



Transcriptions

Three Facets of a Whole Education

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Annotation: *Calvin Theological Seminary, Grand Rapids, MI, January 19, 1984.* Ted Ward highlights two key intellectual problems he encounters among highly educated people, especially graduate students: dichotomizing and oversimplifying. He identifies factors caused by these two problems that hinder scholarly pursuits. A corrective is found in the three facets of a whole education found in Psalm 19.



As an educator, especially a graduate school professor for lo these many years, I have developed a sense of where strengths and weaknesses can be expected in students. I'd like to speak this morning about what I see to be two key intellectual problems which we encounter among many highly-educated people—and I use as my model of a highly-educated person a devoted doctoral student—and I would point out that these two problems are inherent, predictably present, in most graduate students that I encounter. The problems to which I address myself are not by any means unique to theological students or those with theological education background, but I should caution you lest you exempt yourselves by virtue of being in a theological track that over half of my doctoral students come out of the theological track and, therefore, when I note these problems I note that theological students are not exempt from these problems. And I think, as a matter of fact, I'm speaking of matters which are probably of great concern to all of us whether we are ministers-to-be or whether we are professors in such an institution as this or at a graduate school such as the one where I am located.

The two problems to which I address myself are intellectual problems which tend to inhibit scholarly pursuits. The problem of dichotomizing, that tendency which is endemic: to make things

either black or white; to search out the extreme posture, and to pose oneself at one end or the other of a long continuum, and to hold forth as if somehow truth inherently has to always be found at one extreme or another, and the problem of oversimplifying (if, indeed, these are different problems). The problem of oversimplifying or seeking out the easiest possible answer or being satisfied with a pat answer is the other of these intellectual characteristics which I would like to address this morning.

Theological studies, indeed any Bible study, can lead to the deepening of these problems rather than to the solving of these problems if one is not very, very careful. Theological study, if approached with care and commitment to depth, can provide alternatives or release from these problems. But in the minds and hearts and applicational habits of many students within theological studies, biblical study and theological proposition studies tend to intensify the problem of dichotomizing and sometimes intensifies the problem of oversimplifying. I'm quite mindful of the many things we do in churches, both in the name of religious education and also in the name of sermonizing that, in fact, intensify the dichotomizing tendency among God's people; and sometimes, we might even argue, intensify this tendency toward oversimplifying. May God deliver us from these two tendencies because they have very definite limiting characteristics, as they reduce rather than increase our grasp of the wholeness of God.

Now the reason that biblical study can intensify the problem rather than releasing us from it is, of course, at that first level of textual material in the Scripture where we find, for example, in the New Testament especially in its terms and in the Old Testament in yet other terms, a tendency of many things to be resolved at extremes. For example, in Christ's own teaching such as in Matthew 12:30, "He who is not with me is against me." Now this clearly sounds like a highly dichotomistic posture about how to sort out people and I find people running around doing the same thing today in the name of Jesus Christ. Then, of course, there is that kind of theological proposition about such a crucial issue as salvation that we encounter and find intensified in Acts 4:12, and the like; "nor is there salvation in any other where there is no other name by which we must be saved". This "no other" tends toward dichotomization: you either have it or you don't have it. You have it this way or you don't have it. And I am not at all challenging those propositions. Please don't misunderstand. I'm on my way to another issue. But I'm pointing out that there is, in the legitimate handling of the Word of God, that which would tend us toward a dichotomizing style in our approach to intellectual matters because, on many issues and in many matters, there are clear blacks and whites. I endorse that, I subscribe to that, but I warn that it does not follow that *all* matters, therefore, are best approached in such a matter. We find, for example, even in the in the book of the Revelation in the 3rd chapter of the 16th verse, we find this image of the Laodicean church under criticism because it wasn't at an extreme. Would that it had been more of an extreme, but because it was lukewarm it tended to find some kind of a middle point. It was abhorrent to God, "Neither hot nor cold, I will thus spew you out of my mouth."

