**The Basis of the Liberal View of the Bible – BD40-01**

We have found that there are two distinct modern views toward the Word of God which has come down to us over the centuries from the original writers through the manuscripts through the preserving protective hand of God, and to the translations that we have today. We found that these original writings were written by men under the guidance of God the Holy Spirit. This is one view that is held today concerning the Scriptures. This is viewing the doctrine of inspiration as a reality. This means that the original writings were inerrant with no mistakes in them, and that final authority in spiritual matters therefore resides in the written Bible. What we believe and what we practice is determined according to what the Bible teaches.

This book is a book that we are capable of interpreting and of understanding. This book is viewed under this conservative view as being a book of propositions of truth or doctrines which are applicable to day, and they are God speaking to man. That’s one view.

**Liberalism**

A second view, and this is the predominant view in Christendom, that is, among ministers and church members: Most people who are church members will hold this second view, that the Bible is a purely human production; that it was written, edited, and compiled by men apart from any divine guidance; that the original writings were filled with errors, myths, and hallucinations; that the Bible therefore is not the final authority in spiritual matters—rather it is to be submitted to human reason to determine that which in it is truthful and useful. It therefore is not a series by this liberal view of statements of divine viewpoint. It is not God speaking to mankind today.

**Rationalism**

Now you must take one or the other. We are going to pursue this morning the consequences of this second view of Scripture—that it is a purely human product and that it is not the voice of God speaking to us today. God has provided this book. He has preserved it, but during the 18th century era of rationalism, there came an attack upon the supernatural origin of the Bible. Rationalism held that man is capable, because he can reason, of determining what is truth. He can do this within himself alone without any information outside of himself to guide him to the truth; that is, that man simply has to start thinking, and he will think himself into realities. He won’t have to have any information outside of himself to get him into spiritual understanding.

The liberal theologians who are operating on the principles of rationalism were embarrassed by the fact that the Bible has miracles, and that’s irrational; by the supernatural elements throughout the Bible, and that’s irrational. In time, this came became to be known as destructive higher criticism—the study of the origin, the authorship, the purpose, the meaning, and so on, concerning these various books of the Bible. This developed into a study which eventually destroyed the Bible as being a book from God with any absolute authority.

This morning I’d like to trace for you some of the background now of this view of Scripture and the fact that this is commonly held by most of the people that you meet in your day-by-day life. How did we ever come to this point where this book which is so meaningful to you and me, in which we find God’s divine viewpoint, in which we find a contact of life as it really is, in which we find answers to life that work; how is it that we have this book in this way and out there is the vast vast vast majority of humanity and they’re in darkness, rejecting this book as God’s authoritative declaration?

**Thomas Aquinas**

Well it all began with a man named Thomas Aquinas. He lived from about 1227 to 1274. Up to the time of Thomas Aquinas, men placed all the emphasis on heavenly things. People were interested during these dark ages, the middle ages, they were interested only in the things that dealt with the spiritual realm—the things of heaven. The things of earth were of no interest. This was of course reflected in many ways. It primarily reflected, for one thing, in art. It reflected that they were interested in what was spiritual, what was up there, what was before them, what were the things of God, the things of heaven, and the spiritual things. They were not interested in earthly things and secular things. They didn’t portray things realistically. They didn’t draw pictures of things as they existed in the scene that people normally view on this earth.

Well with Aquinas came the humanistic renaissance or revival of learning (that’s what renaissance means) and the stressing of earthly relationships. Spiritual and material realms, heavenly and earthy things, were viewed as having a relationship, but centuries to define the two were to pass by. Here were the spiritual things up here, the things of heaven. Here were secular things, the things of earth. And people viewed that there was a relationship between them. What was true was true here on the earthly scene had a relationship to what was true here on the heavenly scene. Spiritual principles of truth guided to reality on earth. There was a connection.

Now Thomas Aquinas came along and into this scene which had gone on for centuries of this relationship between the two, with people primarily interested in this upper (heavenly) one, Thomas Aquinas interject the concept that in the fall man’s will had been contaminated but not his intellect. His mind had not suffered as a result of the fall. Now this opened a hornet’s nest because this in effect declared that human reason by itself, because it was not fallen and it was not contaminated by sin, man’s mentality could arrive at spiritual concepts. Anything that man sat down and thought through and reasoned to truth concerning spiritual things, he would find was also true in things that he arrived at on an earthly scene. The two would be coordinated. If man’s thinking was uncontaminated, he would be thinking the way God things. Therefore what he concluded would be right. It would fit in spiritual things and it would fit in earthly things.

