Folk Religions

Formal Religions

Folk Religions

• religious elite	- common people
• search for truth	- search for power and answers to immediate problems
• ultimate questions	- existential questions, here and now
• one right solution	- use many solutions in case one might work
• literate tradition	- oral tradition
• cosmic gods and scope	- local, territorial gods and spirits and scope
• institutionalized	- ad hoc arrangements
• prophets, priests	- shamans, magicians, witch doctors
• theologians	diviners, witches
• goal: salvation	- goal: life, health, wealth, success

III. QUESTION ONE: HOW DO WE FIND MEANING IN THIS LIFE, AND HOW DO WE GIVE MEANING TO DEATH?

1. Meaning is found:

1.1 **Synchronically:** (in a theology of personhood—all religions have this)

1.11 In our *being*:

Example: The Ashanti of West Africa believe that we get our body from our mother, our soul from our father, and our spirit from God. So everything having to do with our body—land, residence, and property—come from the mother. Everything having to do with religion comes from the father. Life comes from God

1.12 In our *becoming*:

We find meaning in becoming a full person. In many societies the stages are: Pre-human, human infant, human adult, married, retired senior, ancestor. The transitions are marked by rituals: birth, initiation, marriage, retirement, funeral.

1.13 In our *belonging*:

We find meaning in belong to a community of humans. This sense of belonging is often tied to biological **linkage**. We are tied to our parents, grand-parents, children, grand-children, etc. We share *One Life* and so are one family.

Ancestors
Living
Unborn

In these societies, ancestors remain a part of our lives—invisible but present. They are important:

- they have priority of parenthood: they are wiser, can give advice, and have ancient knowledge
- they have existence in the spirit world, and can deal with spirits and gods
- they have great achievements – example: “The God of Abraham . . .”
- they have the well being of the family at heart. They are guardians who reward good and punish evil. They give us guidance.
- they take different forms: some are benevolent, some are malevolent or capricious.

How do we deal with ‘ancestor veneration.’ We start by calling it ‘veneration’ not ‘worship’ because we don’t know yet whether it is worship or respect. We need to decide that first. If it is respect, we can keep the old rituals. If it is worship we ask if we can reinterpret the old rituals and give them new Christian meanings. If so, we do this. If not, we must not perform them as Christians.

1.14 In our *doing*: we find meaning in work and in what we achieve.

1.15 In our *having*: we find meaning in owning things. This has become the religion of modernity—buying things gives us meaning.

1.2. **Diachronically**: in our stories

1.21 In our personal stories

1.22 In the story of our group, tribe, church or community

1.23 In the cosmic story – of gods, cosmos and eternity

2. The Gospel gives meaning:

- *in being*: we all are created in the image of God. This is good news to the slave, the untouchable, the oppressed and the sinner.
- *in belonging*: we belong to a new family, people which is local and global. A new ethnic group who care for one another. Good news to the lonely, forgotten and marginal.
- *in becoming*: we are becoming saints and rulers. Good news to those who feel insignificant and stuck in life
- *in doing*: we are stewards in God’s work, soldiers in his army, farmers in his fields. Good news to those who find their work meaningless.
- *in having*: we have all things in Christ. We don’t need earthly possessions to find meaning in life.

IV. QUESTION TWO: HOW CAN WE GET A GOOD LIFE, AND HOW DO WE DEAL WITH MISFORTUNES?

1. What do we want in order to have a good life?

2. What are Misfortunes?

Untimely deaths (mother in child birth, barren woman, fisher at sea, suicides), unusual births (twins, abnormal births, breach birth), natural calamities (earthquakes, droughts, floods, fires), illnesses, epidemics, famines, poverty, failure in gambling, love, business and exams, loss of objects, wars, barrenness, mental illness, other misfortun