Now Paul's wrestlings in chapter 7 and 8 of Romans, and elsewhere, where he dichotomizes carnal and spiritual; and elsewhere in the Scripture, sinful and holy, godly and worldly. There is so much about the Christian perspective that tends toward a dichotomizing; a driving of a line, and then putting things on one side or the other of that line and dealing with issues as if the whole of the analysis problem for the educated human being is simply to be able to sort out A versus B, black versus white. We characterize this, of course, and we laugh at it when we're talking about the Lone Ranger mentality, you know. The Old West with its characters with the black hats and characters

with the white hats; and if you know the color of the hat and the code, you can easily tell whether you're looking at a good guy or a bad guy. Now most of us who have Calvinistic frame of reference about sin are very well aware that that is not exactly adequate to deal with the whole of an understanding of the nature of man.

The oversimplifying phenomenon, itself, is intensified by basic Scripture. For example, in Acts 16:31 "believing on the Lord Jesus Christ"; the believing is the process of being saved, "Believe and you shall be saved." This is simple. This is direct. This seems to be the answer. How are you saved? You are saved by believing in Jesus Christ. I believe that. But I warn you that believing that is not in, itself, an excuse to reduce all issues to such simple rudimentary propositions. "By grace you have been saved through faith. That not of yourselves; it is a gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast." I suspect that passage from Ephesians 2. If I were strategizing how to make the gospel more appealing to human beings, I would counsel against making salvation free; making salvation simply a matter of faith, "not by works, lest any man should boast" because I know enough about human behavior to know that people like to be able to boast. And if there were something in here; if there were at least a coupon to send in; if there were at least the necessity of finding two dimes and a nickel to put with it and some scotch tape to hold the whole thing together and a 20¢ stamp, we'd have more people claiming salvation. Advertisers know that. But, you see, the gospel is so rudimentarily simple that in many respects it escapes people because there is something about the reality of life that tells people that things that are that simple can't be right. Yet sometimes, as Christians, we keep drawing things back to simplifications and say, yes, but it is right. And then we go pell-mell and bring everything down to that kind of level of simplification, and then wonder why sometimes we don't grow intellectually.

I believe that, as Solomon warned in Ecclesiastes, there is nothing new under the sun. In the time of Christ, the Pharisees were the very epitome of dichotomizers. They were engaged in that kind of dichotomizing that has to see everything in either right or wrong terms, black or white; and they made themselves something of a nuisance to Christ. Now they become a foil for some of his most important teachings. And as we look at how he handled that dichotomizing mind in the Pharisees, we see something more of the texture that Jesus would hold for us as educated persons. If Christian education is going to be anything to us, it would have to make us able to see how he handled, for example, the woman taken in adultery, when in the face of a dichotomizing proposition, she is guilty, therefore, you know what the law says. Jesus puts the thing back in a much more complicated, textured way and brings it up out of the realm of a simple dichotomization and raises this proposition that the right to be first in that act of judgment should be reserved for the one who is the most holy in the group. And, of course, you see, in the handling of the dichotomizing mind our Lord introduces people around him to a much more complicated way of looking at the matter of justice.

The Zealots at the time of Christ were perhaps, in their own way, classic oversimplifiers. They knew what the problem was. They'd got it all figured out. The problem was Rome. It was very simple. And so, therefore, anyone who wanted to do anything on the on the side of righteousness would help get Rome off their back. There are people who have their world similarly oversimplified today. But at the time of Christ, we find the precedents; we find the evidences of the same kinds of characteristics. Now why are these matters worth looking at? From the standpoint, especially of what it means to be developed educationally, why should we be concerned about the dichotomizing habit and about the oversimplifying habit? Either or both of these problems can lead to

consequences which I believe to be not appropriate for the Christian. And I'd like to list them for you and comment very briefly.

First: tendency to dichotomize and tendency to oversimplify. Either or both will tend, over time, to put severe limits on the capacity to understand. If a person is brought up in an educating environment which simply seeks out processes of pigeonholing, processes of labeling; once we see an idea, once we hear a thought, we simply seek for the right box to put it in. We label it and put it in the box and quit thinking about it. That kind of a tendency to be able to be self-satisfied about labeling an idea—once we can classify a speaker, he must be a real evangelical. Ha, ha, great! Well, then we won't need to think anymore about that. We got *him* figured out. That does, in time, severely limit human understanding.

