Existentialism and Theology

By Rev. Martin Galstad

1. Two Views that Vary

An assertive person is one who has the courage to say yes or no as the situation requires. He protests against the pressures of conformity exerted by the many who hold “accepted” views. Saying no may be partly a behavioral reaction. We often see negativism in a child as the only way he has of asserting himself.

The case is similar in crushed and depressed adults who have given up, unable to say yes or no, and have had to be cared for in institutions. If they could have been brought to assert themselves, at least so much as to become angry when provoked, they would then at least have been acting like living persons, not just breathing beings. People need to express themselves positively. The response of assertive persons is usually more than the actions of people who happen to be “that way.” The response may be a philosophical rejection of rational explanations that leave people uninvolved as persons.

Accordingly, assertiveness is more a verb than a noun. It is more a style of life than a submitting for approval by people in general. As we are using the word here, it does not refer to a philosophy defined as a unified view of life and nature. It is not a system. It is rather a way of Christian behaving, of acting, and of reacting. It may be called a posture, or a mood. In living life as life is, it is not always ready with pat answers, and therefore it is often as unpredictable as life itself.

Before we conclude that such an attitude is the mere rejection of accepted behavior, we must give it a hearing and inquire carefully as to what it objects to. We will discover that intellectualization into systematics is the obstacle, even as that mightiest of existentialists, Soren Kierkegaard (1813-1855), asserted this as his mission: “It was intelligence and nothing else that had to be opposed.” He felt that the great benefactors of mankind, the thinkers and philosophers and theologians, had made things too easy by reducing the world to neat systems, too pat and final. He felt that they had not considered all the evidence. Life is not that simple, and he felt that it was his duty to make some things harder, at least as hard as they really are. He had to reintroduce the involvement of the individual: why, for instance, do the righteous suffer and the wicked prosper? Does the ruggedly honest man always come out ahead? Are the fruits of a generally accepted system or institution always, or ever, good? Anyone who is fairly well-read in the Bible and in history will realize that such problems exist.

2. Early Explanations

The thinkers of the past had aimed at objectivity, at discovery of ultimate truth, at grasping essence and being, real Being. As they looked around they saw change and decay, coming and going, and the passing of the temporary. They decided that the only really real objects in the universe are the universals, or Ideas. Note well, these Ideas are objects to the rationalizing mind. These “eternal essences” are the findings of the intellectualizing mind. Treeness is found to be real; a given oak may be made into a table or it may lie there and rot, but in all events that is a passing matter, so it is not real
because it disappears. Dobbin may die, but horseness, a thing grasped by the mind, is real because it is lasting. Dobbin may be held for some time by his halter, but what constitutes being horse is mastered only by one who “knows.”

3. Unfortunate Applications

What harm is there in this intellectualizations? In itself, none, but in what has been made of it, much. It has been used as an excuse for downgrading participation in the world of trees and horses. It has been used to justify contemplation as superior to participation in the world of things, as in medieval theology. In Whitehead’s words, it has led to sterility when mere ideas have remained inert, unproductive of visible consequences. It led to some staticism in the early Middle Ages: to long discussions trying to reason how many teeth there are in the mouth of a horse; theologically, to the conclusion that since God is perfection, and since the only perfect orbit of a perfect planet must be a circle, therefore the planets must move in perfect circles; to the conclusion that oppression of labor was not wrong because it lay within the idea of the master-servant relationship that masters give all the orders. If we may be brief, such were some of the results of that thinking.

A wrong use of ideas-held-as-theory has allowed people sometimes to excuse misbehavior in daily life because they compensated for that by the correctness of principles doctrinally held. A man jailed for drunkenness protested against his arrest because he belonged to a certain church known for its doctrinal purity. When churches are chastised for questionable practices, we can almost hear them say, “Have you not heard what we teach? That should satisfy you.” That the king could do no wrong because he was the king was an example of the same perversion.