**Natural Theology**

Well the result was the development of natural theology. Natural theology are conclusions concerning God apart from the Bible or any revelation. The theory was that man’s reason could conclude what was truth and it would be supported by Scripture. Reason in this way became independent of the Bible. Thomas Aquinas is responsible for this separation—setting human reason free of the superintendency of the Bible.

Now over the centuries, as rationalism more and more came into its own, men were trying to think their way from natural theology to a relationship with revealed theology. However, it never materialized. The more the mentality of man considered the things of God and of spiritual things, the farther the mind of man departed from the Bible. More and more what the Bible revealed was contradicted by what man thought. What man concluded by reason and his observations contradicted what he read in the Bible. More and more there came a tension between spiritual things of heaven and the secular things of this earth. So by the time of the renaissance (in the 14th through the 16th centuries) had reached a climax, the secular came and took over and dominated men’s thinking entirely. The opposite condition resulted, that where up to the time of Thomas Aquinas the spiritual had dominated men’s minds, now it was strictly this realm here of the secular that dominated the minds of men.

**The Reformation**

When we came to the Reformation in the 16th century, the reformers recognized that Thomas Aquinas had made a bad mistake and that what he taught was not supported by the scriptural view of the fall of man. As we study the Word of God, what the Bible reveals that when man sinned, the totality of his being was engrossed in that sin, and he was a different creature from that moment. It affected his spirit which died immediately. It affected his soul which contaminated his intellect and his will and his emotions. And it affected his body which eventually died also. So he was totally affected by the fall. The reformers realized that Thomas Aquinas was wrong in freeing the intellect from the effects of the fall. They went back to the scriptural position and declared that the intellect also was included in the fall. Thus man was made dependent on God and on the revelation that God gives if he was going to know anything at all about spiritual things. The reformers said that man by reason cannot approach God. He cannot discover salvation. He cannot discover the love of God. He cannot discover moral principles. He can’t discover any of the things that are essential for him to be man and to remain his manliness, his humanity.

So the final authority and the sufficient knowledge rested in Scripture alone with the reformers. It is not the Bible confirmed by the church or the Bible confirmed by natural theology or the Bible confirmed by reason, but rather the Bible making pronouncements about reason and about what the church believes and about what natural theology had come up with. The Roman Catholic Church had been contaminated over these centuries by humanism and they had taught that salvation was by Christ plus an effort of man in order to *deserve* it, which of course violated the principle of grace—that man has to work so he deserves salvation, and then what Christ did will be applied to him. That was the direct result that this rationalism that Thomas Aquinas set loose. The Bible actually unites the things of heaven and the things of earth without a contradiction between the two.

**An Open System**

So when we come to the Word of God, here’s the viewpoint: The Bible says there is an infinite personal God out there. He does exist and he created the universe including man. This creation that He made exists entirely apart from God. This is not pantheism where creation is just an extension of God and everything is God. God is a separate entity from his creation. The universe operates on a cause and effect basis but it operates on an open system. Now this is important.

Here’s our world. This world has openings in it. Here are all the natural laws which God has ordained. That’s why we say that all truth is His truth. Not only spiritual things that the Bible reveals are His truth but every law of nature and every principle of science is God’s truth. Here are natural laws. Within our earth, within our world, within our universe, we operate on these natural laws—cause and effect. But this is not a closed system because God can interject Himself into this system and he can counter these natural laws. That’s what’s called a miracle. God can counter a natural law and therefore He performs miracles. Therefore the flood comes along which is not a normal thing, and He interjects by His power something that is over and above the natural procedures.

**A Closed System**

The liberal theologian says, “No, no, no. All this is closed here. This is a closed system. We operate by natural laws. God can’t come in. Nothing can come in and overcome these natural laws. They always operate and they always have operated.” Evolution is based upon the fact that the scientist looks out and he sees how things are operating now and he says, “This is how they have always operated,” and he tries to project it back and figure out how it all came into came into being.