Secondly, such behavior, such approach to ideas demeans our faith because ultimately it causes us to trivialize important matters. Matters which are deserving of a much more careful, deliberated, thoughtful process of analysis, reflection, and criticism are quite often simply reduced to matters of trivia and thrown aside; and in the consequence, our faith is not asked to stretch. Faith is to be used. Faith is to grow. But faith that simply confronts, day-by-day, things that have been trivialized to the over-simplistic tends to be faith that does not grow.

Third, such behavior can turn us into answer people. Now an answer person is an expert on the answer, but he sees no values in new questions. There is, in much classical scholarship, a tendency already to be preoccupied with the right answers to yesterday's questions. We should be very alert that that oversimplifying and dichotomizing habit does not turn us off to the vital new questions of a given day. Every day emerges in its new questions. What is new in life is a process of the need for new enquiry. We must be people who honor the validity of questions, not simply people who exalt the validity of answers. It is one thing to know the right answer, but it is so easy to fall across a line in which *the right answer* becomes a craving after the pat answer. And those who crave after the pat answer become those who are answer people without any sense of contemporary questions.

The fourth of the problems that I see emerging out of all of this is that it tends to reduce our Christian experience to verbalism. If there is any criticism I would make of the church of North America in our time, it would not be a criticism of the lack of valid theological propositioning and valid doctrine. I would argue that instead the criticism that would be much more realistic and much more substantial to judge the contemporary church on would be the issue of acted out doctrine, acted out theological truth. We have become content with the verbal rather than the actual; and what happens is that quite often in the tendency to oversimplify, we oversimplify to words. And then the complexity of behavior, which is never as easy as words, is overlooked in the process because it doesn't reduce itself so neatly to oversimplification and trivialization of dichotomies.

We should be very much on guard whether we are educators, with capital E, or whether we are pastors, those ministering in any capacity in leadership in the church of Jesus Christ, must be vitally concerned that the book of James be kept intact; and that which and that which James was arguing in the early church be kept very much at the forefront lest the church of North America becomes even more intensively a verbalism community, rather than an action community.

The fifth of my concerns here is that dichotomizing and oversimplifying tends to blind people to truth when it does appear. It tends to cause people to presume that they already have seen truth, and they have seen it in forms that are simplistic. And, therefore, when more complicated forms of truth appear, they cannot even recognize it. There's a tendency among Christians to reject whole categories of the sources of God's revelation, even in our time. I refer here (and I will develop this as we go on with the lecture) I refer here to the specific tendency of people who are theologically educated to be inherently non-empirical; the tendency of a propositioning form of education to make one less concerned about what can be learned observationally in life. But we will develop that as we go along. Just footnote that one in your mind and remember that this issue of becoming blind to forms of truth can afflict even those who have high theological education.

The sixth of these concerns is that, when we dichotomize and when we oversimplify, we fragment our grasp of the life we have in Christ. Because the new life in Christ, if the new birth means anything, it means a more whole life in which the aspects of life are possible to keep together. It is characteristic of sinful man that the parts of life are fragmented and kept apart, therefore, issues of morality quite often are kept quite apart from intellectual issues. Issues of social development are quite often kept apart from issues of person and personality. It is in the nature of man, because of the fall, to be a fragmented creature. If we are not careful, a form of education in the church that emphasizes dichotomy and presumes parts rather than wholes will put us right back into that same habit with sinful man, in general. Now I'm not talking about backsliding and I'm not talking about falling from grace and I'm not talking about losing your salvation or anything else. I'm talking about lacking that which God has facilitated. In the new birth, God has facilitated a wholeness in life. To appropriate that wholeness, we must very carefully avoid that use of our minds which is either trivialized through oversimplification or trivialized through dichotomization.

And seventh and last. I believe that ultimately all of this can lead to the establishment in mind of a very small view of God. It seems very obvious to me, as a person who looks at the way human beings come to grasp ideas and concepts, the way people perceive reality, that what we build inside our own consciousness is the thing that we have to deal with rather than the reality of the external. For example, I perceive the road from here to Lansing to be of a certain sort. Now the way I relate to that road, the way I relate to that highway, the way I relate, as I did this morning, to the nature of slipperiness on that road is the way I behave. If that image has high conformity to the reality of that road, I'll get here safely. If my image does not conform to the reality, I may not get here safely. But what I act upon inherently is not the reality of the road, but my image of the road. Do you grasp that distinction? Now I would maintain that, though God is at work in our lives, we each are building an image of God. You don't need a very big God if you've got life all dichotomized in fifty different boxes. You need a larger view of God and a larger view of God is stimulated in your consciousness by a grasp of the holism of life. More about that as we go along.