Again, the belief has persisted that correct thought would lead to the solution of the problems of men. The Greek originators of rationalism (intellectualism) conceived their utopia in Plato’s Republic. It was to be a reasonable society, with a philosopher as king. The system failed, someone said, because of the “failure of nerve”; nevertheless, the excellence of their theory did not take them out of the jungle of their problems. The brilliant systematization of Aristotle, held for centuries by the medievals as the ultimate of human thought, failed also to yield happiness in life. Even worse, it has been said, it set the brakes on inquiry into actual conditions, which were not considered important because they were mere accidents, transitory, not real.

In discussing the explosion of energetic individualism which followed that mode of thought and learning we must keep those facts in mind. The accumulated knowledge of mankind, the fruit of its intellectualism, the findings of its keenest minds – all added up to the idealism, the ideation, the head work that was esteemed at the top of the hierarchy of values. No one verbalized this better than did the philosopher Hegel (1770-1831): “The Real is rational, and the rational is Real.” He brought to its logical conclusion the thought of Western philosophy expressed in the famous verse of Parmenides: “It is the same thing that can be thought as can be.” Existence, the daily struggle, can only be lived, so it must be left out of the picture of reality. Hegel tried to smuggle existence back into his scheme of idealism. His attempt is outlined in any of the standard references. It was in that smuggling activity that Kierkegaard caught him and raised the hue and cry. Kierkegaard shouted as loudly as Samuel Johnson might have screamed had he kicked that stone and broken his toe.

4. Necessary Reaction

The latter two said similar things: existence is real, and it will not do to ignore the pains of pathological conditions with some fine generalizations about the principles of health. It will not do to theorize beautifully as to what is the church and then treat its members as “children of the church,” whose main function is paying the bills for the cathedrals and other glamour. It will not do to say to
the hungry and cold, “Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed” (James 2:16). The Corban incident in the Gospel (Mark 7: 9-13) showed too neat an escape from the realities of existence. Just as merely devising a system for thinking about life is useless for living real life, so the belief which makes daily living the only real reality is equally a perversion. That leads to a rejection of quality, of values, and leaves people to find their satisfactions in quantity of activities and enjoyments.

5. Reenter the Person

We want to examine here the character and stance and mood of the Christian who must have that life giving nourishment upon which he can subsist. We emphasize the actions and attitudes of the subject. The objective facts are already there for the Christian (the doing and dying of Christ). The Christian must only be careful that he does not substitute some truths about Christ for the Christ himself.

We are concerned then with the doing and living, the stance and the mood of the existing, the subsisting Christian. Sometimes the word existentialism is a summary word for what we are talking about. It is not a system for thinking about life from a unified point of view; the very word is repulsive. To exist in the sense of to live and to subsist means to be free of determinism (predestination by antecedent decision). Very little in life is sufficiently predictable for anyone to forecast consequences that are certain. Think of Saul of Tarsus! And consider the pains through which he was given another certainty!

To our subsisting and surviving Christian, communication must be by experience. Brubacher has put this nicely in A History of the Problems of Education:

Ever since the social culture had been reduced to written symbols and ever since education had taken the social shortcut of vicarious learning through the written or printed word rather than through direct experience, one of the most persistent aberrations of education ha been that the oncoming generation had often memorized the literary form of their social culture without always comprehending its actual meaning. Of this difficulty reformers of nearly every century had been aware. Yet, though many had urged that comprehension and memorization go hand in hand, little or nothing had been done to mark out the steps in facilitating understanding. Few teachers realized, as Pestalozzi so clearly did, that “when a third person, to whom the matter is clear, puts words into my mouth which he makes it clear to people in his own condition, it is not on that account clear to me, but it is and will remain his clear thing, not mine, inasmuch as the words of another cannot be for me what they are to him- the exact expression of his own idea, which is to him perfectly clear.

