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Epistemology of Faith and Learning: A Systems Approach

by

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According to Ken Badly (1994), Christian educators are too ambiguous in explaining what we mean by “integration of faith and learning” as an educational philosophy. His research has led him to believe that the concept of integration is of recent origin within the last half of the 20th century. He found that the term itself was merely implied in 1954 by Frank Gaebelein in Pattern of God’s Truth. It then took 21 years before Arthur Holmes of Wheaton College, in The Idea of a Christian College (1975), “articulated what could properly be called a Christian conception of integration as part of his philosophy of education” (p. 17). Holmes describes the ideal pattern of integration of faith and learning as one of having “the entire educational enterprise viewed from a specific perspective” – namely the Christian worldview (p. 25).

However, this type of comprehensive integrative approach has been a primary goal of Adventist education since the 1890’s (Knight, 2000). Recently, the Director of the General Conference Department of Education of the Seventh-day Adventist church reaffirmed this goal to be of central importance to the denomination’s educational mission:

Adventist education’s fundamental premise is this: God exists and is the source of all true knowledge... As the revealed and authoritative Word of God, the Scriptures provide the basis for the Christian worldview... God created human beings as integrated units of mind, spirit, and body... (Rasi, 2000, p. 4)

Even so, defining the principle does not ensure effective implementation. Attempts of educators to integrate faith and learning is often undermined by competing worldviews of how we define knowledge (epistemology). Professor Alvin Plantinga, a well-known Christian philosopher, has offered a three-point challenge for Christians to push beyond the boundaries of our culture’s secular and materialistic worldview:

First, Christian philosophers and Christian intellectuals generally must display more autonomy - more independence of the rest of the philosophical world. Second, Christian philosophers must display more integrity - integrity in the sense of integral wholeness, or oneness, or unity, being all of one piece. Perhaps ‘integrality’ would be the better word here. And necessary to these two is a third: Christian courage, or boldness, or strength, or perhaps Christian self-confidence. We Christian philosophers must display more faith, more trust in the Lord; we must put on the whole armor of God. (Plantinga, 2000)

Plantinga's call to 'integrality' is forcefully reflected in Scripture: "According as His divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him that called us to glory and virtue" (2 Peter 1:3, KJV). We are to be men and women of "virtue" or as translated in the New International Version (NIV) "goodness" (arete). The biblical scholar Spiros Zodhiates defines this Greek word as meaning "... courage, fortitude, resolution; moral excellence" (1984, p. 1669). In this passage of Scripture, Peter continues this thought by using this same term as an imperative for us to diligently bring wholeness or "integrality" to our faith. However, it is not just faith and knowledge that are to characterize our integration and wholeness!

"...giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue, knowledge [gnosis]; And to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; And to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge [epignosis] of our Lord Jesus Christ. (2 Peter 1:5—8, KJV)

In this paper I will develop a systems approach to Christian epistemology. Initially I will briefly sketch the epistemologies of classic theology and "progressive" education. Many philosophers within the early part of the 20th century "shared a commitment to the so-called scientific worldview... they accepted science as a model of knowledge and of rationality and, consequently, substituted philosophy of science for epistemology" (Hartmann & Lange, 2000, p. 76). I will show how these epistemologic models are too reductionistic and simplistic to adequately explain the process of knowledge acquisition. Furthermore, I will suggest a model based on systems theory from a biblical Christian perspective which can allow us to bring "integrality" to divergent worldviews, beliefs, and human experiences.

The Influence of Scientific Positivism

August Comte (1798–1857) was an influential figure of the Enlightenment era. He believed that there were three stages in human affairs — the superstitious or religious; the speculative or philosophical; and the stage of positive knowledge or scientific (Adler, 1988, p. 70). He encouraged a development of a scientific approach which, through prediction and control by a scientific elite, would improve the status of the masses. However, Comte was convinced that science possessed a vast amount of spiritual power that could renew society. Indeed, his faith

seemed well-founded in the light of tremendous discoveries made within science (Walsh-Bowers, 2000).