I'd like right now to reflect back on the sixth of these points, specifically this issue of dichotomizing which tends to fragment our grasp of life. For example, if we fragment in terms of sacred and secular, spiritual and material; and we compartmentalize our lives so that we say, well, I do this for God, I do this for man. And I believe that I am among friends on this matter because I think that in careful Calvinistic theology one has a much more adequate answer than in some schools of thought with reference to how one sees the wholeness of life and avoids that dichotomy between secular and sacred. Nevertheless, when we find ourselves thinking casually and thinking and using our minds in a sloppy manner that keeps coming back in—I suspect it would be my testimony

to admit that and maybe some of you would, as well—so we sometimes make those distinctions and those of us that work, as it were, on both sides of the tracks. I work in the in the frame of reference of Michigan State University which it may surprise you does not have a department of Christian theology, and I work in that context as a Christian. There are some delimitations in that context. There are some restraints that I must operate under but, nevertheless, I do not operate as if I weren't a Christian. Now that's a hard problem for a lot of people, especially people that have been raised and educated in such a way that they can't keep their Christian-ness alive in a secular environment and they tend to really be two different people. And it tends to be, in such a person's mind, that no, this is where I do these sorts of things, that is where I do those sorts of things. What is produced out of there is a fragmented life which flies in the face of one of today's themes, even among secular scholars, the theme holism; holism spelled with an h or a wh. We haven't really settled on that yet, except the big dictionaries would still have us believe that with an h is a little more careful to the original, and also it suggests a little more relatedness to our word, as insiders, holy. And it comes out of the same kind of unity concept: that which is holy is that which is seen in its God-centeredness. That which is holistic about life, at least in Christian perspective, is that which is seen centered in Christ about the reality of being human. But in the in the terms of those who have no theological frame of reference, holism is simply a matter of getting your act together. Not a bad idea in and of itself because there are plenty of people who don't have their act together and they are scattered so badly in their thinking and in their acting that they really need a more holistic approach to life.

Now as you know—because you, I understand, have an outpost in California on the frontier—in California holism is simply one more excuse to be weird and wonderful. But in the world of scholarship, the word holism has a respectability, though much of the faddish stuff done today in the name of holistic tends to emerge out of Southern California. And that's not what I'm talking about. I am, instead, talking about how we view the human being.

I use the hand as an illustration of what I mean by the human being because the way scholarship is divided today—and, obviously, this is arbitrary—we talk about human development processes basically in five sectors or five aspects, and we talk about these aspects. The most clear evidence of the developing processes in the human being, of course, is that which you can look at; you can feel it, touch it, you know, smile at it and it smiles back. It's the physical. And then, of course, every human being has an intellectual aspect, a mental processing aspect. Closely related to that is the emotional aspect which also has its roots in the mental processes; but it comes out for different functions. So we say, physical, intellectual, emotional; and then these other two are social because there there's the way we develop socially, and last—the one that's been fairly recently entered into the fields of study in in empirical sciences—the moral development. For many years, moral development was assumed to be kind of like one and the same as spiritual development. Somehow, they never seem to ask Christians about that because for Christians spiritual isn't an aspect. A lot of my friends turn me off about that point and I just ask you to hold on just one minute before you turn off your hearing aid. I don't believe there's a spiritual aspect of the human being. I'm I mean that. I don't think there's a spiritual aspect. I think that the empirical aspects have just been named according to the way we divide and define the spiritual—the empirical study of the human being.

