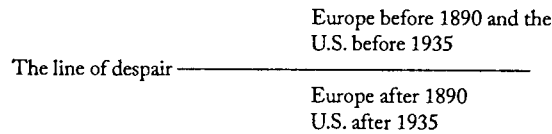


The use of classical apologetics before this shift took place was effective only because non-Christians were functioning, on the surface, on the same presuppositions, even if they had an inadequate base for them. In classical apologetics though, presuppositions were rarely analyzed, discussed or taken into account.

So if a man got up to preach the gospel and said, "Believe this, it is true," those who heard would have said, "Well, if that is so, then its opposite is false." The presupposition of antithesis pervaded men's entire mental outlook. We must not forget that historic Christianity stands on a basis of antithesis. Without it historic Christianity is meaningless. The basic antithesis is that God objectively exists in contrast (in antithesis) to his not existing. Which of these two are the reality, changes everything in the area of knowledge and morals and in the whole of life.

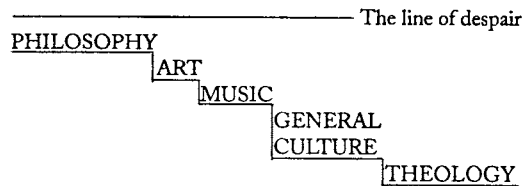
The Line of Despair

Thus we have a date line like this:



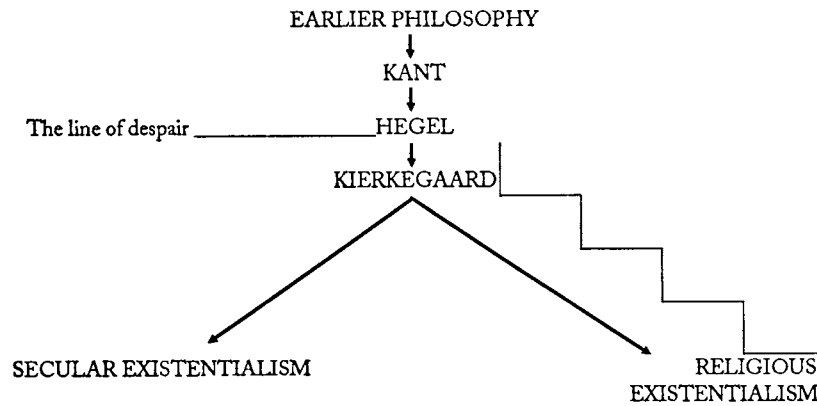
Notice that I call the line, the line of despair. Above this line we find men living with their romantic notions of absolutes (though with no sufficient logical basis). This side of the line, all is changed. Man thinks differently concerning truth.

In order to understand this line of despair more clearly, think of it not as a simple horizontal line but as a staircase:



Each of the steps represents a certain stage in time. The higher is

existential thinking, both secular and theological thinking. Our diagram now looks like this:



Why is it that Kierkegaard can so aptly be thought of as the father of both? What proposition did he add to the flow of thought that made the difference? Kierkegaard led to the conclusion that you could not arrive at synthesis by reason. Instead, you achieve everything of real importance by a leap of faith.

Kierkegaard was a complex man, and his writings, especially his devotional writings, are often very helpful. For example, the Bible-believing Christians in Denmark still use these devotional writings. We can also be totally sympathetic to his outcry about the deadness of much of the Church in his day. However, in his more philosophical writings he did become the father of modern thought. This turns upon his writing of Abraham and the “sacrifice” of Isaac. Kierkegaard said this was an act of faith with nothing rational to base it on or to which to relate it. Out of this came the modern concept of a “leap of faith” and the total separation of the rational and faith.