A Classic Theological Model: Knowledge and Religion

John Wesley “was keenly interested in experiment and often displayed an investigative attitude toward the world. Scientific inquiry—observation, testing, hypothesizing, analyzing, discovering—Wesley found appealing, not appalling” (Larson, 1996b, p. 40). He was a scholar with a strong desire to join religion and reason together into a rational entity often referred to as “experimental religion.” He developed a theological model of epistemology, sometimes referred to as the Wesleyan quadrilateral (Thorsen, 1990). This model, as depicted in Figure 1, has been advanced as a coherent and adequate integration of the 4 sources of interpreted information that Christians value: reason, experience, tradition, and Scripture (Larson, 1996a; 1996b).

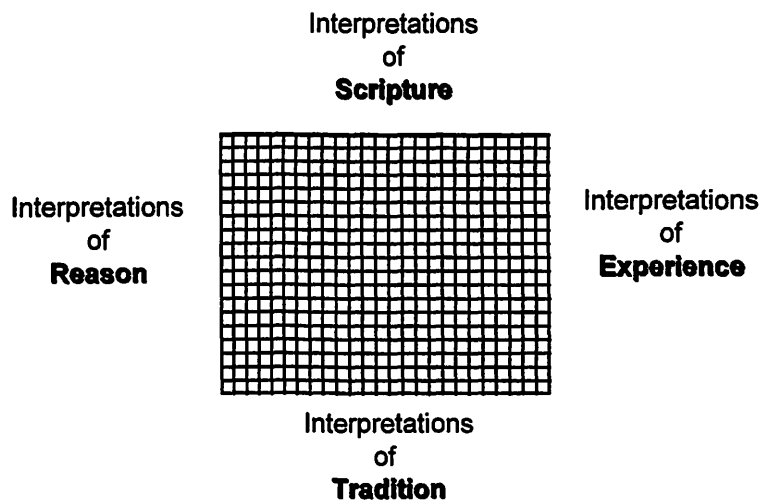


Figure 1. John Wesley's Quadrilateral of Scripture, tradition, experience, and reason.

The advocates of this “comprehensive approach” believe that it “can help contemporary Christians avoid crashing on the extremes of fundamentalism and relativism” (Larson 1996b, p. 44). However, this model is rooted within the rationalist tradition of the Enlightenment. While this model may be helpful in developing a coherent denominational perspective I believe it inadequately explains the formation of knowledge for the individual. In effect, this model

provides a basis for truth that is denominational - one truth for Methodists, one for Baptists, and one for Adventists.

The Enlightenment myth of rational human beings proceeding magisterially through life, assessing the evidence for and against the propositions that come to his attention and coolly deciding on the basis of that assessment what to believe, is just that: a myth. (Plantinga, 1993, p. 51)

Another problem with this approach is the low view of the Bible in its role of providing spiritual norms. Evidently Wesley, as well as other Christian leaders today, are sensitive to the tendency of some Protestants to use the term *sola scriptura* to “protect particular interpretations of Scripture, interpretations that frequently work to the advantage of some... to defend ignorance, bigotry, and injustice” (Larson, p. 44). However, this rationalistic approach does not protect the user against self-deception — which can contaminate any of the 4 sources of interpretative knowledge. It seems that many of today’s religious groups highlight or emphasize particular areas of the quadrilateral by which they can then define what is normative for the Christian: for charismatics it is experience (i.e., emotions); for the liturgical it is tradition (Church dogma); for fundamentalists it is Scripture (based on a particular understanding); and for liberals it is reason.

Some Christian scholars react to this type of an approach with a conviction that it must be the Scriptures which has ultimate authority that transcends our experience and even our rational skills (Hasel, 1993; Davidson, 2000). I will speak more on the integration of Scripture with a Christian epistemology later. Suffice it at this point to remind us of Paul’s admonition: “Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily” (Colosians 2:8-9).

An Educational Model

No name is more sacrosanct in liberal or “progressive” American educational theory than that of John Dewey (Peterson, p. 9). What is especially interesting from a Christian perspective is that Dewey began his career as a staunch advocate of a Christian worldview. Eventually, this gave way to an empirical form of education and a “spiritual” focus on societal progressivism through the innate movement of humanity through the god of materialism.