3. Mechanical Explanations of Misfortune and their Remedies:

- Bad fate -----> Divination and cautious living
- Bad karma -----> Live lawfully
- Bad stars -----> Use astrology to determine actions
- Bad magic -----> Counter magic
- Breach of taboos -----> Restitution and cleansing
- Object intrusion -----> Object removal
- Evil eye -----> Protective charms and signs
- Pollution -----> Purification
- Biological illnesses -----> Medicines
- Physical injuries -----> Surgery, medicines

3. Organic Explanations of Misfortune and their Remedies:

- Sin against: God, spirits, ancestors, society, nature, self -----> Sacrifice, cleansing, punishment
- Spirit possession -----> Exorcism of the spirit
- Soul loss -----> Soul recovery
- Witchcraft -----> Protection, destruction of witch
- Broken relationships -----> Mediation, reconciliation
- Mental illnesses -----> Counseling
- Violation of nature -----> Placation of nature

4. Illnesses:

5. Spirit Possession:

5.1 Altered states of consciousness: ordinary, inspired, vision, dream, trance, out of body experiences, unconscious state of possession

5.2 Functions: give guidance in everyday life, sanctions leadership, provides authority, communicates with the spirit world, deals with mental illnesses, counter sorcery, frees a person from the constraints of society.

5.3 Discern the cause: There is fake possession, psychological problems and real possession. If we use exorcism in dealing with psychological cases we may cause great harm.

5.4 Towards a theology of healing/deliverance:

- pray for the sick/possessed. Don't be afraid to pray lest it 'not work.' Remember, God will defend his own honor.
- seek healing of the whole person, physical, psychological, social and spiritual. Remember, physical healing is temporary. Only spiritual salvation last for eternity.
- healings and deliverances are signs of the Kingdom of God, not ends in themselves. God heals to point us to himself, not just for our own comfort. The Kingdom has come in Christ in the form of signs pointing to the reality yet to come. That Kingdom has not come in its fullness. Don't confuse signs with the realities they point to.
- healings and deliverances should be done as part of the larger range of ministries done by the church as part of its normal life—not as specialized ministries divorced from the church. They should go with care for the poor, oppressed, needy and mentally ill. Above all they should be tied to evangelism and discipling believers.
- we must discern the sources of healings and deliverances. Remember Satan imitates everything God does. His counterfeit actions often seem to come from God. Test the spirits and sources of the illnesses. The only thing Satan does not imitate is worship of Jesus Christ and holiness. 1 John 4:1-3, Gal. 5:19-25.

5.5 Ministering to possessed: minister to the person.

- avoid a magical approach. Remember, you are powerless, but God is powerful.
- minister in teams if possible including ministers, doctors and psychologists
- pray and use Scripture
- if the deliverance does not last, it may be psychological—the person need attention, not deliverance.
- deal with known sin in your life before ministering. Satan is the great accuser.
- move to priorities—go beyond healing and exorcism to witnessing to Christ's salvation, and discipling converts.
- it is important to have a follow-up period of discipling and incorporating the persons into the church. This is crucial otherwise the ministry will end prematurely or fail.

5.6 Satan's Power:

- to discourage us physically by causing illnesses and hardships.
- to discourage us psychologically. He tempts us and temptation leads to desire, desire to acts, acts to habits, habits to addictions and addictions to bondage. He also deceives and confuses us (2 Cor. 4:3-4). He creates fear in us.
- to discourage us socially. By rewards such as money, honor, status, security. By social controls such as gossip and ostracism. By causing suffering, beatings and death.
- to discourage us culturally. He uses ideologies to blind us from seeing reality.
- to attack us spiritually.

5.7 But God's Power is Far Greater:

- physically: by giving us life, answering our prayers, strengthening us in times of trial.
- psychologically: by his presence in us in the Holy Spirit, by illuminating our minds, by speaking to us through, our consciences, by giving us experiences of joy and hope.
- socially: through the church as his body, through Christian families and friends.
- culturally: through Scripture and the teachings of the believers.
- spiritually: through strengthening us in the inner person and being with us.

