

How does a card carrying Calvinist,
raised in the Christian Reformed Church,
become a “Christian Agnostic” in his old age?

*Where did this nice little Dutch boy go wrong?
Does science enlighten or corrupt?*

*"God blessed them and said to them,
"Be fruitful and increase in number;
fill the earth and subdue it.
Rule over the fish of the sea
and the birds of the air
and over every living creature
that moves on the ground."*

New International Version, Genesis 1:28

The earth is the LORD's and the fullness thereof,
the world and those who dwell therein,
for he has founded it upon the seas
and established it upon the rivers.

RSV, Psalm 24: v. 1,2





My beliefs circa 1961

- God created the world in six days about 10.000 years ago
- The earth and all living things were created instantly during those six days
- The world as originally created was perfect
- The earth was corrupted by the disobedience of Adam and Eve
- Adam and Eve were real historical first people
- The fall of Adam and Eve changed the entire character of the earth, animals which former grazed peacefully together, began to eat each other, diseases occurred, humans suffered, died and began to fight and kill one another
- The Bible is completely accurate, not only as a guide to salvation, but also with respect to historical and scientific content
- The facts presented in the Bible trump human reason: where there is apparent conflict the Bible is correct and human reasoning is in error
- God is constantly and intimately involved with humans, intervening in human history on a daily basis, not only spiritually but also materially-"His eye is on the sparrow"
- God not only knows everything in advance, but also has a detailed plan for the entire course of human and world history
- Nurturing creation is less important than leading people to salvation, because the primary focus of Christianity is our (and others) personal salvation
- This is a transient world, and we are just passing through.
- The primary reason for creation is to sustain human needs

Moral Absolutism

Moral absolutism is the ethical view that certain actions are absolutely right or wrong, devoid of the context of the act. Thus lying might be considered to be always immoral, even if done to promote some other good.

Moral absolutism stands in contrast to categories of ethical theories such as situational ethics which holds that the morality of an act depends on the consequences or the context of the act.

The Scientific Method

- 1. Using experience or intuition derive a concept of how some aspect of reality functions.**
- 2. Form a conjecture or develop a concrete working hypothesis concerning this phenomenon**
- 3. Make specific testable predictions based on your hypothesis**
- 4. Set up experiments and or collect data that might disprove your hypothesis**
- 5. Based on the collected data, change or refine your hypothesis so that it is consistent with what you have observed**

A Dialect Approach to Religious and Moral Truth

The term dialectic as I am using it here refers to an understanding of how we can perceive the world; an assertion that the nature of the world outside one's perception is interconnected, contradictory, and dynamic; it also refers to a method by which human history unfolds; that is to say, history progresses as a dialectical process.

Logical Positivism

The the verifiability criterion suggests that a proposition is "cognitively meaningful" only if there is a finite procedure for conclusively determining whether it is true or false. An intended consequence of this view, for most logical positivists, is that metaphysical, theological, and ethical statements fall short of this criterion, and so are not cognitively meaningful

Critics of logical positivism said that its fundamental tenets could not themselves be formulated in a way that was clearly consistent. The verifiability criterion did not seem verifiable; but neither was it simply a logical tautology since it had implications for the practice of science and the empirical truth of other statements.

Moral Relativism

Moral relativism is the position that moral and ethical propositions do not reflect objective and/or universal moral truths, but instead make claims relative to social, cultural, historical or personal circumstances.

Moral relativists hold that there is no universal standard by which to assess an ethical proposition's truth. Relativistic positions often see moral values as applicable only within certain cultural boundaries or in the context of individual preferences.

Practical Atheism

In *practical*, or pragmatic atheism, also known as apatheism individuals live as if there are no gods and explain natural phenomena without resorting to the divine.

The existence of gods is not denied, but may be designated unnecessary or useless; gods neither provide purpose to life, nor influence everyday life, according to this view.

A form of practical atheism with implications for the scientific community is methodological naturalism—the "tacit adoption or assumption of philosophical naturalism within with or without fully accepting or believing it."

Strong Agnosticisim

—the view that the question of the existence or nonexistence of a deity or deities and the nature of ultimate reality is unknowable by reason of our natural inability to verify any experience with anything but another subjective experience. A strong agnostic would say, "I cannot know whether a deity exists or not, and neither can you."

Weak Agnosticism

—the view that the existence or nonexistence of any deities is currently unknown but is not necessarily unknowable, therefore one will withhold judgment until/if any evidence is available. A weak agnostic would say, "I don't know whether any deities exist or not, but maybe one day when there is more evidence we can find something out."

Christian Agnostic

Christian Agnostics hold that it is difficult or impossible to be sure of anything beyond the basic tenets of the Christian faith; that God exists, that Jesus has a special relationship with him and is in some way divine, that God should be worshiped and that humans should be compassionate toward one another.

Agnostic Creationism is the belief that humanity, life, the Earth, and the universe were created in their original form by a deity of some form. Additionally it is unknown or, inherently impossible to prove the identity of said deity.

Spirituality

Spiritual matters are those which regard the ultimate nature and meaning of human beings, not only as material biological organisms, but as beings with a unique relationship to that which is beyond the bodily senses, time and the material world.

A perceived sense of connection forms a central defining characteristic of spirituality — connection to a metaphysical reality greater than oneself, which may include an emotional experience of religious awe and reverence.

My Beliefs circa 2009

- The universe and our world are billions of years old
- Living organisms were created (evolved) over 3.5 billion years
- The world was never perfect
- There has been no discontinuity in the essential character of creation—The same physical laws always applied and biological functions have not changed. Death, disease and conflict have always occurred.
- Adam and Eve are prototypic, male and female metaphors for the human race.
- The fall of Adam and Eve is a paradigm of what happens in the life of each individual human
- The Bible is a religious document which helps us connect to God, but it is not to be used as a historical or scientific treatise
- We have many tools for deciphering reality and finding spiritual meaning—The Bible is one such tool, but so are human reason, cultural and religious traditions, community interactions, prayer, meditation, and scientific and medical investigation.
- God is a source of spiritual hope and comfort, but God's direct interventions in the function of the world are exceedingly rare.
- The history of the world is not foreknown or predestined by God.
- There is an inherent value to creation and to all of the living things in it, that transcends human wants and needs.
- The world is going to continue for a long time unless humans destroy it, and it is our privilege and duty to nurture and preserve it.
- Saving souls is God's work. Our work is to “love our neighbor as ourselves”, to “do unto others as we would have them do unto us” and to act as stewards of all of creation.