But the Word of God says, “No, the universe is not a closed system that God cannot interject Himself into.” Now get this straight. The Bible teaches an open system. The liberal teaches a closed system. The closed system concept again came from the rationalism that Thomas Aquinas set loose.

Well the reformers said that the Bible unites the two. God is an infinite God. He is there. The universe operates on this cause and effect, and God can override His natural laws. Furthermore, the Bible’s viewpoint is that man is made in God’s image. He has a soul and he has spiritual qualities, and that God has revealed Himself to this man, and he has made this revelation in a verbalized form in a written communication, that is, the Bible. Therefore everything that God has recorded, because He is perfect, He has recorded without error through His writers. What He has given us are propositions of truth, the Bible declares.

Now the Bible does not give us everything that God knows, but it does tell us everything that man needs to know. God is interested in the whole man. He is interested in both his spiritual realm and his secular realm. In the Word of God these two are not separated. The universe and human relationships today are in an abnormal state. They are not as they were when they were first created. But the Bible provides us with the solutions to solve the problems as the result of our abnormal condition.

Now all of this is in contrast to the view of naturalism. Naturalism says that if God does exist, He doesn’t have anything to do with the creation He made or with man. Naturalism says that the universe is a closed system and God cannot come in to override any of the natural laws. He simply presupposes this. The understanding of human life in the universe is determined by man himself, not by some outside revelation.—what man is like, is man bad, is man sinful, where is he headed, who’s going to decide that? Naturalism and liberal theology says that man decides that on the basis of his reason. Man consequently is an animal who is a product of chance evolution.

**Immanuel Kant**

Now where did all this come from? Well it started, first of all, with a man named Immanuel Kant who lived from 1724 through 1804. Immanuel Kant was a German philosopher. From the time of the reformation to the time of Kant, the mood of secular thinkers was one of optimism. They believed that man by rationalism could find the answers that unified all knowledge and all of life. Liberal theology echoed the views of the secular thinkers. They trusted in rationality, the application of reason. They trusted in rationality for spiritual understanding. They were optimistic too as theologians. Rationalistic theologians were ill at ease with everything supernatural in the Bible so they threw it overboard. The just jettisoned the whole thing.

Now before Kant, people operated on this principle which called Antithesis, or absolutes. Now most of you probably think this way. Your children may not think this way, depending upon where they go to school. If they are up at the realm of higher education, they may have been contaminated against this type of thinking. Now this is biblical thinking—antithesis and absolutes. What this means, in its simplest form is: A is not non-A. These two are not equal. A does not equal non-A. A is different from non-A. Therefore what we are saying is that some things are right and some things are wrong. Some things are true and some things are false. Now this is the way men used to think until Kant came along.

Now they believed in the possibility of coming to conclusions on the basis of authority from the Word of God. People thought that you could read the Bible and find out what was right and what was wrong; find out what God intended and what He did not intend for us to do. But Kant came along and he said, “No, that’s wrong. You can’t know anything beyond your five senses,” which you know we call empiricism. The only thing you could know is what you get from your five senses. So personal freedom lies in obedience in obedience to whatever moral law speaks from within you. He distinguished between what he called the “phenomenal” and the “noumenal.”

Now the phenomenal had to do with what your senses could deal with. The noumenal was beyond your senses and you couldn’t know it. Kant said the only thing we know in life is the phenomenal because we can get to that by our senses, and there is no reality beyond what we can understand through our senses. Now the noumenal is beyond our senses so it is totally incomprehensible to man, and we can’t apply his understanding or his reason to it. What he was saying was that you can’t reason your way to the things concerning God. He was saying now that this realm over here (the spiritual) is totally separated from what man’s existence can deal with. So Kant said that man is in total darkness about life beyond the grave. He can’t know about the resurrection of Christ. He can’t know about heaven. Those are all noumenal realms. He can’t enter into those. Though the Bible teaches that the visible world that we have we may understand through our senses, it also teaches us that the invisible world is known to us through what God as revealed about himself.

So what Kant did in effect was again to make man the master of what can be known and of what is true. Since miracles are in the realm of the noumenal, Kant said they’re out. They are not reality, and it’s foolish for prominent religious leaders to speak of scientific inventions of miracles, by the way. Kant said that there is no such thing as miracles because that’s beyond what we can grasp.

