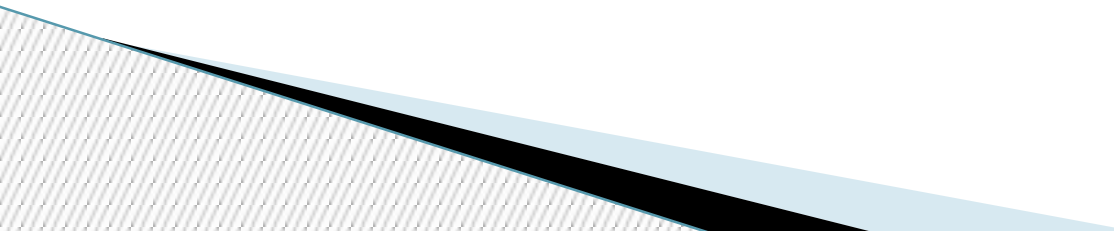


# **Theological Delivery in the Academy vs. Theological Delivery in the Pew**


Clinton Baldwin, Ph.D.



# OBJECTIVE

- ▶ Many people are unaware that there are differences between theological presentations/teachings in theological schools and seminaries and theological presentations in church. The objective of this presentation is to highlight some of these distinctions.
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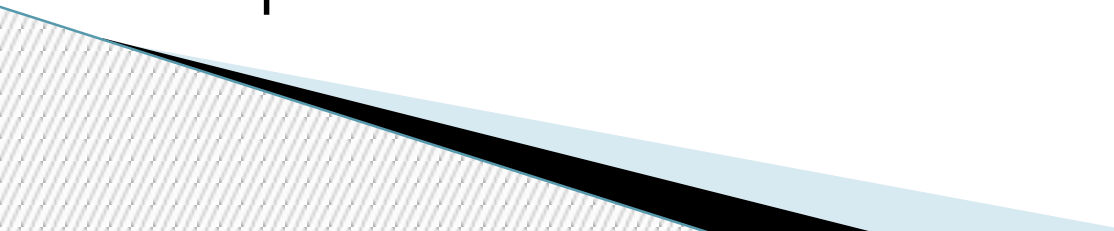
# The Perceptual Screen

- The perceptual screen equals the mental filters through which new information is passed and processed
  - It is the horizon of expectation within which we hear and interpret information
  - It tends to edit, redefine, recreate, minimize, or maximize the incoming information
  - It can also block the information flow
- 

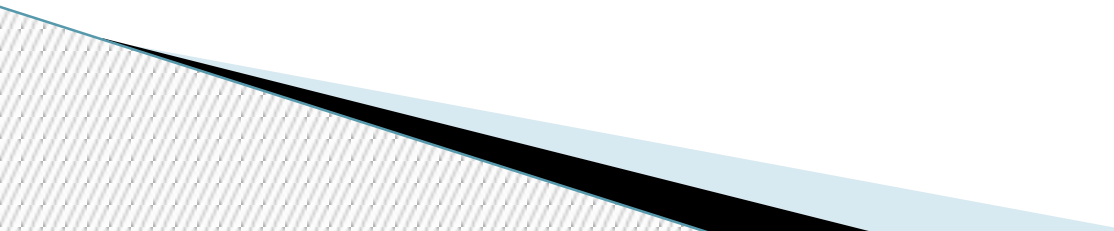
# Test Your Filters

John's experience told him he could escape. The lock that held him was hard to break, but he sensed he could do it. He thought about it, closed his eyes, breathed deeply and made another gallant effort. Exactly as he thought, he managed to escape.