No one without the experience of Christianity should presume to proclaim it. When Louis Armstrong was asked to explain the nature of his offbeat art, he put it this way: “If you gotta ask what is it, you’ll never get to know.” Try describing a mountain to a person who has never left the plains. Something beyond logical communication is necessary. The doings of God can be told, but the living of it is learned best by indirection. Seeing Jesus in the Gospels reveals what God is; watching Nicodemus, Peter, and Paul makes it more understandable; but experiencing it for oneself makes it plainer than by memorizing the Apostles’ Creed.

To exist and subsist as a Christian means to be personally involved, often painfully and with much fear and trembling. Much Christianity seems to be merely on the surface, but that which is engaged mainly with the systematization of it is dangerously open to the curse of professionalism and artificiality. Jesus told the Pharisees that the very fact that they saw (were “knowers” of Scripture) was the reason for their blindness. They did not get to become children of God because they insisted that they were children of Abraham already, but it was only in a “mental” sort of way.
The goal of him who "knows" is to enjoy contemplation and rest, to put his feet up on the study table and talk confidently about "how things are." The urgent person who subsists on grace in spite of all troubles is ever striving for new heights of insight and involvement. To him the world of "general truth learned" is not enough.

Take an illustration from the truths of mathematics, which is a body of truth systematized from the real world of things. But fiveness cannot be bought in a modern drugstore, nor can one find a pound of dollar signs in their perfect state, removed from the decaying substance of wood, metal, or paper. Imperfect circles and uncertain dollar signs (life!) are not really important, say the theorizers, for they are very low in the categories of value, even if made of iron or gold; but the idea of them is imperishable, external, because it has essence and real being. However, the existence-minded person does not prefer to run in mental circles but to make circles serve him as in wheels of machinery. He needs the lever and fulcrum to pry stones out of his field, not for the amusement of scholars who proudly abstract them and then perhaps belittle his tolls as perishing things that wear out in his struggle to earn a living.

6. Applied to Religion

Luther took a dim view of rational foundations for a belief in God that were spun by the Aristotelian Thomists following the Greek method. There was an immediacy about Luther's knowledge of God that was lacking in Thomas Aquinas, because Luther's main emphasis was on the mediating Word. Even if Aquinas' natural knowledge of God was supplemented by the revealed, it did not add up to Luther's "theology of the cross," which he contrasted with the mind-kind of the scholastics, which he called their "theology of glory." So Christian existentialists (who with him learned the struggle to be urgent, to energize and subsist) hail Luther as one of their champions. They quote the words in his commentary of Psalm 5: "By living, by dying, by being damned one become a theologian, not by understanding, reading and speculating."

Luther wanted us to experience God, to fear, love, and trust him, not to argue and reason about him. This is perhaps what Luther meant when he hurled his condemnation of "that dame reason." It was not just reason as another word for human unbelief and difficulty of belief that he was talking about. He blamed the methodology that scholastic thinking had inherited from the Greeks and had combined with Christianity. We would do well to consider what entered the church when Thomas Aquinas performed the nuptials for Greek philosophy and Christian doctrine. Anyone who has read a volume of Luther can recall the different approach he had. For him, God was not to be discovered by inference, but he was to be apprehended in nature as well as through the Word. He also guarded against the idea of an unmediated relationship between God and mankind, for he knew how to hold related thoughts in tension. He glorified the Word and called it the treasure compared with which the whole world is too small in value to be exchanged for it. Yet he found God unveiling himself to us in everything that goes on in our lives. When he went hunting with his friends, he called the hunted hare that he had wrapped in his coat a symbol of the hunted soul pursued by the dog Satan. God was so real to Luther that he was experiencing him in every vicissitude of life, and, in the hunting incident, with considerable anxiety and pain.