In this thinking concerning Abraham, Kierkegaard had not read the Bible carefully enough. Before Abraham was asked to move toward the sacrifice of Isaac (which, of course, God did not allow to be consummated), he had much propositional revelation from God, he had seen God, God had fulfilled promises to him. In short,

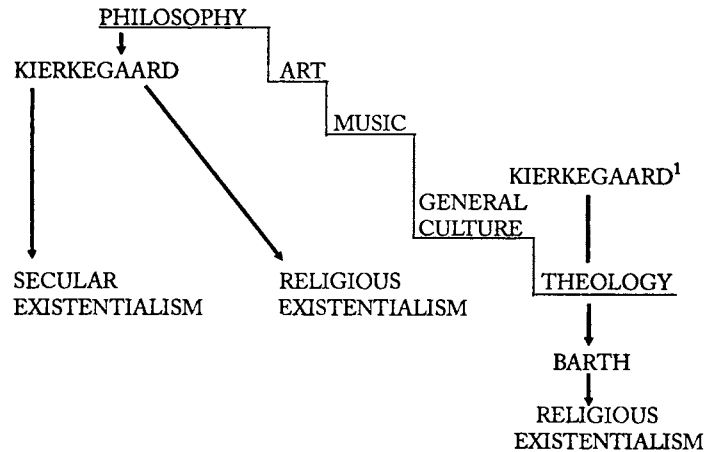
would, like the final experience advocated by the existentialists, be above the line of rational validation, in this way:

THE NONRATIONAL AND NONLOGICAL	A first-order experience by the use of drugs.
THE RATIONAL AND LOGICAL	No purpose or meaning found.

This overwhelming desire for some nonrational experience was responsible for most of the serious use of the drugs LSD and STP in the 1960s. For the sensitive person, drugs were then not usually used for escape. On the contrary, he hoped that by taking them he would experience the reality of something which would give his life some meaning. Intriguingly enough, Professor Timothy Leary, formerly of Harvard University, linked up the LSD experience with that described in the *Tibetan Book of the Dead*.⁴ Thus he shows that the desire for, and the form of, this experience changes very little from West to East. Whether it is the existentialist speaking, or Aldous Huxley, or Eastern mysticism, we find a uniform need for an irrational experience to make some sense of life. Their views have brought them to a wall, and by an unrelated leap of faith they hope to clear the wall. Each of their views may be distinguished in detailed description, but they have come to the same wall and are making the same attempt to clear it. Each case involves a nonrational leap of faith.

The chairs of philosophy in most universities have come under the line of despair. The living philosophical discussions have tended to move into unusual settings—such as philosophic astronomy, modern jazz or among the counterculture. It is in such fields that philosophy is being hammered out. Academic philosophy as such, including Anglo-Saxon philosophy, has tended to be antiphilosophy.

In concluding this section let us note that when we speak of being under the line of despair, we do not mean that these people necessarily sit down and weep, but that they have given up all hope of achieving a rational, unified answer to knowledge and life.



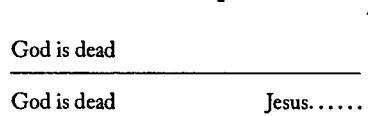
The new theology has given up hope of finding a unified field of knowledge. Hence, in contrast to biblical and Reformation theology, it is antitheology.

Seen in this way it is naive to study the new theology as if it were a subject on its own. Some years ago I was speaking at one of the most solidly biblical seminaries in the world. I began by saying that if our American theologians had understood the Armory Show of 1913 in New York, when modern art was first shown in the United States, perhaps the big denominations in American would not have been captured by the liberals in the thirties. By that time the trends which would come much later in theology were being foreshadowed in art. This is why, earlier in this book, I gave 1913 as such an important date. Had the Christians understood the message of this art at the Armory Show, it would have been a tremendous opportunity to have been ahead rather than to have lagged behind. Conservative theology has not yet caught up. It has been far too provincial, isolated from general cultural thinking.

Karl Barth was the doorway in theology into the line of despair. He continued to hold to the day of his death the higher (negative) critical theories which the liberals held and yet, by a leap, sought to bypass the two rational alternatives—a return to the historic view of Scripture

restlessness amongst many of the modern theologians. A new attempt was made to breach the dichotomy. This attempt took two forms: one form is to try to find a unity of the whole on the level of the lower story, the other on the level of the upper.

The first form was widely publicized as the “God is dead” theology. Its adherents chose the downstairs as a place to find a unity, and they have dispensed with God altogether, including the term *God*. When the real God-is-dead men say God is dead, they do not merely mean that God is being listened to very little in our modern secular world, *but that he never existed*. They put their emphasis on the lower story and seem to deny the validity of the upper story altogether. This leaves only the word *Jesus* downstairs. But we must be careful not to get caught out, for if we turn our backs for a moment these men use the word *Jesus* as a banner with *upper-story* overtones. We will represent it like this:



These men chose to call themselves “Christian atheists.” They are atheists in the classical sense of that word; and they are Christians only in the sense that they have adopted for themselves Bonhoeffer’s definition of Christ, “The man for others.” They really differ little from today’s optimistic humanists.