Now the reason I say there isn't a spiritual aspect is because I can't, as a Christian, see essence as if essence were an aspect. You see, the skin of an apple is an aspect of the apple. It's a

part of the apple, right? But it isn't the essence of the apple, is it? So, the physical isn't the essence. The intellectual isn't the essence. The emotional, the social, the moral—these aren't the essence. What's the essence? Alright, there's the symbol [the hand]. I say, yeah, I use this hand as a paradigm. And notice I haven't talked about this yet. There's a spiritual core. It's the essence. When man is created in the image of God, you know, don't take that lightly. We have fretted so much on the technology of Creation that we've forgotten the important message of Creation. The important message of Creation is that man is created in the image of God, and that has to be thought of in spiritual terms. God relates to man in spiritual terms. Our "present with the Lord as absent from the body" is a spiritual proposition. You know, if I leave the physical and I'm present with the Lord the real essential me isn't in the physical. All these empirical aspects that can be assessed, measured, understood tell us something about the spiritual. Because I believe there will never be empirical research on the spiritual essence of a person because spiritual is by definition that which is non-empirical, but it's real.

It's real in the same sense that the Pauline definition of faith talks about reality, "evidences of things not seen." Now an evidence of things not seen to an empirical scientist is really in and of itself a conundrum, if not for some, a ludicrous proposition. But as an empirical behavioral scientist, I would argue that this is a perfectly reasonable kind of way to look at human beings; that we understand that there are things to be studied about the human being, and if we're going to minister to human beings we've got to study them. We've got to know something about how human beings develop and function. And, you see, that's why I think a holistic view comes out of a concept of revelation that is bigger than quite often one finds in theological circles.

I believe it's an axiom that God is in the revealing business and that God has created the human being in the inquiring business. And that when Creation is described in terms of man created in the image and likeness that image has a reflection quality to it in the same way that an image in a mirror does. The image in the mirror is not the same thing, but it's coming back at it is it not? Image and likeness. Likeness is a photograph, image is a mirror. Think about that possibility of understanding image and likeness. And if God is in the revealing business, then man is in the inquiring business. God reveals, humankind inquires. I believe this to be the reciprocal process of revelation. In other words, you have a communicator and you have an inquirer into that communication. Thus to mount valid inquiry, we need first to comprehend the facets of revelation. And here's where I want to turn to Psalm 19. Now I'm not doing a Bible study on Psalm 19, but I'm doing a kind of a hermeneutic perspective of Psalm 19 out of this scientist's orientation to the human being and to the understanding of what human beings, in Christ, need to be in order to be fully developed.

Anyone who has examined Psalm 19 is aware that there are, at least, two major parts in Psalm 19. The thing is so absolutely beautiful. It's been set to music about as often as any passage of Scripture, "The heavens declare the glory of God." You know, you can just hear that in your mind in about five or six different tunes, if you know anything about music. "The firmament showeth its handiwork" and you have in this whole first section a focus, not on man—not even on the earth, interestingly enough—but a focus on this firmament which in the in the Hebrew of the Old Testament is the is the expanse of God's Creation, If you please, the heavens; "that which God has created in his starry order." And then you find a centerpiece within that, from man's perspective, the sun. And you find this as a kind of an adulation; of a kind of a praise to God, and it's just absolutely, absolutely beautiful.

Now that's what that first section of the Psalm is about and it comes down to there's nothing hidden from its heat in verse 6, when you get into a clear-cut transition. In fact, it's a sudden transition. In fact, it's a non-transition. It's just a sudden pop to a totally different stanza with a totally different emphasis. And you find, then, that very important v. 7 down that deals with the law and that which God has revealed through his direct revelation; the special revelation in the Word. Very interesting. Most people can see that instantly. They say, okay, God is revealing himself. He has created, and that which he has created bears witness of him. He has spoken and that which he has said bears witness of him. So we find, down in this section, a tremendous emphasis on that which God has said. It's a sharp contrast. It's as if somebody put a knife down in the thought world there, and after verse 6 shifted it to the law, the testimony, the statutes, the commandments, the judgments. And then it brings humanistic (that's a bad word anymore; you have to be careful how you use that) human sorts of reactions to these. It says these are perfect. These are sure. These are right. These are pure. These are desirable. Yet they are of a warning sort, and they lead to human response. Very interesting.

In this second great stanza of this particular Psalm, you find—unlike the first where the first is simply presented as a testimony of God with no particular involvement with the reaction of man—you find in the second stanza that what God has done in his special revelation is particularly important because of what it elicits in response and reaction and judgment from man.