7. The Two in Harmony

Here is the tie between genuine theology and the existential view of practical Christianity. The opportunity to find God, to be confronted by him, to be ground down into the dust by experience, but to be exalted into the heavenlies by the gospel is something dear to him who has gone through the hell of contrition and repentance. He has found peace in the experience of grace that has made him truly a son of God.
The reasoning process has its place. Luther placed it at the top of those characteristics that make us people. Using it to arrive at generalizations (doctrines) to be believed and confessed was to him a valid occupation and high activity. One Luther student coined an expression to combine both aspects of theological activity: mediated immediacy. “We do not reach God by inferring his existence, nature, and attributes from his masks and veils, but God himself comes to meet us in them—none other than the God who meets us in Christ.”

The existential mode, then, ought to characterize the thinking and inferring mind. Do not ask us to take sides for or against the existential manner, nor to vote for or against inferential procedures. They are two sides of the same coin. Do not ask us to pronounce a sentence for or against white and black in juxtaposition. No one goes through life devoted to higher things as against lower things; he needs them both. The well-balanced person who wants daintiness in her earrings wants majesty in the mountains. In The Existential Posture Roger L. Shinn Wrote:

There is no sense in casting a vote for or against existentialism. That would be like voting for or against the wind. Winds save crops and cleanse cities; they also rip apart barns and factories. Existentialism likewise brings blessings and fury.

The Reformation has been called an existential protest, and the “pro” must be taken in its original meaning of “for.” Those who protested were not satisfied with the accepted forms of scholastically derived systematics held over the people. They wanted to reassert the rights of individual participation and judgment. The Reformer’s theses put down some things to be believed, but his much quoted first thesis was personal in its statement of what the life of a believer should be: a process of anxiety plus the leap of faith.

8. The Error Reappeared

Christianity became institutional. Its activities were deposited with those who “knew.” People believed what the church believed—don’t disturb them by asking what that was. Thomas Carlyle once referred to the saying, “Socrates is terribly at ease in Zion.” All was rationally accounted for: Peter was Christ’s vicar; the church was in charge of the tradition and its interpretation; all would be finally saved so surely as they remained obedient; despite a longer or shorter stay in purgatory. No one was too disturbed about the human condition: poverty might be bad, but it would pass; sickness might be serious, but the sufferer would finally be relieved; ignorance might exist in mountainous proportions, but whatever was was right. The accepted view was that life is neat, pat, orderly, and explained. But so surely as there were still some rebels around, there had to be an explosion. A John Baptist must disturb Zion. An Elijah must rise to object.

When we observe these things and try to explain and communicate the understanding of them, we experience the inadequacy of language. Here is an experience I had with preparing sermons: in reading the text, studying the original, making the sermon study, and meditation upon the material, I thrill with thoughts and ideas and insights that should make a valuable message for the hearers. When I turned to putting these fermenting thoughts into the form of the good Greek unities, theme and parts and all that, the impact slipped away. “We murder to dissect.” We cut and slice and force and finish until somehow everything seems to get lost.

9. Necessary Action

God was not able to make himself fully known to us with words; he had to appear among us in Jesus of Nazareth and exist among us in the form of One whom we could with our eyes, look upon, and handle with our hands. Note well: only those who entered into a personal relationship with Jesus saw
God in him. They were the wounded and hurt in life who suffered anxiety and pain. They responded with faith, and they found in him their completion, their eternal fulfillment as earnest persons, and thus they subsisted.

Those who went beyond the “I-It” relationship (where classical thinking is inclined to stop) and became involved in the “I-Thou” relationship were reborn children of God. Jesus is more important as a prompting person than as a speaker of words of truth, even as he made a final appeal to his deeds in John 14:11. We hope that this explains partially the importance of existent, urgent, and subsistent living as superior to inert systematics.

In this connection, recall the many passages in Scripture that describe the agony and the striving, the stumbling and the falling, the reaching and the grasping, the begging and the demanding, the crying out and the insisting of many saints whose pilgrimages are reported in those pages.