This is fairly straightforward; in one sense these men are no longer “having their cake and eating it too.” They lost all connotation words except the term *Jesus Christ*, and even this, to the extent to which they defined it, they have ruined as a connotation word. But they were not being left quiet in their atheism. The upper-story men who still want to keep the use of the connotation words fought back.

In actual fact this theology has a dead god in both the upper and lower stories:

The new mysticism—all knowledge concerning God is dead, any concept of a personal God is dead—therefore God is dead

On the basis of rationality God is dead

A typical exponent of the upper-story mentality was Paul Tillich (1886-1965). When asked at Santa Barbara, shortly before he died, if he ever prayed, he said, "No, but I meditate."

Thus in the upper story it is not only that *man* becomes a "shade," but the god of the new mysticism is no more than a mist which becomes only Being or Pan-everything. If we look at the theologians operating in this upper story, we may say that they are either atheists in the classical sense, or pantheists—depending on how one looks at it. Thus their god is also dead.

This vague pantheism, which we have noted in secular thinking also, creates problems for those brought up within the Christian faith. Thus for example, Bishop Robinson, a British theologian, in his writing insisted that God is actually transcendental after all. He spoiled it, however, when he went on to say that man is transcendental too (which, fascinatingly enough, is the exact word Sir Julian Huxley used about man), for this therefore means that "transcendental" really equals "nontranscendental," and we are back at square one.

When the theologians and the secular men use this word *transcendental*, I would suggest that they mean by it the things that surprise them when they examine man, things they could not expect to find on the basis of what they believe about man's origin. Or again, it means little more than Henry Miller's "sense of wonder." So when they use this word without definition, it does not thereby mean that they have escaped from the charge of pantheism.

As far as God and man are concerned, modern theology then is like this:

Nonrational, nonlogical faith	=	No categories for God, all knowledge concerning God is dead. The personal God is dead. No categories for man or his meaning.
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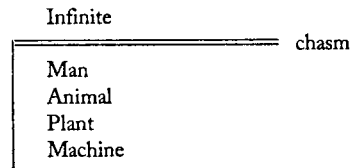
All rationality; i.e., all contacts with the cosmos (science), all contacts with history	=	God is dead and man is a machine
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A Quest by the Upper-Story Men

This position is a high price to pay for rejecting historic Christianity,

total comprehension of the infinite.

Modern man and the new theology have only this:



Modern man has driven a wedge between the personal and the infinite and says that personality equals finiteness. He has equated personality with limitedness. But the Christian says that the only *limitation* which personality intrinsically must have is that it cannot be impersonal at the same time. To say that personality must always be limited in other ways is to try to make an absolute which one cannot make. Indeed, human personalities are limited in other ways, but this is because they are created and finite, not because they are personal.

Personality as Such Cannot Necessarily Imply Limitedness

A man from Israel who was an atheist wrote and asked me, "What sense does it make for a man to give his son to the ants, to be killed by ants, in order to save the ants?" I replied that it makes no sense at all for a man to give his son to the ants, to be killed by the ants, in order to save the ants, because man *as a personality* is totally separated from the ants. Man's only relation to the ants is in the areas of Being and creaturehood. However, in the area of personality man's relationship is upward to God, and therefore the incarnation and death of the Son of God for the sake of man's salvation are sensible.

The reasonableness of the incarnation and the reasonableness of communication between God and man turn on this point—that man, as man, is created in the image of God.

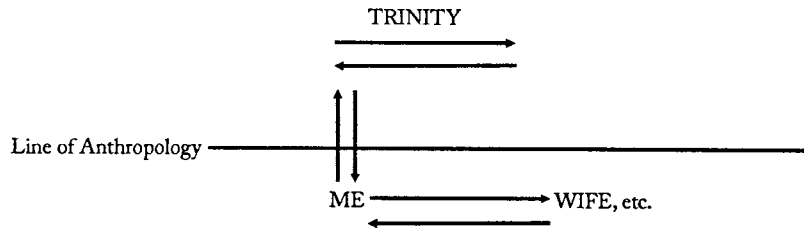
Divine and Human Communication

The communication which God has made to man is true, but that does not mean it is exhaustive. This is an important distinction which we must always bear in mind. To know anything exhaustively we would

existence of love as we know it in our makeup does not have an origin in chance, but from that which has always been.