After receiving his doctorate in 1884 from Johns Hopkins University, Dewey spent the next 10 years teaching at the University of Michigan. He started his professional academic career with a Christian idealistic faith that stood against empirical science. He was an active member in his local Congregational church and the University's Student Christian Association. Initially he defended religion against current worldview of materialism and tried to keep young people within the church. However, his fervor in spiritual pursuits began to wane when, in 1894, he went to the University of Chicago. He began to distance himself from church activity and became increasingly committed to social reform instead (Kucklick p. 241).

Starting in the early part of the 20th Century, academic reformers fought against what was considered an intellectually restrictive dominance of Christian (Protestant) religion within academia (Marsden, 1997, p. 23). Dewey eventually joined this movement and became a primary figure along with William James. He rejected dualism of the physical and mental. Dewey held to a unique philosophical approach which combined Hegel's dialectical progressivism, Kantian dualism of mental form (noumena) versus material content (phenomena), and the purposeful materialistic approach of Darwinism.

Dewey's purpose in his epistemology was to primarily provide a means of "harmonizing and integrating of one's self with the larger universe of which he is a part" (Moore, p. 254). He believed that matter and mind were one and the same thing. Mind presented itself in the entire body in the fundamental mode of nervous, adjusting, or teleological (purposeful) activity. For Dewey, the physical world wanted to be the spiritual. Somehow, by a process that Dewey was unable to explain, intelligence was latent within matter. It was through evolutionary processes that the natural world (through its own spirituality) would ultimately be transformed into the moral (p. Kucklick 232).

Dewey's approach to educational theory was a integration of physiology, philosophy, social science, and scientific experimentation. He believed that the mind was a teleological unity disclosing the divine (Kucklick p. 235). For Dewey, Knowledge was by definition pragmatic or goal-directed and manifested when "things are reconstructed by reflective thinking with new meaning and then verified as capable of directing us to our goals" (Shook, 2000, p. 4). However, this could not be done in the abstract but had to be pragmatically and scientifically demonstrated.

Humanity was to be studied scientifically thereby "divulging the immanence of God in man, the constitution of the relative by the eternal." (Kucklick, p. 236) Dewey believed, like the New Theologians, that "understanding science was crucial, that the infinite and the finite could not be separated, and that man and nature were continuous" (Kucklick, p. 238). Furthermore, "the process of knowing essentially requires the purposive manipulation [experimentation] of natural things in the environment" (Shook, p.7).

Traditional epistemologies distinguish between the knower and the known, the perceiving subject and the perceived object. For Dewey there was no separation. Knowing is essentially the interaction of an organism with its environment. He pursues inquiry into this situation by examining the knowledge process not as an epistemologist but simply as a scientist would in observing a new biological process that might come to his attention (Moore, pp190-192).

Dewey believed in the progress of humanity based on a natural process — just encourage humans to work on social problems using scientific methodology within a democratic educational system. Eventually they will sort out those problems and provide us with a utopian-type of religious commonwealth without the trappings of organized religion (Kucklick, p. 243). In effect, the scientific method, when applied to the pedagogy, would allow us to stabilize religious values. This scientific positivism asserted a faith in the perfectibility of human beings and the promise of a heaven on earth through inevitable progress.

While scientific positivism may have been helpful in defining problems and developing change strategies I do not believe that it adequately explains the dynamics of epistemology. The problem with the rationalistic approach of the quadrilateral and the empirical approach of Dewey is that both are too reductionistic. They provide models that in some contexts are useful in objectifying information. However, they both focus on a modernistic rationality with a tendency to show "an obsession with objectivity and defensive blindness to the social context and human interests saturating scientific activity" (Walsh-Bowers, p. 224).

Need for a New More "Complex" Model

While the self-contained processes of the quadrilateral and the circular approach of continual improvement are attractive and useful for specific areas of understand neither are satisfactory as a comprehensive model of knowledge—especially from a Christian perspective.

Cognitive research has demonstrated the complexity of various processes involved in human learning (see Chomsky, 1988; Carey & Spelke, 1994; Brown, 1995; Vosniadou, 1996).