**Miracles**

Now what is a miracle? A miracle is an overriding of a natural law. Recently a prominent evangelist was on one of these talk programs. The person who was leading the panel was moving toward the direction of trying to examine the attitude of this evangelist concerning the Pentecostal movement and the miracle workings of the Pentecostal claims today. So he was asked, “So do you believe in miracles?” This meant the healers, the tongues, and the whole bit. Because he a professional fandango dancer, he knew that he could not say on the program, “No, I don’t believe that God is going around healing people through the hands of some miracle healer today.” Instead he said, “Yes, of course I believe in miracles. My goodness, if my grandfather were here today and he were to see television, he would be stunned by that miracle of communication and of entertainment. If he were here today and saw that machine flying through the air, he wouldn’t be able to believe it. If he saw people out there in space and people flying to the moon, what a miracle that is. Of course I believe in miracles.”

Now that’s a cute way to get off the hook when you don’t want to say, “Yeah, I think that Catherine Kuhlman and Oral Roberts are a bunch of frauds. They can’t put the enamel back on your teeth, and they can’t fix your broken bones.” But because he didn’t want to say that they can’t perform the miracles and identify them for what they are as Satan’s delusionary tools upon Christians who are doctrinally disoriented who swallow that guff; because he did not want to say that because he wants to fill his auditoriums nice and full when he’s there speaking, he played ball. He gave the illusion that the miracle-working was for real. But do you see what he said? He took the word “miracle” and he used it exactly the way a liberal would use it, and that is not what the Bible calls a miracle. What was he calling a miracle? The fact that you could take a machine and put wings on it, curve the surface on the top, and then send it at a certain speed, and because the air over the top of the wing goes faster, it reduces the pressure over the air that’s underneath, it creates a vacuum on top and pressure underneath, and an airplane will fly. That’s not a miracle. That’s a natural consequence of the laws of science. The same thing with space travel or television or anything else. These are natural laws of science that man has discovered and that he’s applying, and those are not miracles in the sense in what the Bible means by miracles.

This evangelist should know better. Any Christian who’s got any (sense) at all should rise up and say, “That’s a terrible thing you did. You’re a big name man but that’s a terrible thing you did to hedge on miracles because you know what the panel moderator meant, and you gave the impression that we Christians believe that miracles are the same thing that the liberals say.”

Now this is what Kant was saying (at least he was hones), “That’s noumenal. You can’t know anything about what overrides natural laws.” So he rejected the possibilities of miracles existing altogether, but he wasn’t calling natural scientific operations as miracles. So he made a distinction between supernatural Christianity and the liberal theologian has based himself squarely on the teaching of Kant.

Now sometimes the liberal will use orthodox terminology. You are not to be deceived by this. He does not mean the same thing that you and I do when we speak in these terms. They reject the resurrection of Jesus Christ as a supernatural act. It is in the noumenal realm and so it cannot be understood. They do not view Christ’s death upon the cross as an act of history where you could go up and if you rubbed your hand on the cross you might get a sliver in your hand. They don’t view it as that. Prophecy is rejected. Why? Because it’s supernatural history. That’s contrary to reason. You cannot know what’s going to come in the future.

Christianity is based in history. It reveals realities about the invisible world. These things are explained in the Bible. It is the Bible that tells us what happened in Eden. It is the Bible that tells us why man has this propensity to sin because of what happened in the Garden of Eden. It is the Bible that tells us why we have all of these fossil remains all over the world, because there was a great flood that settled the sediment and that produced the fossil layers that we have to day. The virgin birth is viewed as being in the realm of the noumenal, but it was an actual event in history because the Bible tells us about this. Otherwise we wouldn’t know that it was. It’s a revelation. All the acts of redemption took place in the phenomenal realm of history. We know about them. These are not cunningly devised tales. There were people who stood there and they saw Christ put on that cross and they saw Him die and they saw Him put in that tomb. The Bible gives us records of historical events and these are degraded by the Kantian philosophy to myths. Man is deciding what is real. Man is concerned only with what it means, not whether or not it’s true.

So Kant’s system ultimately dominated the thinking of the secular leaders and eventually of the theologians. But this system broke upon the rock of trying to find some way to bring the phenomenal world of nature into a relationship with this noumenal world of absolutes. This is what Kant didn’t like. Here in this noumenal world that your senses could not enter was where the absolute truths reside, and that’s why he was rejecting that.