And that part, a kind of a sub-theme (if you again use a musical metaphor, it's a kind of a counterpoint in that second stanza) that counterpoint of how the human being deals with this and what it makes available to the human being. This emerges until you have a gentle transition, and by verse 12 something new has happened in the Psalm. Now many of the commentators don't bother to notice it. Some do. This is certainly no invention of mine. But it is also possible to read a number of commentaries on this Psalm and simply, as again, a kind of an oversimplified dichotomizing. It's a two-part Psalm: the Creation and the Word, the Creation and the Word; the general and the special revelation. Yeah, but let me tell you that this social scientist can see something else there because that third portion does not concentrate on the Word. It concentrates on human experience, and it begins in verse 12.

Now what it strongly suggests to me is that if we are to understand the development, as human beings are available to us, we should see ourselves being in a three-part not two-part learning process. Now that may be a big leap. It would take perhaps two intermediate lectures right at this point to make that bridge a little tighter, but I think I could do it for you if I had the time. But I wasn't invited for a series; wait four more years. Wait four more years and I'll come back and fill it in. Here's the point. Education ought to reflect revelation. I believe that. God has revealed himself. God has revealed himself in his nature. Now the secularists understand that rather well. Now they may not attribute it to God, but they know it's out there. They know they know it got there. They'll quibble about how it got there, but they believe it's important to study. I do, too. How many of you don't believe it's important to study? I believe it's important to study. And more's the pity that we force people not to study it because it makes them too busy studying in the second sector. That's a mistake; that's a mistake. Because it's in that first sector where we understand what it is that God has made because the second sector has to take count of what it is that God has made to which he is addressing his Law. Now even though there is a Psalmist's sharp knife between 6 and 7, you have to see these (and virtually anybody who critiques the Psalm does see this) you have to see these two parts as being both involved in what it is that God is trying to say. You cannot ignore what God has

done because it is a statement. Most explicitly (and I rest my case on this one point though I could make dozens) if, as a minister of the Word of God in the community of the Body of Christ, a person is attempting to relate the Word to human beings, we have to understand something about how human beings perceive things, how they relate to life, how they develop, how they function, how they think. That is not wasted understanding if you have it.

But I want to assert today a particular emphasis on this relationship into the third facet of education which has to do with developing people who are capable of learning from life experience because their life experience is informed by an awareness of God's Word and an awareness of God's statements in his universe. This third aspect begins most clearly with a kind of self-critical, self-judging, self-aware kind of reaction. The third section phases in gently (as I pointed out) it phases in as a kind of a counterpoint in section two. It's the reacting counterpoint in section two: The Law is this but from a human perspective it is sure, it is trustworthy, it brings us to a self-judgment that then becomes clear in verse 12 and following. [The] "who can understand his errors?" question. It's a kind of a rhetorical question that says, I need to. I want to. This is part of what God's Word brings me to see in myself. I need to understand my errors. I need to be cleansed from my secret faults. And then the prayer, "Keep back your servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be blameless; I shall be innocent of great transgression." We find this reaction coming out of the empirical responses in the second stanza which have to do with rejoicing, desirable, "more desirable than fine gold, sweeter than honey"; and then it comes down to a growth through understanding what God is doing in one's life.

Here's my point. It's one thing to understand and to be educated in an understanding of what God has done in his natural universe. And as we study science, as we study social sciences, as we study history, as we study in the humanities, in general, we see what God has done in his Creation. And, by the way, even the study of music is a study of what God has done in his Creation.

Then, as we study in biblical and theological studies (and we should) we see, as it were, in this second facet something of what it is that God has given us explicitly through which our lives can be more explicitly informed and guided. But that is still a kind of an external. If you read section one and section two of this Psalm, you'll get the feeling in both sections that there's a kind of externality about it. There's an externality, in fact, in this first section that has to do, again, with this firmament; the out there-ness of what God has done. And in the section on the Law, the precepts, we get still a kind of an externality and we know it rings in the back of our mind that our God has said, "I would far rather write on the fleshy tables of the heart than on the externals of the tablets of stone." Thus, the third section that said God is at work in your life; developing your perspective of yourself and of him and of that relationship; and it is not the same thing as studying biblical data. It is the response out of experience to those biblical data.