6. Witchcraft: this is big problem in parts of India and Africa.

6.1 Nature: witches are seen as anti-social persons who have spiritual powers to help or harm. They are found in most societies.

- we must test between real witches and those who are falsely accused. False accusations are often used to harm enemies.

6.2 Functions:

- a means of social control—people who don't fit the society are accused of being witches.
- stress reduction—scape goating stress on a person and killing her or him
- explanation of evil—evil is reified by pointing to witches
- gives power to the powerless in the society
- provides a way to express anti-social behavior
- used corporately it is often for good. Used individually and secretly it is often used for harming others.

6.3 Ministry:

- minister to the persons who believe they are under the attack of witches
- minister to people falsely accused of being witches. Often they are victims of hatred and jealousy of others.
- develop ways in the church to bring jealousies and hurtful relationships to the open and to resolve them so that love, not jealousy and fear reign in the church.

V. QUESTION THREE: HOW CAN WE KNOW THE UNKNOWN?

1. If we could know the future, what would we want to know?

Things we might want to know: the future of our life on earth, our life beyond death, who to marry, what job to take, what is happening to our friends on a journey, remember what we forgot, future stock prices, gambling numbers, who stole our goods, what is the will of God for our lives?

2. Knowledge and guidance are sought to:

- determine a course of action: marriage, going to battle, building a house, business venture going on a trip, planting crops
- to select someone for office
- to avoid future dangers: omens, astrology, necromancy
- to determine a guilty party
- to diagnose a disease or cause of misfortune
- to gain Gnosis or supernatural powerful knowledge that gives one power of others

3. Methods for Discerning the Future:

3.1 Divination

- oneiromancy—interpreting dreams
- augury – watching the flight of birds
- necromancy—communicating with the dead (1` Sam. 28:7)
- astrology—calculations based on the movement of the nine planets
- drawing flowers at a temple
- many more

3.2 Omens

3.3 Ordeals: physical tests—poison, water, fire, hot metals; contests and duals

3.4 Conditional curses

3.5 Dreams, visions, trances

3.6 Prophetic utterances, inspiration

3.7 Possession by spirits

4. Example: New Christian tribesmen come to you and ask, “Teacher, we need meat for our families. To be successful, should we go North or West? Should we go tomorrow or the next day? How do we get answers from our new Christian God?” What is your answer? If you give no answer, they will go back to their shamans and get definite answers.

5. A Theology of Divine Guidance:

5.1 Misconceptions:

- we must guess God’s will. He will show it to us if we are willing to obey it.
- God has only one plan for your life.

5.2 Nature of God’s call:

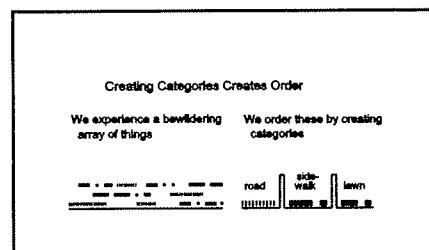
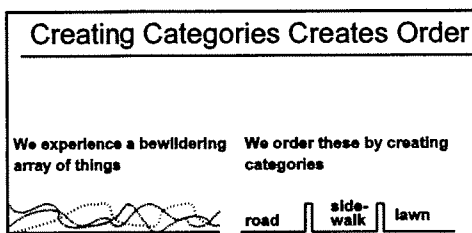
- General call: God calls all of us to minister to the lost and broken world.

- Specific call: God may call you to a specific ministry and special place. This may change as God prepares you for greater ministries in your future life.

VI. QUESTION FOUR: HOW CAN WE HAVE ORDER, BEAUTY AND RIGHTEOUSNESS, AND HOW DO WE DEAL WITH CHAOS, UGLINESS AND EVIL?

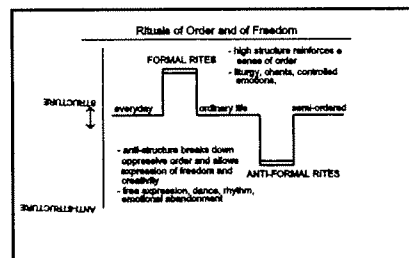
1. How do we create a sense of order and meaning in the chaos of our experiences?