# Questions

1. John's previous experience with door locks told him he could undo the lock? T or F
  2. Was the door lock very easy or difficult to undo? T or F
  3. Was John always in a standing position? T or F
  4. Was there any other lock in the room? T or F
  5. Could it be that John had ignored the other escape routes in the room? T or F
- 

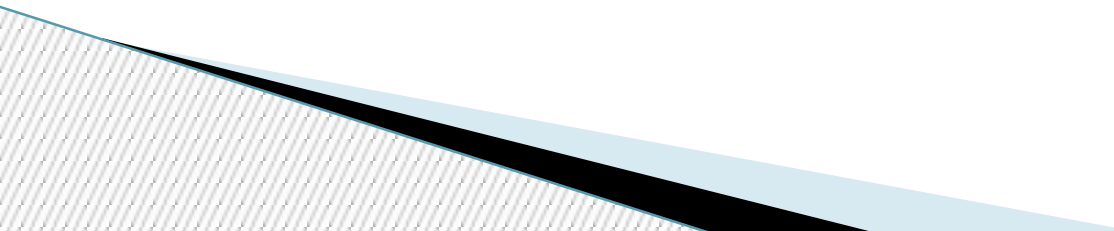
# Questions

- ▶ Was John held in the ring for some time before he managed to escape? T or F
  - ▶ Was John a very strong wrestler? Y or N
  - ▶ Did John receive any training as to how to escape a locked position? Y or N
  - ▶ John was proud that he defeated the other wrestler T or F
- 

# Answer

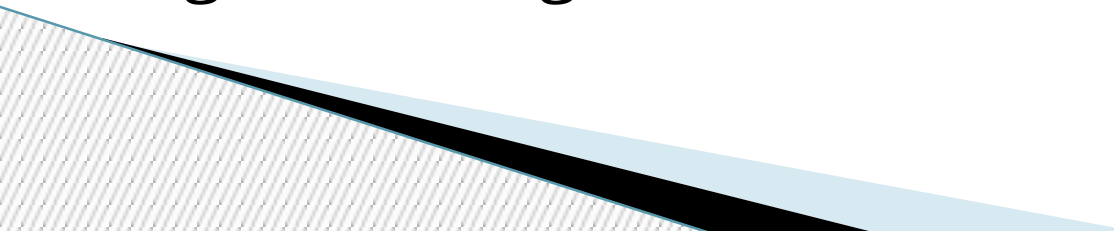
- ▶ The answers you gave would be very much dependent on your preconceived ideas of the lock(s)

# Matthew 2:11

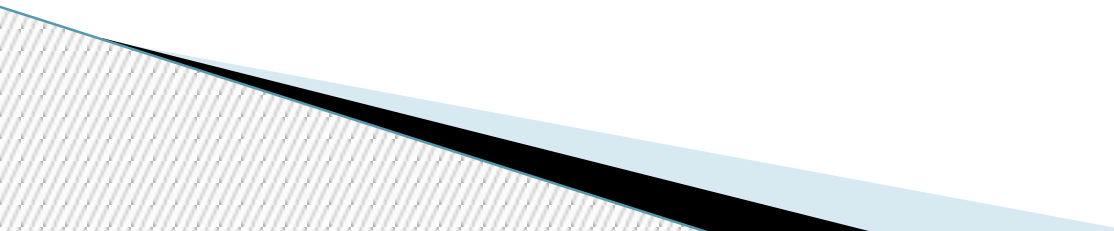
- ▶ And after coming into the house they saw the child with Mary His [Jesus'] mother; and they fell to the ground and worshipped him. Then opening their treasures, they presented to Him gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.
  - ▶ The three wise men presented gifts to Jesus T or F
  - ▶ Falling to the ground of the stable, the wise men worshipped Jesus T or F
  - ▶ The wise men presented three gifts to Jesus T or F
  - ▶ The wise men saw Mary and Joseph with the baby Jesus T or F
- 



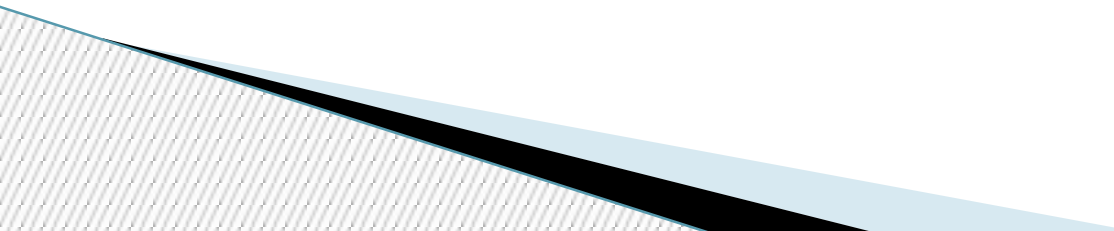
# The Theology Student

- ▶ Begins with an advantage and a disadvantage
  - ▶ Advantage in that s/he usually has a store of theological knowledge upon which to build
  - ▶ Disadvantage in that the same theological knowledge creates a perceptual screen that can block or limit the intake of new knowledge
  - ▶ The old information also becomes a basis for greater cognitive dissonance
- 