The existential life-style implies that in struggle and victory people become real persons, assertive individuals, exigent partakers. It is indicated in Scripture that God wants people to exert themselves, engage in conflict, and take up their cross to attain that victory for which God took hold of them. The violent take the kingdom by force, we read in Matthew’s Gospel. People in a living “I-Thou” relationship with God rise to the high stature that God would inspire in them, as when they come able to call God himself to account! Luther was at his grandest when he confronted God with his own promises. No prayer is more perfect than a promise tossed back to God.

10. Persons Who Prevail

Job would not meekly submit to slaughter: “Though he slay me, yet will I hope in him.” That famous passages closes: “I will surely defend my ways to his face” (Job 13:15). He would submit to all that God had for him to endure, but he would retain his integrity as a person. The Lord wrestled with Jacob at the Jabbok until there was physical injury. So strongly did Jacob exert himself in the struggle that the anthropomorphic Lord could not handle him without resort to his attributes of deity. God was a real person to Jacob, not an “It” about which he had been told, not a Being about which it was sufficient to make a correct statement (systematic confession of truth).

Jesus could not fend off the woman of Canaan with the objective, plain, and stated truth: “I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel” and “It is not right to take the children’s bread and toss it to their dogs” (Matt. 15:24, 26). That was plainly true, but to her he was more complicated. She would take him by a side which she may have heard that he had, or which somehow her faith at that moment sensed and she beat him in the argument because he did not have a way out! To prevail with God, one must enter into a personal encounter with him. The battle in which one endures to the end is not fought with academic arguments.

A prevailing person will protest against trivial and easy religion, against religion that is chiefly a rational knowing, and that finds easy refuge in authority. The firmer existentialist will not grant that objective generalization is really knowledge. He will insist that to experience is to know. He will contend that putting ideas in order with precision not only can, but often will, destroy their validity. Truth systematized to be memorized and accepted (without personal experience of it) will suffer from what the French call “professional deformation.” We will see what that means when we look at the caricature of Christianity that resulted when theology and the ministry became infected by the specter of professionalism. The Greeks were already aware of such terms—they warned against any one’s doing anything too well. Professionalism in education can become so precise, so rational and so theoretical that the needs of pupils and students as living, active, and reacting persons is forgotten. At that point, professionalism has deformed the process and has itself become a caricature.
11. A Summary

Generalizing in philosophy, systematizing in theology, professionalizing in education, rigorizing in law, legalizing in managing home or business— all these can become so abstract and rarefied and so far removed from the realities of life that the needs of living people sooner or later accumulate to the point of explosion. That “blow up” is what we referred to earlier as both a psychological and a philosophical necessity. It happens when “everything nailed down is coming loose,” as angel Gabriel says in Green Pastures, a play by Marc Connelly.

The anxious Christian analyzes the coming loose as the inevitable result of an unwarranted nailing down. He has learned that life was never intended to have all things neatly settled. Room must always be there for contingency and for the freedom of people to move and grow and develop and constantly change in the process of coming. This is what Luther meant by his remark that anyone who says that he is a Christian is not Christian. Describing existing, urgent faith, he said further:

This life is a journey on which we constantly progress from faith to faith, from love to love, from patience to patience, and from cross to cross. It is not righteousness but justification; not cleanliness but cleansing. We have not reached the goal, but we are all journeying toward it. Some have progressed much farther on their way than others. God is satisfied to find that we work with determination.

A few paragraphs from Irrational Man by William Barrett will cast further light on the two postures that we are considering. He discussed the Hebrews and the Greeks in the following:

To sum up: The ideal man of Hebraism is the man of faith; for Hellenism at least as it came to ultimate philosophic expression in its two greatest philosophers, Plato and Aristotle, the ideal man is the man of reason, the philosopher who as a spectator of all time and existence must rise above these.