Learning is a complex process that has 3 areas of interest within cognitive learning theories: strategies, metacognition, and knowledge structures (Vosniadou, 1996). However, the interaction of these 3 aspects of learning have additional levels of interaction which include social, biological, and psychological interactions which thereby multiply the complexity. Vosniadou reflects on the need to develop a comprehensive epistemological model since “the epistemology of cognitive psychology could not provide an adequate learning theory to explain the results that it had itself produced” in learning laboratories (p. 101). Such complexity requires a paradigm shift which has been seen in research being done in chaos theory. However, this theory has caused us to realize that chaos, in that it...

“is not mere complication. It is that curious mix of complication and organization... The underlying thesis of complexity theory is that traditional reductionism — understanding systems by breaking them down into components and analyzing the interactions between them—cannot provide an adequate understanding of such systems... [complexity theory] shifts the scientific goalposts away from ever-more-detailed analysis of fine internal structure towards a more global explanation of forms, features and functions.” (Stewart, 1993, p. 507)

It is within this global perspective that I believe we can best explore cognitive interactions with faith and learning to form a meta-theory of epistemology. If our system of knowledge fits best within the parameters of complexity theory it will resist reductionistic analyses and not be open to delineation by simply holding some of their subsystems constant as would be needed within the scientific method for us to study specific subsystems.

Science and religion, objective and subjective, rational and emotive, fact and feeling, logic and belief, physical and mental are all dualisms that we have accepted into our worldviews. When we, in the quantum sense, discover that the whole is far greater than the sum of the parts we may experience “at both the personal and interpersonal levels... [a] disquieting experience” (O’Murchu, 1998, p. 117). Simple models of human behavior and experience, while helpful in describing specific aspects of the human condition, are unable to adequately explain all of the demonstrable effects. This is because each is based on a reductionistic premise which does not adequately fit within a complex system.

A New Model: A Systems Approach to Epistemology

The Importance of Worldview

We have a cognitive capacity that evaluates all experience (subjective and objective) through a filtering device which has been referred to as a paradigm, worldview, value system, value-memes or *a priori* bias. Frank Hasel (1992) notes that Thomas Kuhn's hypothesis (Kuhn, 1962) of paradigms is important in science (and any form of empirical knowledge) because all "observations are paradigm dependent" (p. 12). These paradigms consist of symbols, beliefs, values, and "...appropriate [*a priori*] methods of inquiry (epistemology)" (Mundy, 1990). These worldview perspectives or values can be considered the "sum total of the invisible, cultural, and spiritual forces that drive our perceptions, influence all of life's choices, lifestyles, and sense of what is right, wrong, and appropriate (Rosado, 2000).

Cognition: A "Wholistic" Imperative

The attempt to separate our personal worldview from our subjective and objective experience is impossible. However, it is useful to discuss these concepts as vital components of epistemology and in an effort to understand the complexity of interaction between these realms of knowledge. It is the whole-person (all cognitive and physical functions) who relates all experiences through his or her specific worldview with a integrative movement towards developing a coherent (self-organizing) understanding. Various subjective interpretations, emotions, observations, and logico-semantic processes, neurophysiologic events, biologic processes are engaged to encode knowledge. This knowledge may be in the form of isolated facts (cases), strategic models of knowledge wherein a set of hypotheses are possible to explain their relationship, or as propositional knowledge (Fig. 2). This aspects of knowledge are open to revision based on additional information being provided by either a subjective, objective or a change in one's paradigm or worldview.