Above the line of anthropology, God the Father loved God the Son before the creation of the world—this is on a horizontal plane. On the vertical plane God also loves me, who am below the line of anthropology. The word and act of love has crossed the line of anthropology downward. Then, also on the vertical plane, I am to love God. The word and act of love has crossed the line of anthropology upward. Finally, I am commanded by God to love my wife, children, neighbors, below the line of anthropology. Here is the word and act of love horizontally below the line of anthropology.

The relationships of love can be shown like this:



Two things follow from this. First, I can know something truly of what it means when I am told that God the Father loves the Son. When I see a boy and a girl walking together arm in arm, obviously showing love towards each other, I do not know all that they feel towards one another; yet because I too love my woman, my looking at them is not as a dog would look at them. It is not exhaustive, but it is true understanding—there is true correlation. And when I talk about love existing in the Trinity before creation, I am not talking gibberish. Though I am very far from plumbing its depths when applied to God himself, yet the word *love* and the reality of love when Christ spoke of the Father loving him before the foundation of the world has true meaning for me.

Second, when I love my woman, its meaningfulness is not exhausted by the context of this one individual relationship alone, nor even the love of all men for all women, nor all finite love. The validity and meaning of love rest upon the reality that love exists between the

Logical Conclusions

We can look now at some of the general principles to guide our communication with twentieth-century man.

Let us remember that every person we speak to, whether shop girl or university student, has a set of presuppositions, whether he or she has analyzed them or not. The dot in the diagram represents a person's non-Christian presuppositions; the arrow points to what would be the logical conclusion of those non-Christian presuppositions.

A man with his non-Christian presuppositions • ————— ⇒ | The logical conclusion of his non-Christian presuppositions

If a man were completely logical to his presuppositions, he would come out at the line on the right. If he arrived there in thinking and life, he would be consistent to his presuppositions.

But, in fact, no non-Christian can be consistent to the logic of his presuppositions. The reason for this is simply that a man must live in reality, and reality consists of two parts: the external world and its form, and man's "mannishness," including his own "mannishness." No matter what a man may believe, he cannot change the reality of what is. As Christianity is the truth of what is there, to deny this, on the basis of another system, is to stray from the real world:

The real world—the external world and man himself ← ————— ⇒ | The logical conclusion of a man's non-Christian presuppositions

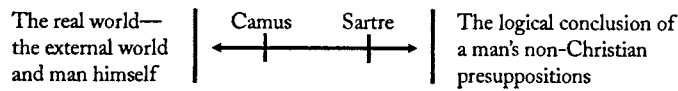
Every man, therefore, irrespective of his system, is caught. As he tries intellectually to extend his position in a logical way and then live within it, he is caught by the two things which, as it were, slap him across the face. Without indicating that his psychology or philosophy is correct, Carl Gustav Jung has correctly observed that two things cut across every man's will—the external world with its structure, and those things which well up from inside himself. Non-Christian presuppositions simply do not fit into what God has made, including what man is. This being so, every man is in a place of tension. Man cannot make his own universe and then live in it.

The Bible takes this point a step further when it says that, even in

Every person has the pull of two consistencies, the pull towards the real world and the pull towards the logic of his system. He may let the pendulum swing back and forth between them, but he cannot live in both places at once. He will be living nearer to the one or to the other, depending on the strength of the pull at any given time. To have to choose between one consistency or the other is a real damnation for man. *The more logical a man who holds a non-Christian position is to his own presuppositions, the further he is from the real world; and the nearer he is to the real world, the more illogical he is to his presuppositions.*

The Tensions Are Felt in Differing Strengths

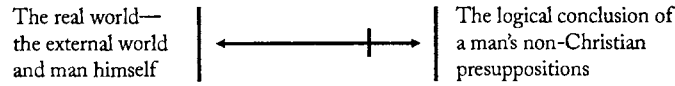
We have said that every person, however intelligent or lacking in intelligence, has stopped somewhere along the line towards the consistent conclusion of his own position. Some people are prepared to go further from the real world than others in an attempt to be more logical to their presuppositions. The French existentialists Camus and Sartre exhibited this:



Sartre said that Camus was not sufficiently consistent on the basis of their mutual presuppositions. The reason for this was because Camus never gave up "hope," centered in random personal happiness, though it went against the logic of his position. Or as was stated when Camus received the Nobel prize, because he never gave up the search for morals, though the world seemed to be without meaning. These are the reasons why, of the two, Camus was more loved in the intellectual world. He never got the real world sorted out, as we have seen from his book *The Plague*, but he was nearer to it than Sartre.