- in part we do so by creating categories:



- life cycle rites help order our lives by creating categories:
- we find high structure can be oppressive, so we seek times of anti-structure:

- example: a banquet vs beach party
- example: dress up for church and dress down for church



2. There are two types of order: mechanical and organic.

- mechanical: seek law and order. Chaos is greatest evil because it renders all meaningless and makes us live out of control. Sin is ultimately breaking the cosmic moral law.
- organic order: seeks shalom and harmonious relationships. Chaos is the unformed potential from which relationships can be build. Sin is ultimately broken relationships.

MORAL ORDER

	Mechanistic	Organic
Goal:	- order	- relationships
Sees:	- objects	- beings
Focus:	- on laws	- on relational principles
Seeks:	- power and control	- shalom
Approach:	- engineering	- negotiating

Affirms:	- hierarchy	- worth, dignity, equality
Stance:	- violence is justified	- seeks harmony
Chaos:	- is evil	- can be evil or potential
Sin:	- breaking the law	- breaking relationships
Consequence of sin:	- sense of guilt	- sense of shame

3. Images of Salvation.

Sin	- breaking the law	- breaking relationships	- defilement
Response	- guilt	- shame	- repugnance
Salvation	- punishment, restoration	- forgiveness, reconciliation	- washing, purification
Image	- righteousness	- shalome, peace	- holiness, purity
Application	- U. S.	- Japan	- India

4. Sacrifices are part of an organic worldview. They symbolize the deep nature of relationships.

- **HOMAGE:** king and vassel, father and son.
- sin is insubordination, sacrifice is subordination and renewed consecration to serve
- **GIFT:** hospitality, gift exchange
- sin is broken relationships, sacrifice restores fellowship
- **RESTITUTION AND EXPIATION:** criminal paying a debt, self abnigation, demerits.
- sin is violation and damaging another, sacrifice is restitution, payment, suffering
- **COMMUNICATION:** dining together
- sin is loss of communion, sacrifice restores communion
- **REJUVINATION:** regeneration, seed must die before a new plant can grow
- sin is decay, loss of vitality and life, sacrifice is death and ressurection.
- **COMMUNICATION:** sending a messenger
- sin is broken communication, sacrifice restores communication

Note: we as modern people are addicted to a mechanical view of order. We stress impersonal law, mechanically ordered space and time, an cleanliness defined in terms of mechanical order. We must learn to see life in terms of organic order—as seeking relationships and shalom in which we see others not as objects but as true persons. In much of the world we are seen as impersonal, uncaring and driven by tasks and time, not by people and relationships.

VII. RELIGIOUS SIGNS AND SYMBOLS

Religion is about beliefs, feelings and morals. It is also about signs, rituals and institutions. What we first see of other religions is their services, rituals, festivals, religious fairs, pilgrimages, and other behavior and products.

1. How is religion as an inner life related to religion as an outer life?

- Max Weber: beliefs \longrightarrow behavior
- Emile Durkheim and Karl Marx: behavior \longrightarrow beliefs
- Some modern psychologists: behavior // beliefs
- Charles Peirce: behavior \longleftrightarrow beliefs
- Mary Douglas: behavior \equiv beliefs

2. Signs:

2.1 Create categories by which we can think. Religion creates our deepest categories.

Experience comes to us undifferentiated. To think about things we must create categories.

Examples: day and night, human animal, our self and outside world, life cycle rites.