The man of faith is the concrete man in his wholeness. Hebraism does not raise its eyes to the universal and abstract; its vision is always of the concrete, particular, individual man. The Greeks, on the other hand, were the first thinkers in history; they discovered the universal, the abstract and timeless essences, forms, and Ideas. The intoxication of this discovery (which marked nothing less than the earliest emergence and differentiation of the rational function) led Plato to hold that man lives only insofar as he lives in the eternal...

What is important is to make clear the central intuition that informs each of these two views of man. The reader probably has already divined that the features of Hebraic man are those which existential philosophy has attempted to exhume and bring to the reflective consciousness of our time, a time in which as a matter of historical happening the Hebraic religion (which means Western religion) no longer retains its unconditional validity for the mass of mankind...

We have to insist on a noetic [mind] content in Hebraism: Biblical man too had his knowledge, though it is not the intellectual knowledge of the Greek. It is not the kind of knowledge that man can have through reason alone, or perhaps through reason at all; he has it rather through body and blood, bones and bowels, through trust and anger and confusion and love and fear; through his passionate adhesion in faith to the Being whom he can never intellectually know. This kind of knowledge a man has only through living, not reasoning, and perhaps in the end he cannot even say what it is he knows; yet it is knowledge all the same, and Hebraism at its source had this knowledge.

12. An Aspect We Reject

Sometimes the atheistic existentialist indulges in unwarranted license and blasphemous attack upon accepted truths that he cannot abide. His scorn is in the pattern of unbelief. His view was well
worded by a writer for the “Theatre of the Absurd”: “Cut off from his religious, metaphysical, and transcendental roots, man is lost; all his actions become senseless, absurd, useless.” The mood of the atheistic existentialist was well put by Ernest Hemingway in *A Farewell to Arms*:

I was always embarrassed by the words sacred, glorious, and sacrifice and the expression in vain. We had heard them, sometimes standing in the rain almost out of earshot, so that only the shouted words came through, and had read them, on proclamations that were slapped up by billposters over other proclamations, now for a long time, and I had seen nothing sacred, and the things that were glorious had not glory and the sacrifices were like the stockyards at Chicago if nothing was done with the meat except to bury it. There were many words that you could not stand to hear and finally on the names of places had dignity. Certain numbers were the same way and certain dates and these with the names of places were all you could say and have them mean anything. Abstract words such as glory, honor, courage, or hallow were obscene beside the concrete names of villages, the numbers of roads, the names of rivers, the numbers of regiments and the dates.

Another writer had a youthful character speak for his generation: “We have principles, but no suffering, money but no wealth; delinquency, but no evil; television but no insight; I.Q.’s but no intellects. We have everything but the one thing without which human beings cannot live, something for which to die slightly.”

**13. Reflections in the Arts**

Considerable literature has been devoted to portraying the sad situation in our world where everything seems to be coming loose. A reviewer of one of these books said:

There are no heroes... Lawyers and engineers, war-rich contractors and businessmen, country club drifters and adulterers, newspapermen on the way down, saloon-keepers on the way up, deadbeats, pimps, and whores, they possess in common their uncommon reality and the fact that with few exceptions they have made a mess of their lives, or are on the verge of doing so.... The breakdown of human relationships is the favorite theme; failure, loneliness, or boredom appear and reappear in his stories. He depicts unsparingly a continuing war of attrition between the individual and his society, between the middle-aged and the young, between husband and wife and lover; if the joyless participants can be called lovers; between parent and child. The world described is neither a moral place nor a merry one, but crowded, noisy full of eating and drinking, making love, laughing and the contrary, cheating, fighting, dancing and conniving.

Other art makes the same portrayal. The word *absurd* is correct, if it is understood to mean something other than just ridiculous. To the pagan existentialist, the world is exactly that: absurd. There are not in it established morals as conventionally accepted. The word square is a word of opprobrium. The old virtue of thrift, defined as not spending for luxuries, is economic stupidity. A huge public debt is not considered serious because we owe it to ourselves.