Sartre was correct to say that Camus was illogical to their presuppositions; but as we saw before, he could not be consistent either. When he signed the Algerian Manifesto, taking a position as though morals have real meaning, he too was being inconsistent to his presuppositions. Thus Sartre was also in tension.

Each person may move up or down the line at different times in their lives, according to their circumstances, but most people more or less stabilize at one point. Every non-Christian, whether he is sleeping under the bridges in Paris or is totally bourgeois, is somewhere along the line.



This is not an abstraction, for each of these persons is created in the image of God, and thus is in tension because within himself there are things which speak of the real world. Men in different cultures have different standards for morals, but there is no one who does not have some moral motions. Follow a modern girl through her day. She may seem totally amoral. But if you were to get to know her you would find that, at some point, she felt the pull of morals. Love may carry different expressions, but all men have some motions of love. The individual will feel this tension in different ways—with some it will be beauty, with some it will be significance, with some it will be rationality, with some it will be the fear of nonbeing.

Man today seeks to deflect this tension by saying that he is no more than a machine. But if he were no more than a machine, he would find no difficulty in proceeding step by step down the line to the logical conclusion of his non-Christian presuppositions. Man is not a machine, however, even if he says he is.

Suppose that a satellite were put into orbit around the earth with a camera that was able to photograph everything on the world's surface. If this information was then fed back to a giant computer that did not need programming, it might calculate that everything behaved mechanically. But the final observer is not a computer but the individual man. There is always one person in the room who does not allow everything to be seen as machinelike; it is myself, the observer, because I know myself.

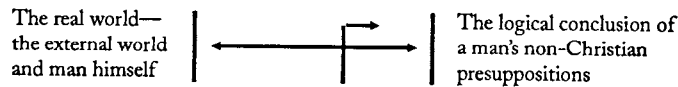
Christians must be careful at this place. Though the Bible says men are lost, it does not say they are nothing. When a man says he is a

not properly to be spoken of as “neutral.” There are no neutral facts, for facts are God’s facts. However, there is common ground between the Christian and non-Christian because regardless of a man’s system, he has to live in God’s world. If he were consistent to his non-Christian presuppositions, he would be separated from the real universe and the real man, and conversation and communication would not be possible.²

In this way it does not seem to me that presuppositional apologetics should be seen as ending conversation with the people around us. On the other hand, to try to work below the line of despair without a clear and defined concept of presuppositional apologetics is simply to destroy the possibility of helping twentieth-century people. There is no use talking today until the presuppositions are taken into account, and especially the crucial presuppositions concerning the nature of truth and the method of attaining truth.

Giving and Taking Blows

When we have discovered, as well as we can, a person’s point of tension, the next step is to push him towards the logical conclusion of his presuppositions:



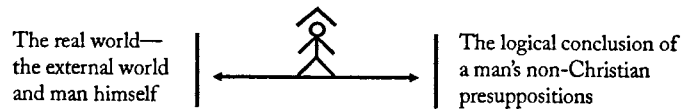
We ought not to try first to move a man away from the logical conclusion of his position but towards it, in the direction of the arrow. We should try to move him in the natural direction his presuppositions take him. We are pushing him towards the place where he ought to be, had he not stopped short.