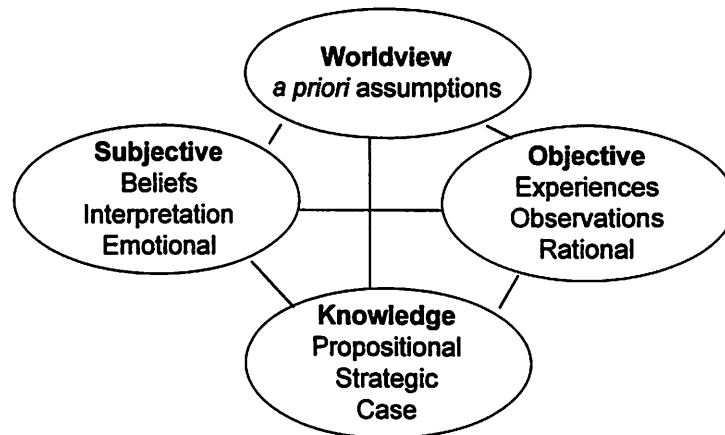


Figure 2. Dynamic inter-relationship of worldview, subjective experience, objective experience, and knowledge.

Perhaps it is our attempt to divide cognition into subjective (empirically “unvalidated”) and objective (empirically “validated”) spheres that causes problems within the educational process. Vosniadou (1996) has shown how inconsistent information or misconceptions can be erroneously constructed into a “synthetic mental model” which then becomes reinforced by faulty worldviews (p. 102). These misconceptions result in a constraining effect on future learning. Besides the influence of prior learning and worldview on learning, it is important to encourage an active, wholistic, and integrative approach to learning. For real understanding to take place learning must include the emotional, motivational, social, physical, and experiential aspects and not only factual data (Smith, 1995).

Cognitive Design

Is there value in trying to understand how knowledge forms, or is it too haphazard and inconsistent to capture? Humanity’s ability to cogitate, perceive, decipher, explore, discover, invent, diagnose, and record for posterity seems to be the product of a wonderfully constructed design. This awareness of our nature should be considered in developing a comprehensive theory of epistemology. Furthermore, beliefs and knowledge are not pigeon-holed in different areas of our cognitive domain. We have been created with an incredible capacity to integrate our beliefs within our world as well the ability to engage in dialogue with others who have differing perceptions and beliefs:

God has created us with cognitive faculties designed to enable us to achieve true beliefs with respect to propositions about our immediate environment, about our interior lives, about the thoughts and experiences of other persons, about our universe at large, about the past, about right and wrong, about the whole realm of abstraction (numbers, properties, propositions, states of affairs, possible worlds, sets), about modality (what is necessary and possible), and about himself... Our beliefs and the strength with which we hold them, furthermore, are delicately responsive to changes in experience - perceptual experiences, of course, but also experiences of other kinds; they are also responsive to what others tell us, to further reflection, to what we learn by way of systematic inquiry, and so on. (Plantinga, 1993, p. 40,50)

We have been designed to explore and understand and be in relationship with our world, ourselves, humanity, and our Creator. However, because of the Fall (the Great Controversy) we now have impaired cognitive abilities. Humanity has demonstrated an incredible, almost supernatural ability to create as reflected within the palpable advances made by the sciences and technology. However, humanity has revealed a dark side. We use our ingenuity to destroy and defile. We use our creative powers to discover new depths of perversion and selfishness. All around us is evidence that something is wrong - especially in the paradox of our cognitive successes and failures. But such was not the initial design:

Man was originally endowed with noble powers and a well-balanced mind. He was perfect in his being, and in harmony with God. His thoughts were pure, his aims holy. But through disobedience, his powers were perverted, and selfishness took the place of love. (Ellen White, Steps to Christ, p. 17)

The Role of Special Revelation

How depressing the world would be if we had no way of moving beyond the mire of self and sin! To be constantly viewing reality through a defective cognitive capacity and culturally biased worldview would lock me into a circular frame of mind that I would be unable to break. Ellen White eloquently reflects what our condition is without God's intervention:

It is impossible for us, of ourselves, to escape from the pit of sin in which we are sunken. Our hearts are evil, and we cannot change them. "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one." "The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." Job 14:4; Romans 8:7. Education, culture, the exercise of the will, human effort, all have their proper sphere, but here they are powerless. They may produce an outward correctness of behavior, but they cannot change the heart; they cannot purify the springs of life. There must be a power working from within, a new life from above, before men can be changed from sin to holiness. That power is Christ. His grace

alone can quicken the lifeless faculties of the soul, and attract it to God, to holiness. (Steps to Christ, p. 18)

God must intervene for me to be made whole - I cannot understand the things of God for they are spiritually discerned! For me to understand spiritual reality I need to be “born again” as Jesus said to Nicodemus (John 3). The instrument of this transformation is the Word of God: “So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God” (Romans 10:17). This transformation is empowered by the Holy Spirit thereby quickening a heart that was dead but now is alive! I believe this process has a supernatural and dramatic effect on our worldview. However, some beliefs, attitudes, experiences, and behaviors might still be untouched by the Holy Spirit’s influence as my faith may be compartmentalized (Fig. 3).