2.2 Generate feelings. Religion gives expression to our deepest feelings.

2.3 Articulate our values. Religion defines morality and moral behavior.

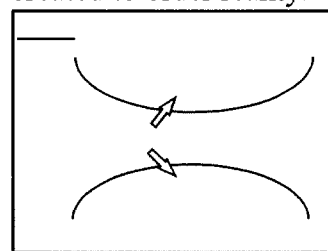
3. Nature of Signs:

3.1 There are three kinds of signs:

- indexes: the sign indicates the presence of something.
- icons: the sign is a tropological 'window' through which we view reality.
- symbols: the sign is a culturally created category with which to think.

3.2 Nature of signs:

- Formal theory: symbols are literal. They refer directly to realities.
- Mental theory [de Saussure]: symbols are mental categories created to order reality. This led to 'dynamic equivalence' Bible translations.
- Triadic theory [Peirce]: symbols are culturally shaped categories that have three parts to them: 1) the reality, 2) the forms used to categorize that world, and 3) the mental images these symbols evoke.

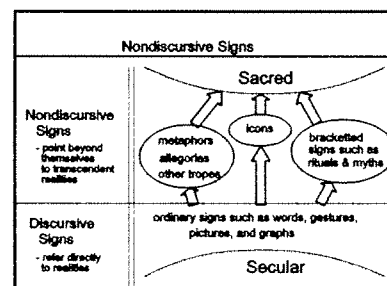


3.3 Types of signs:

- with regard to form: oral (bells, sirens), visual (print, pictures, arrows), touch (brail, texture), taste (sweets), smell (flowers, gas tracers). use of time (late, early), use of space (sacred, standing, altar, holy ground).
- with regard to reality: discursive, non-discursive

3.4 Signs range along a continuum from discursive to nondiscursive.

- discursive signs are literal and directly referential.
- nondiscursive signs point beyond themselves to things beyond words. They range from analogy, to allegory, to sacred.



- we create nondiscursive signs by ‘bracketing them.’ Examples of bracketing are singing, chanting, bowing, special clothes, special places, repetition, special symbols such as flowers, incense, fire, water and blood, ritual contexts, and special roles such as priest and shaman.

VIII. RELIGIOUS RITUALS

1. Rituals. Formal reenactments that 1) define and reorder relationships, 2) define and reorder cultural ideals (beliefs, feelings and values). Example: American form of greetings—hi, hi.

Sacred rituals: formal enactments that define 1) ultimate reality, 2) fundamental relationships, 3) express deepest feelings, and 4) enforce deepest morals.

2. Sacred and Profane:

Rituals are set apart from mundane life. In so doing they become ‘sacred.’

The opposite of sacred is ‘polluted.’ It, too, is set apart from the mundane.

3. Nature of rituals:

3.1 Structure of religious rituals makes them sacred: Rituals have three parts: 1) separation from the mundane, 2) the ritual enactment, 3) reintegration back into society.

3.2 Types of rituals:

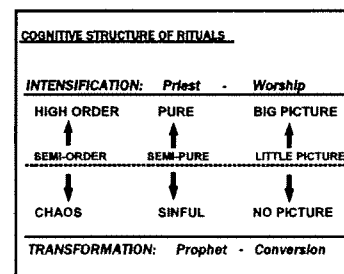
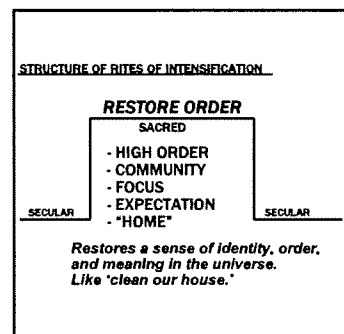
- intensification: renews order, reminds us of tradition, is like ‘cleaning house.’
- transformation: creates a new order, changes us, like ‘remodeling a house.’
- crisis: restores order out of chaos, gives us new life, like ‘building a new house.’

3.3 Rituals focus on the 1) individual, or 2) the group.

3.4 Nature of rites of intensification: stress high order, community, focus, expectation, and being ‘at home.’ They restore a sense of identity, order and meaning in the universe.