Modern art of all kinds describes disorganized man. If modern music sounds like the pulling apart of a bedspring, it is good art because it gives a correct picture of the disorder and conflict among rootless and undedicated cynics. Living under the threat of "death from above” ( *mors ab alto* printed on a bomber), some have turned to final flings as the practical thing to do. The unsavory plays of some writers for the theater are so salacious that one reviewer resorted to Latin for some of the things he felt obliged to report. Within the framework of such attitudes, it is not strange that quality of life has been exchanged for quantity of titillation and crude desires.
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Mankind has been reduced to being a partaker in the animal kingdom, so why shouldn't he act like one? Labor has been robbed of creativity and satisfaction by the performance of cold machines, and what is the pleasure in that? We have power and wealth in abundance, but much of our national budget is devoted to armaments for killing. We earn good salaries, but is has become well-nigh punitive to own one's home. We eat a rich and tasty diet, but Thanksgiving is spoiled with chicken. The race up the corporation pyramid leaves a trial of broken homes and unhappy children- in suburbia they don't even have places to dig holes. Wealth has faded as the condition of a good life. Such is the lostness of people, their alienation, when an attitude than can be useful is misused.

14. Misapplication in Religion

Something specific is to be said about modern existential theologians. Karl Barth sought an existential declaration of God's holiness, man's sin, redemption in Christ, and justification by faith. This he did in his Romans. Our faith is grounded on the all-embracing objective order of creation, preservation, redemption, sanctification, and glorification. Those are truths to be learned, and they can also be known in the experience of them. When submerged to the low level of "dogma and nothing but," they are mishandled. Therefore the existential reminders we have above noted from Luther are in order. There are implications here for the Christian ministry and classroom and home-specific criticisms of what we are doing that could seem almost revolutionary. But rootless theologies will erode the sure foundation of our heritage, the revealed, inspired, and written Word.

15. Response is Necessary

In discussing the two main tensions so often mentioned in the above, we have surely noticed that man is fundamentally ambiguous. He was that way in Eden, he could do good or he could do evil. He remains salvable and teachable, but he is subject to darkness and damnation. He is filled with tensions and contradictions, even when converted, which cannot always be resolved by exact and consistent thinking. He is at war with himself, he is split down the middle. He is both battleground and prey. His condition cannot be healed by knowledge of his own gaining, nor alone by others teaching him. His response must be made, as we see in the pages of Scripture. And this is because people are people. If they could quickly become either animal or God, all would be solved, but that they cannot. We do know how we can become "like God," and that is the way out of our situation.

The solution is in that consummation which all revelation points to in Col. 2:9f: "In Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, and you have been given fullness in Christ." This truth (but more than a truth intellectually defined) must be presented to people, and in the confrontation they must respond. Man is an existential person in the presence of God; never has God treated him as a preset machine.

After considerable research, the age-old question has been answered: "How many Christians does it take to change a light bulb?":

Charismatic: Only one. Hands are already in the air.

Pentecostal: Ten. One to change the bulb and nine to pray against the spirit of darkness.

Presbyterian: None. Lights will go on and off at predestined times.

Catholic: None. Candles only.
**Baptist:** At least 15. One to change the bulb, and three committees to approve the change and decide who brings the potato salad.

**Episcopalian:** Three. One to call the electrician, one to mix the drinks, and one to talk about how much better the old bulb was.

**Methodist:** Undetermined. Whether your light bulb is bright, dull, or completely burned out, you are loved. You can be a light bulb, turnip bulb or tulip bulb. Church-wide lighting service planned for Sunday.

**Church of Christ:** They do not use light bulbs because there is no evidence of their use in the New Testament.

**Nazarene:** Six. One woman to replace the bulb while five men review church guide on lighting policy.

**Amish:** What’s a light bulb?

**Lutheran:** None. Lutherans don’t believe in change.