We may interpret our response to God as an embarrassing emotional response with very little impact on the rest of our personality. It is important that this sense of rebirth not

“degenerate into a mindless emotionalism that denigrates the importance of adequately reflecting on the meaning of what one is feeling. By failing to recognize that our feelings are not self-interpreting and that they gain meaning as we interpret them in the light of our current framework of thought, such anti-intellectualism enslaves us to our emotions. And in those collegiate settings where there is an overemphasis on deeply-felt religious experience, the intellectual task of ‘integrating knowledge’ takes a back seat, despite our common college catalog claim that this is Christian higher education’s most fundamental distinctive.” (Heie, 1997, p. 252).

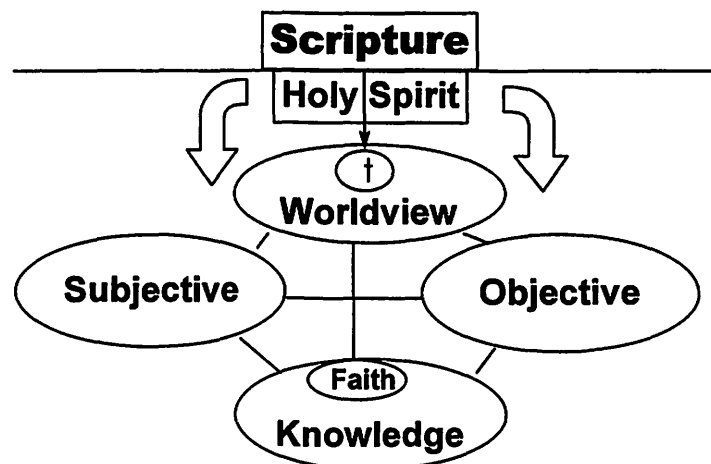


Figure 3. The Holy Spirit and Scripture entering into the individual’s worldview.

The Role of Scripture

The Bible is God's gift to us and brings us into the revelation of His love for us and the desperate need that we all have of a Savior. The Bible is the inspired Word of God (see 2 Peter 1:19-21; 2 Timothy 3:16; John 10:35; Hebrews 1:1-3). However, we are dependent on the Holy Spirit to fully understand the inspired Word and to apply it correctly. The importance of the written Word is that it help us focus on the integration of our faith upon principles defined by God. In order for us to receive instruction from the God we must have a humble attitude before Him as we read His Word. We are given Divine assistance in believing—but if we really want to find a reason for not believing...

...God never asks us to believe, without giving sufficient evidence upon which to base our faith. His existence, His character, the truthfulness of His word, are all established by testimony that appeals to our reason; and this testimony is abundant. Yet God has never removed the possibility of doubt. Our faith must rest upon evidence, not demonstration. Those who wish to doubt will have opportunity; while those who really desire to know the truth will find plenty of evidence on which to rest their faith. (Ellen White, Steps to Christ, p. 105)

The Role of the Holy Spirit

The work of the Holy Spirit is essential in leading us into all truth. Notice that, according to this model the Holy Spirit is involved in guiding into subjective and objective truth as well as increasing of our faith (Fig. 4). Here the faith we have should grow as we are led by Him into temporal truth ("gnosis" - knowledge) and into a closer relationship with the Way, the Truth, and the Life (John 14:6). In fact, for the Christian, all desires for truth can and should be energized by the Spirit of Truth:

Christ is the source of every right impulse. He is the only one that can implant in the heart enmity against sin. Every desire for truth and purity, every conviction of our own sinfulness, is an evidence that His Spirit is moving upon our hearts. (Ellen White, Steps to Christ, p. 26)