They are like ‘cleaning our house.’

3.5 Nature of rites of transformation: stress liminality, communitas, focus, expectation and of rebuilding a better home. These produce deep and lasting changes. Like ‘remodeling our house.’



Types of Rituals		
	Individual	Group
Intensification	- birth days - vacations	- Sunday services - festivals - fiestas - special days
Transformation	- birth rites - initiation rites - weddings - conversion	- revival meetings - retreats
Crisis	- illness rites - suicide rites	- drought rites - flood rites - plague rites - earthquake rites

- example: life cycle rites. These 1) bring order to our lives and show us our place in life, 2) honor us, 3) provide us occasions for celebration and comfort, and 4) show us our place in the universe.

4. Functions of rituals:

- create order in life
- store information and tradition. They are our ‘corporate memory.’
- talk about transcendence through the bracketing of signs.
- show us the ideals
- order and confirm social roles and structures.
- validate change.
- provide psychological reinforcement.
- give expression to our deepest feelings.
- reaffirm our deepest beliefs and morals.

5. Danger in having no rituals:

- we have no way of deeply expressing and experiencing the ‘sacred.’ Our religion is limited to mere words—to only what we can directly refer to and talk about.

6. Danger in having rituals:

- they become magic or idolatry
- they become dead and meaningless tradition

7. The answer is:

- not having no rituals. We need rituals to express the mystery and transcendence of God, the world and our place in the world.
- the answer is to have living rituals by:
 - recreating old rituals to constantly give them meaning.
 - creating new rituals to give expression to our beliefs and experiences.

IX. MYTHS. RELIGIOUS LEADERS

ASSERTIVENESS	LEADERSHIP MYTHS		
	High	FORCING * do it my way * disagreement bad * power in position + speed, decisiveness - impersonal, no buy in	COLLABORATING * I prefer but your opinion? * welcome differences * power in trust, skill + cooperation, creativity - time-loss, over analyze
Low	AVOIDING * withdraw, avoid * suppress emotions * power in calmness + preserve status quo - periodic explosions	COMPROMISING * bargain * something for everyone * power in reasoning + get going, calm - mediocrity, no absolutes	ACCOMODATING * agree, give in * placate * power in approval + least hassle - frustration, stagnation
	High	AFFIRMATION	Low

XI. INSTITUTIONS AND INSTITUTIONALIZATION

1. Parkinson's laws:

- expenditures rise to meet income
- work expands to fill the time allotted to it
- delay is the deadliest form of denial
- time spent in committee is in inverse proportion to the topic's importance
- institutions grow at 5% per year without added output
- successful research attracts the grants which makes further research impossible

2. Growth of Institutions:

- | | | |
|------------------------|---|---|
| • high cost | - | follow the crowd |
| • strong fellowship | - | impersonal relationships |
| • informal roles | - | formal roles |
| • ad hoc processes | - | rationalized rules and constitutions |
| • charismatic leader | - | bureaucratic leader |
| • unity based on love | - | unity based on creed and participation in institution |
| • <i>low structure</i> | - | <i>high structure</i> |
| • <i>low order</i> | - | <i>high order</i> |

3. Benefits of Institutionalization:

- makes large and efficient programs possible
- develops highly advanced technical knowledge
- enduring programs
- 'redemption and lift' in missions

4. Dangers of Institutionalization:

- | | | |
|------------------------------|---|-----------------------------|
| • vision | - | routine |
| • goal orientation | - | self maintenance |
| • flexibility | - | inflexibility |
| • focus on people | - | focus on programs |
| • participation | - | alienation |
| • we control the institution | - | the institution controls us |

5. Response to Institutionalization:

- the answer is not **not** having institutions. It has to have living organic institutions.
- informal organization helps temper rigidity of formal organization
- we constantly need institutional renewal:
 - stress conversion
 - new beginnings
 - parachurch renewals
 - rituals of renewal
 - institutional renewal through re-engineering