Well, out of Kant’s reasoning that there are no absolutes came of course on concept, that of determinism, that man, like all the laws of science, is just an animal which is determined. What comes is the result of what is determined. There are no supernatural overriding laws. There is no God out there. Man became the center of the universe, and his freedom became the primary thing, but his freedom independent of any restriction of any control. So because man is simply matter in motion (he’s a chemical operation), his freedom should not be hindered. There is no reality in the noumenal world. It is only the spiritual world, and man is determined by any number of things: his society, his bodily chemistry, and his heritage. He’s determined and he’s going to go on a certain path.

Well, the influence of this idea had something when it came to the realm of morality. This realm in influence in the realm of morality was epitomized by the Marquis de Sade who lived from 1740 to 1814. The Marquis de Sade is the father of 20th century pornography who today is a great name in drama, philosophy, and literature. There was a time when you could be arrested if you had the writings of the Marquis de Sade on hand. Now he said if man is determined we cannot enter the noumenal realm, and this realm cannot affect our life here. The Marquis de Sade said, “What is, is what is right. Don’t go around talking to me about what is right and what is wrong. What is, that’s what is right.”

Consequently, morals do not count. Life is a machine. Morals are, by his view, simply what society invents in order to control people. So he proceeded to operate on that basis, that morals were nothing. He extended this in the fact that man is made stronger than a woman. Consequently, nature indicates to him that he, with superior strength, is to exercise his freedom upon that female in any way that he likes. As a matter of fact, de Sade was put in prison for beating a prostitute just for the sheer pleasure of brutalizing her. This is where we get the word “sadism” in our vocabulary. Now sadism not only meant pleasure in hurting someone, but it also implies that “might makes right.” It’s nature’s way of determining things, so, in nature, whoever is stronger is stronger, that’s the one who is right. There is no realm to tell us what is right and what is wrong. Kant said there are no absolutes of truth.

**Hegel**

Now our society today is playing out this bestial concept, and here’s where it all originated. What was the outgrowth of Kantian philosophy? Well it followed through several men that I want to mention this morning. First was a man named Georg Hegel (1770-1831), a German philosopher. Hegel took what Kant had taught and he added a new concept to it. Hegel came along and he said, “We have tried this antithesis system for centuries, and reason is not able to come up with the answers that man needs, and to arrive at truth and to arrive at knowledge.” Hegel said the reason for this is that we’re going at it the wrong way. With Kant’s rejection of absolutes, the way was directed for Hegel to add a new concept. His concept is called “relativism.” Now what relativism means is that everything is “both/and.” The whole approach to life was in terms of relativity, meaning that there are no universal truths, and what may be false here can be true over here. It just depends upon what the situation is. It’s all relative. And he did this on the basis that he said, “There is a thesis, a principle, a concept. This is being opposed by an antithesis. These two are in tension. They’re fighting one another—a concept and an anti-concept; thesis and an antithesis, struggling against one another. In time, these two result in a synthesis. Where this was once true, and this was once false, neither one of these are true and false. This is what is now true. It’s a conglomeration of the two.

Now what, in effect, happens is that the synthesis now becomes a thesis, and it begins to opposing a new antithesis until a new synthesis is created. That’s how you constantly go. Down, down, down. There is never anything that is right or wrong. There is never anything that is always right or always wrong. Now this, you can immediately see, is at the heart of the Communist conspiracy concept. These are the basis of our political and economic ideas, that we cannot know. We cannot go the Word of God and say, “What on earth are we going to with criminals? What on earth are we going to do with poverty? What on earth are we going to do with the pornographers? We cannot go to the Bible and get absolute statements because it’s all relative. What was not acceptable one time is acceptable another now. So we’ve got to shake it down, and consequently man gets himself deeper and deeper and deeper into a hole on the basis of Hegel’s principles.