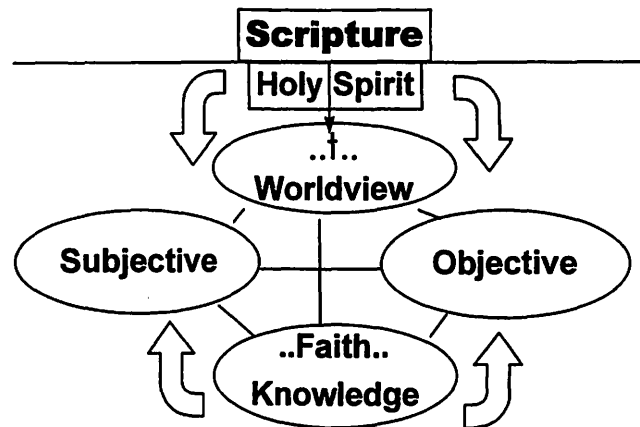


Figure 4. Widening impact of the Holy Spirit through Scripture on a transformed worldview and growing faith. Arrows indicate the movement of the Holy Spirit within our understanding and through our objective and subjective experience.

The Role of Behavior

James tells us that we should be “doers of the Word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves” (1:22). How easy to isolate God’s Word from impacting our behavior! A comprehensive model of knowledge should consider the coherency between what we say we believe, what we say we perceive, and what we then do about it! If I say I believe something - but then ignore it - there is a problem. But even in this situation God’s Spirit helps us in being obedient to His leading. Is it willful disobedience or is the reality that I really do not believe it? The Bible makes a categorical statement - “Whatever is not of faith is sin”! I must not fool myself “for many in that day will say Lord, Lord...” In fact we should regularly review our “faith-ful” status:

Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates? But I trust that ye shall know that we are not reprobates. (2 Corinthians 13:5-6)

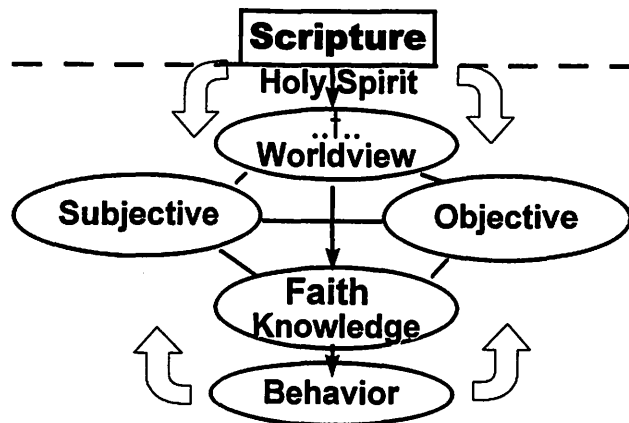


Figure 5. The Holy Spirit not only leads into all truth but also enables the believer to behave in accordance with Truth.

Organizing Principles as “Attractors”

One of the most attractive features of complexity theory is the geometric images that have been created by scientists and mathematicians such as Mandelbrot, Koch, and Sierpinski as described in the book *Chaos* by James Gleick (1987). It only takes a few simple rules within the context of a complex system to demonstrate remarkable patterns. In his book, Gleick describes a technique called the “collage theorem” which was used by Barnsley and co-workers to demonstrate knowing the shape you wanted you could produce that image using a computer and reproduce “...a staggering image, correct in every aspect” (p. 238).

Could it be that we have rules given to us in Scripture that are purposely used by the Holy Spirit to conform us to the image of Christ (Romans 8:29)? What are some of these rules? There are many possibilities. Two organizing principles come to mind - faith and love.