XII. Theological Responses to the 'Middle Zone'

1. Christian answers to the middle zone:

- medieval Catholicism: Mary and the saints
- Reformers: doctrine of providence
- Anabaptists and Pietists: living with the sense of God's immediate presence
- Charismatics: work of the Holy Spirit
- Cults: commands of the leader

2. Principles for a Christian Folk Theology:

2.1 A Trinitarian view of God's acts in everyday life.

- God the Father in his providence -- superintending all history
- God the Son in his presence -- present among us in our sufferings and joys
- God the Holy Spirit in his power - working in us with power

2.2 A whole Gospel.

- dealing with ultimate questions: sin/salvation, church/ministry, eternity
- dealing with existential 'middle level' questions:
 - = meaning of life and death
 - = desire for a good life and challenge of crises
 - = decision making and need for guidance
 - = desire for righteousness and justice and problem of evil and destruction

2.3 A biblical balanced Christianity.

- Christ remains at the center, and peace/justice/provision/healing/guidance are the out workings of his work in our lives

2.4 A theology of discernment.

- we need to have a clear understanding of how we can know the will of God for our lives.
- does this decision: 1) bring glory to God, 2) affirm the Lordship of Christ, 3) show agreement with Scripture, 4) bear the fruits of the Spirit, 5) lead us to Christian maturation, 6) reflect biblical balance, 7) build towards the unity of the body of Christ?

2.5 An anticipatory eschatology.

- the Kingdom of God has come as a hidden rule manifest here and there in signs of God's work among us.

2.6 An incarnational theology

2.7 A theology of the cross

- of suffering, sickness
- of our living still in a fallen world with the consequences of sin around us

3. Specific Areas in the Middle Zone Requiring Theological Response:

3.1 A theology of meaning in life and of explaining death to the living.

- this requires a theology of ancestors and the linkage between humans
- this requires a theology of ecology

- 3.2 A theology of the 'good life' and of dealing with calamities and misfortunes
 - this requires a theology of spirits and spiritual warfare
 - this requires a theology of witchcraft and our response to it
- 3.3 A theology of decision making and the guidance of God
- 3.4 A theology of justice and righteousness, and of responding to evil and injustice

4. Dangers in Folk Christian Expressions:

4.1 Danger of Christo-paganism and a new Christian magic:

WORSHIP

- God centered
- submission
- relational
- focus on service, self giving and the cross
- God is the end, we are the means

MAGIC

- Human and self centered
- control
- mechanistic and formulaic
- focus on success
- we are the end and God is the means

4.2 Danger of a new secularism based on a "two-tiered" worldview

- continue to make the supernatural/natural, miracle/natural law distinction. The Biblical distinction is Creator/Creation, and God works in ordinary and extraordinary ways
- if we see God primarily in miracles, we leave Him out of the natural order. The result will be a growing secularism
- we need to see God at work in ordinary and extraordinary ways

4.3 Danger of a misplaced focus

- a 'sign' points beyond itself to a greater reality
- 'signs' in Scripture are not equated with 'miracles.' They are often natural events that point to God's presence among his people. Eg. rainbows, circumcision, Sabbath.
- signs often come at junction points in our lives and have a lesson for us

4.4 Danger of institutionalizing immaturity

- maturity leads us to balance
- maturity leads us to a dependence not on the manifestations of God's power but on God himself

4.5 Danger of a health and prosperity gospel

- a self-centered narcissism
- blindness to a lost and suffering world
- no place for suffering and the cross, or for sacrifice and martyrdom
- a denial of death
- Gospel as 'Cargo'

4.6 Danger of confusing phenomenology with ontology

- of building theology on individual experiences rather than on Scripture
- of equating feelings with reality
- we need reality testing and theological testing of our experiences.

4.7 Danger of generating a false sense of failure and guilt

- those not healed when we pray are in the greatest need of our ministry and support

4.8 Danger of glorifying humans.