Now this gave an approach to truth where everything was relative and nothing was absolute. So Hegel said that states don’t have to obey the moral laws. And governments can make agreements and they don’t have to keep them. Now you wondered why the Communists are perennial liars. The Communists are perennial liars because they believe Hegel is right. They believe that everything is constantly shaking itself down to something else. And about the time Mr. Nixon over here on thesis agrees with the Vietnamese leader over here on antithesis, and they come to the synthesis of what they’re going to call “peace” in Vietnam, the Communists are already planning to make the new thesis and the new antithesis with which they’re going to pose. They don’t intend at all to stop with that peace. They’re just getting to the synthesis, and that’s what’s been happening over all the months. The Communists have been working on this point right here. You’re about to see it come to fruition. You’re going to see this set up again, and what lies here only God knows. So don’t be too enthusiastic on the day after inauguration over the peace which is at hand.

In relative thinking, one deals with subjective thought. Cause and effect have not part. The matter of how you feel about a thing at a moment is what counts. How do I feel about this thing? That’s the thing that counts. So once Hegel did away with ultimate cause and effect or truth, there was no need to believe in a creator God with the Bible of absolute truths. It’s all based upon a certain changeable quality. Relative thinking has permeated higher education. The more educated a man became, the more he rejected the absolute authority of the bible.

So in our secular schools today, from the elementary on up to the university level, the idea of Hegel is at the heart of the educational system. Your sons and your daughters are taught on the basis of the thesis / antithesis / synthesis concept. Consequently, they come home and they mouth to you about relativism because they have been contaminated and poisoned, and it can even take place in a Christian school. But this is what’s happening so you’ll understand that our educational world has become enamored with the concept of Hegel, and many a student doesn’t know that he’s mouthing a bit of poison that he has picked up which is contrary to the Lord Jesus Christ, to the Word that He has revealed, and to the Savior who has bought him with His own precious blood in his spiritual death upon the cross. Our religious leaders wreak with relativism, and those who believe them are on a self-destructive course. So be careful.

**Kierkegaard**

This in religious realms went even worse. Things didn’t get better. So finally it came to man name Soren Kierkegaard (1813-1855). He rejected the theology of the Lutheran church in Denmark. Kierkegaard said there was no way in reason to unite heavenly and earthly things—no synthesis possible. He accepted this principle of Hegel. But then Kierkegaard applied it to Theology. He said, “You know, for centuries we’ve been trying to unite spiritual and earthly things on the basis of man’s reason, and finally we’re going to have to admit to ourselves and bring it out in the open and just say once and for all that there’s no possible way of uniting these two.” Now, mind you, all of this because the Bible is rejected as the Word of God. That’s what I’m trying to show you this morning, where the road leads once you begin doubting that the bible is the authoritative Word of God, word-for-word, inspired by Him, without error, and the final authoritative in faith in practice, so when it speaks, the issue is settled. If you ever reject that, as you begin hedging on that position, this is the road you will travel because better men than we have traveled it before us.

Soren Kierkegaard came along and said you can’t by reason unite the things of God and the things of this earth. So he introduced these principles. He declared there could be no rational basis for anything beyond the five senses. Kierkegaard was an empiricist. He said you can’t know anything beyond your five senses. Men are finite. Their reason cannot provide them with enough information to arrive at the absolutes of divine viewpoint. He was right on this. Men are finite. Therefore they can’t come up with everything that they need to know concerning their relationship to God. They need information outside of themselves, namely the Bible, to come up with this.

So to find purpose, Kierkegaard taught, a person must forget reason and he must take what he called a leap of faith. I want you to be careful. That likes awfully good. I see some conservative writers who talk about Christians taking a leap of faith. People are being told how to become Christians. Instead of being told to believe the gospel, they’re told to take a leap of faith because they mean something different than Kierkegaard meant by it. What Kierkegaard meant was that it is not possible to know anything absolute. He refused to return to the Bible. He viewed the Bible from the higher critical point of view, and he said that the basis of asserting that man can improve society and that man has a rosy future is arrived at by a leap of faith. We believe things are going to think better, Kierkegaard said. We believe that man has a rosy future. We believe that out before man there are solutions for poverty. There are solutions for the Communist conspiracy. There are solutions for the aggressors in the world and the criminal on the street. But the absolutes of those solutions he had already rejected in the Word of God so, he said, “We just leap out there by faith in the confidence that it’s going to turn out well.