Faith as an Organizing Principle

The writer to the book of Hebrews shows how critical faith is in the life of a believer:

Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen...But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him. (Heb 11:1,6)

It is faith that initially draws us to Him and it is faith that allows us to grow closer to Him. Faith brings coherence to what is seen and what is still beyond our sight. The key in this passage is that our faith is centered on a relationship with a Person. Trusting that God is there

and also that He desires us to be satisfied in discovering Him is vital to the initial steps of a new believer. It is this sense of receptivity to God's leading that results in faith becoming an "attractor" to God's revelation through His Word within a world of intellectual arrogance and selfish desires. Our reason must be enlightened by the Holy Spirit and instructed by His Word:

... we are to beware of deifying reason, which is subject to the weakness and infirmity of humanity. If we would not have the Scriptures clouded to our understanding, so that the plainest truths shall not be comprehended, we must have the simplicity and faith of a little child, ready to learn, and beseeching the aid of the Holy Spirit. A sense of the power and wisdom of God, and of our inability to comprehend His greatness, should inspire us with humility, and we should open His word, as we would enter His presence, with holy awe. When we come to the Bible, reason must acknowledge an authority superior to itself, and heart and intellect must bow to the great I AM. (Ellen White, Steps to Christ, pp 109-110)

Love as an Organizing Principle

The other organizing principle involves love of God and love for others. This principle was given by Jesus when asked by the rich young ruler which was the greatest commandment:

And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these. (Mark 12:30-31)

All of the commandments of God rest upon these! A life that demonstrates a love toward God and towards others has coherence. We can see that these principles are reflected in the life of Jesus when He walked upon the earth. A miraculous thing happens as we live within the influence of these attractors - we become more like Him! It does not matter what our cultural background, educational level, or area of specialization – we become more like Him!

Conclusion

I am convinced that God is transforming people into the image of His Son through the work of the Holy Spirit. The complexity of acquiring knowledge requires a systems approach model. The Word of God is not just useful in our walk of faith - it is essential in providing principles that God intends for us to abide by so that we may have a full life and a satisfying relationship with Him and others.

The supernatural effect of this model should be reflected in the people called by his Name. We all come from different countries and languages, numerous worldviews, contrasting backgrounds and experiences, various ethnic groups, and educational and religious experiences. The Body of Christ has diversity and unity at the same time! Only quantum theory can say that two statements that are contradictory can be true at the same time! A friend of mine (Reuel) at this seminar gave a superb example. Often his church has a pot-luck meal. The people attending buy all of the ingredients from the same place. But because of the difference in cultural backgrounds and types of dishes they prepare for the meal there is incredible diversity of taste and mixtures of color! It is the similar with the Body of Christ - we are brought together - all Christians but what incredible diversity and vibrancy of life! As the Lord mixes us together we look around and see that we all are being conformed to His image (Fig. 6)! We have “integrality” not just in coherence within ourselves - but also with each other through God’s marvelous work.

For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and the knowledge of the son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.” (Ephesians 4:12—13)

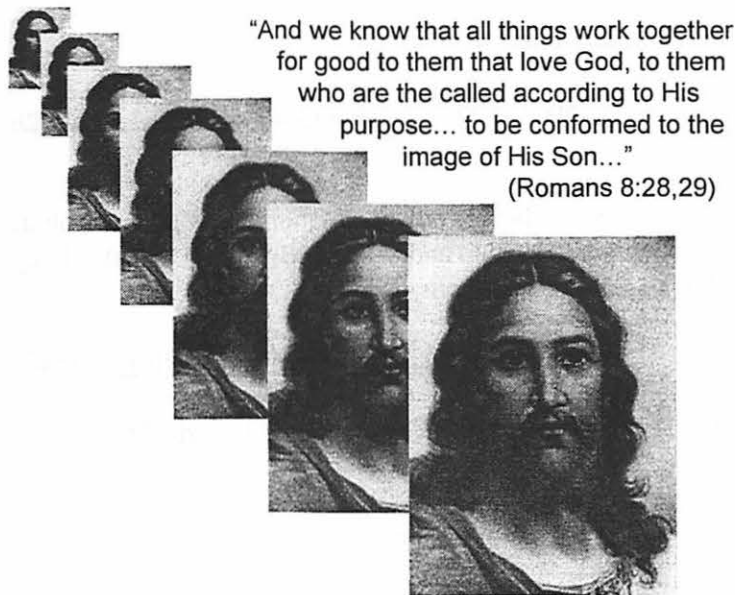


Figure 6. The purpose of our faith - to grow into His image.

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