As I seek to do this, I need to remind myself constantly that this is not a game I am playing. If I begin to enjoy it as a kind of intellectual exercise, then I am cruel and can expect no real spiritual results. As I push the man off his false balance, he must be able to feel that I care for him. Otherwise I will only end up destroying him, and the cruelty and ugliness of it all will destroy me as well. Merely to be abstract and

ity. He has a right to ask questions. It is perfectly true that not all Christians proceed in this way with all modern people, and yet people are brought to Christ by them. For every person who is saved we should be very thankful. But to withdraw by saying or implying "Keep quiet and just believe" may later lead to spiritual weakness, even if the person does become a Christian, for it will leave crucial questions unanswered. Therefore, in the midst of our attempts to press our case, we must be ready to receive blows as well. The more he is a true twentieth-century man the more important it is, if you wish to see him become a Christian, that you should accept the blows of the questions in the name of Jesus Christ, and in the name of truth. On the other hand, keep pressing him back, for *he* must keep answering questions too. As we take time to study both the modern world in which we live and, more particularly, our Bible, we shall come to know more and more answers. We must have faced the question "Is Christianity true?" for ourselves. We must be men of the Scriptures, so that we can know what the content of the biblical system is. Every day of our lives we should be studying the Scriptures to make sure that what we are presenting really is the Christian position, and that we are presenting it as well as possible in our day.

Taking the Roof Off

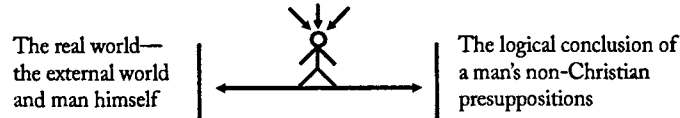
Let us think of it in a slightly different way. Every man has built a roof over his head to shield himself at the point of tension:



At the point of tension the person is not in a place of consistency in his system, and the roof is built *as a protection against the blows of the real world*, both internal and external. It is like the great shelters built upon some mountain passes to protect vehicles from the avalanches of rock and stone which periodically tumble down the mountain. The avalanche, in the case of the non-Christian, is the real but abnormal, fallen world which surrounds him. The Christian, lovingly, must

remove the shelter and allow the truth of the external world and of what man is to beat upon him. When the roof is off, each man must stand naked and wounded before the truth of what is.

The truth that we let in first is not a dogmatic statement of the truth of the Scriptures, but the truth of the external world and the truth of what man himself is. This is what shows him his need. The Scriptures then show him the real nature of his lostness and the answer to it. *This, I am convinced, is the true order for our apologetics in the second half of the twentieth century for people living under the line of despair.*



It is unpleasant to be submerged by an avalanche, but we must allow the person to undergo this experience so that he may realize his system has no answer to the crucial questions of life. He must come to know that his roof is a false protection from the storm of what is, and then we can talk to him of the storm of the judgment of God.

Removing the roof is not some kind of optional exercise. It is strictly biblical in its emphasis. In the thinking of the twentieth-century man, the concept of judgment and of hell is nonsense, and therefore to begin to talk here is to mumble in a language which makes no contact with him. Hell or any such concept is unthinkable to modern man because he has been brainwashed into accepting the monolithic belief of naturalism which surrounds him. We of the West may not be brainwashed by our State, but we are brainwashed by our culture. Even the modern radicals are radicals in a very limited circle.

Before men passed below the line of despair they knew for the most part that they were guilty, but it rarely entered their minds that they were dead as well. By contrast, modern man hardly ever considers himself to be guilty, but he often acknowledges that he is dead. The Bible says that both these things are true. Man in revolt against the holy God who is there is guilty and is already under God's wrath. Because he is guilty, he is separated from his true and only reference point and therefore he is dead as well. The Bible does not say man will

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Demonstrating the Character of God

Salvation Does Not End with the Individual

We have examined the tension which a non-Christian is bound to feel—the tension between the real world and the logical conclusion of a man's non-Christian presuppositions. If we are honest, Christians too have a question to face. As people watch us, individually and corporately, and hear our presuppositions, what do they see with regard to our consistence to our presuppositions?

The man, now the Christian,
and his presuppositions \longrightarrow The logical conclusion of
our Christian presuppositions

In this concluding section I want to pursue the question of a reality which is visible to a watching world.

As Christians we must consider what the logical conclusions of *our* presuppositions are. Here we are speaking of apologetics, not abstractly, not scholastically, not as a subject taught in a Christian school but as practiced in the battles of our generation. Christian apologetics must be able to show intellectually that Christianity speaks of *true truth*; but it must also *exhibit* that it is not just a theory. This is needed for the defense of the flock of Christ, and also in the positive sense of