**Existentialism**

Now this is faith in faith. I remind you that faith has no value whatsoever except in its object. So Kierkegaard became the father of what is called today “existentialism.” Now existentialism is the big thing today. What it means is simply that there is no definite reason for life or truth. There is no purpose to life. What you do at this moment of your existence has nothing to do with what you did in the past. And what you do in this moment of existence right here that you’re in at this moment will have nothing to do with what comes in the future. This moment has not been affected by what you did here in the past. It will not affect anything you do in the future. It is simply a moment in time, and without the explanation of what is out there in the mind of God, it leaves man in a condition of despair. Existentialism is a theology of despair. It finds its ultimate expression in neo-orthodoxy. Since there is no absolute truth, man has to find some kind of relative reasons to base his life on. Man has no meaning, no purpose, and no significance. Nothing is significant. Therefore he has a life of pessimism. By a non-rational leap of faith, he says, “OK, I’ve got to put meaning to my life, so I gain optimism because I just jump out there and I say, ‘I know it’s got to be better. There’s something better out there. This can’t be it.’”

So today, whether you realize it or not, the mass media are belting you with the concept of existentialism. They are belting you with the concept that what you are and what you have now is not the result of anything that has happened in the past, nor is what you do now going to have any effect whatsoever on what happens in the future. Therefore just cut loose and live it up big, and indulge yourself, for tomorrow you die.

For this reason, parents don’t understand your children. You go to your son or your daughter, especially an older kid who has been reared in a secular school, and he goes off to school and you say to that kid, “Now I want you to be a good boy.” He looks at you and he doesn’t understand what you mean by being a good boy. You mean that you want him to separate right from wrong according to the Word of God. You want him to do what is right with his mouth. You want him to do what is right with his mind. You want him to be right in his morals. You want him to be proper in his sex life, and so on. You mean this is right and this is wrong. “I want you to be a good boy. I want you to be a good girl. I want you to do what is right, not what is wrong.” The reason he doesn’t understand you is because he doesn’t think about rights and wrongs. It’s all relative. It’s all the new morality. Thou shalt not kill, “ordinarily.” But if this guy is getting in your way and hindering a good business deal, now that’s something else. Just ask any godfather. He can tell you that. I mean that’s justice. Thou shalt not commit adultery, “ordinarily.” You’ve always got to add “ordinarily” to the commandments. Unless you have a chance for a little fun, but ordinarily, no. And so on down the line. This kid says, “What do you mean, ‘Be good.’ I don’t understand that. It depends on my chances and my opportunities as to what is right and what is wrong—what I’m going to do and not do. We hear it all the time.

Now the goal of existentialism is concentrated on an experience therefore. It is to contact the non-rational world. “Here I am,” the existentialist says, “there’s no purpose in my life. I’m a blanket-blank nothing. There’s nothing out there for me. There’s no purpose. I’m in despair. What I do now has got no future to it. What shall I do? I’ve got to identify myself as a human being.” So existentialism says, and Kierkegaard taught, “Experience.” Get an experience. Of course this is what is screamed at, to get an experience, so that the non-rational world out here of the heavenly world, the world beyond our senses, we’ll get some contact with it by an irrational leap of faith.

So how are you going to have an experience? Well it doesn’t matter what you do. I was in downtown Dallas just yesterday and there was a bus driver. He pulled up to a curb and he jumped out and he ushered a little old lady across the street. All those passengers were sitting there and he’s walking little old ladies across the street. Now that’s an experience. It didn’t matter that he did her an act of kindness to get her across the street. She could have also been crossing the street while he came, and the light could have turned green, and he could have run her over. Now that was an experience and that was just as well. Existentialism says it makes no difference whether you help her across the street or run her over with your bus. It’s an experience either way and that’s what you’ve got. And when you have an experience, you’ve exercised your will, and you know that you’re a human being. That’s the idea—that you exercise your will. You get out and you do something. Then you say, “I am a being. I am a person. I have reality.” Now this is intelligence of the highest degree of man without the Word of God.

The same overwhelming for an experience is what is the primary motivation behind the drug practice. Why do people go on drugs? To try to have some kind of spiritual experience out there. To try to get that leap of faith to reach out there to that world that’s out there beyond them that that they have rejected any information on through the Word of God. So they’re going to find reality and meaning to their life in this way.

The scene is set for the doctrine of demons in its worst vile form, and we shall take that up at that point next week.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1971