Now where people get in trouble today, though they sense the need for that third facet, there are those—and I point out, particularly among some of our charismatic brethren—there are those who have seen the importance of that third facet, but they're not careful enough to keep that third facet disciplined by the second facet. The sequence in this Psalm must be observed. God speaks first in his Creation. And never is the word pure used in reference to that first stanza. The word pure is reserved for the second because it's in that second facet of revelation where the purity and the directness of God comes forward and the explicitness of his teaching. But, don't forget, the first is laid down as the background for the second. And even so, the second is the disciplined

background for the third. We should be about the business of helping God's people and ourselves appreciate that God is busy teaching us every day. Life, itself, is teaching us. We are learning. We are developing as Christians.

Now that developing, that learning, that growing that takes place day by day, is disciplined by the two prior facets of God's revelation. Now this is not to be construed to say that God is expanding his revelation through our experience; that God is adding to his special revelation today. I'm not asserting any of that. In fact, I'm not even entering into that debate. I'm simply pointing out that when the direct words of God as law, as precept, as directive, as instruction are given, they are in the middle of a kind of revelatory sandwich. They are the substance between two other facets.

A whole education would be concerned with all three facets. Would that the ministries in the pulpit could respect the importance of discipline in all three facets. For example, when we study God's nature, we only do it in a caricature by saying I'm going to go study God on the golf course. You know that one, you know. I'm going to go study God on the golf course. I'm going to get under God's great heaven and I'm going to appreciate God more. That's possible, it's possible, but it's not what you'd call a highly disciplined approach.

Human experience, over time, has showed that, in order to study the natural revelation of God, one needs discipline. Now that discipline, in general, goes by an old and established term. What is that term? Science. Now this is not argument for Chemistry versus History, but when we approach systematically, we study the nature of things scientifically. How do you do that? Not just experimentally—that's only part of it—but you study observationally. You try to understand things in their own terms and you try to clarify and clear up, purify your own perception over time. We call those disciplines, the disciplines of scholarly approach.

When we come to the second facet—and you know as well as I that the same equivalent of studying God on the golf course occurs when people pop in and pop out of the Bible. As far as I'm concerned, shabby Bible study or shabby Bible reading, even Bible memorization, is equivalent to studying God on the golf course in reference to that second facet. We must be about the business of helping God's people understand that there must be a disciplined approach to the Word of God.

Now that disciplined approach to the Word of God is not a 20th century invention. It, too, has a name. What is the name? Theology. As I see it, science and theology are human inventions each having been created, invented, by inquirers, not by revealers, but by inquirers in order better to handle that which is available from the revelation. Would that, in our time, we could build a discipline of reflection on life experience. I know of no name for that. That third sector has yet to be thoroughly explored.

Now in past times it was called spirituality. Maybe that's what it is. Maybe that's adequate. At any rate, this concern to understand one's errors, to be cleansed from secret fault, to be restrained from presumptuous sins, to be free of the dominion of sin; to be blameless, to be innocent of great transgression, this is the spiritual life. Does it not have discipline? Does it not have shape and form? Cannot that discipline be taught? Should we not, in the pulpits and in our schools, be concerned with the processes by which that third aspect of dealing with God comes more clear, more sharp, more well-refined? But my point goes beyond that. My point, my argument, my request, my urgent plea is not simply that we think more carefully about how to do that, but that we respect the

integration and the wholeness that comes when each of these three facets is kept in a proportional relationship with all the others.

General revelation responsibly approached through processes that have information, have structure: Science. Special revelation handled through processes which have discipline, have form, have structure: Theology. The walk of faith approached through discipline, commitment to spirituality, and exercise of that faith. I think this is what James was talking about because I think that it is in the acting out of the Word of God that the disciplines of spirituality are refined. Whatever it is, these three aspects in human experience are interwoven. They come together, I believe, in this third facet: the walk of faith. Even so, none of these three will stand alone except at the risk of bias and completeness. “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one God.” And I paraphrase to say: Hear, O citizens of the kingdom. We are each one person integrated, whole; not fractionating, dichotomizing, oversimplifying, but becoming integrated, informed by the disciplines of science and theology, integrated through the walk of faith.

And I end where this Psalm ends. In sharp contrast with the majesty of the first verse is the simplicity of the last verse. It is a cyclic presentation of the wholeness of human experience: “May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O Lord; my strength and my Redeemer.”

Thank you.