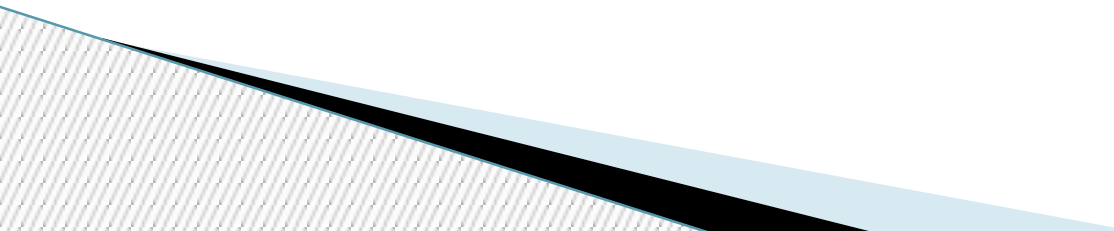
# Cognitive Dissonance

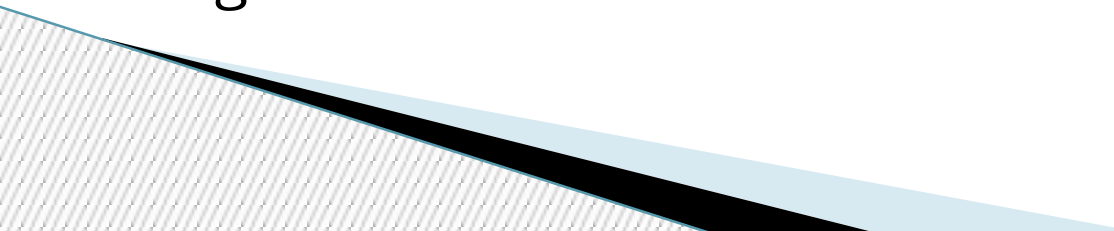
- Cognitive dissonance describes the discomfort, fear, anger, or mental turmoil that we experience when our perceptual screen is challenged
  - The brain dislikes cognitive dissonance and immediately seeks to recover cognitive consonance
- 

# Reaction to Cognitive Dissonance

- ▶ Violently reject the new position
  - ▶ Hold the new information in suspicion
  - ▶ Accept the new information gradually or with modification
  - ▶ Full acceptance of the new information
- 

# Learning and Unlearning

- ▶ The process of learning involves:
    - 1) The addition of new knowledge to old knowledge
    - 2) The modification of old knowledge
    - 3) The discarding of old knowledge (unlearning) and its replacement with new knowledge
- 

- ▶ The statement: “Old truth does not contradict new truth” is a half truth. The statement does not fully apply to any discipline of study
  - ▶ New Truths can contradict Old Truths
  - ▶ The research process is always engaged in unearthing new knowledge which may or may not agree with old information
- 

# Old Truth

- ▶ Exo 21:24: An eye for an eye
- ▶ Exo 20: I [God] shall visit the iniquity of the fathers upon the third and fourth generation
- ▶ Acts 15: Do not eat meat sacrificed to idols
- ▶ Exo 12:42-49: Circumcision necessary
- ▶ Don't touch the unclean: Lev 11

# Contradictory New Truth

- ▶ Matt 5: Turn the other cheek
- ▶ Ezk 18:3-5: Only the person who sins shall die
- ▶ 1Cor 8,10: Eat meat sacrificed to idols
- ▶ Gal 1,2: Circumcision not necessary
- ▶ Ezk 4:12: Touch the unclean

## Old Truth

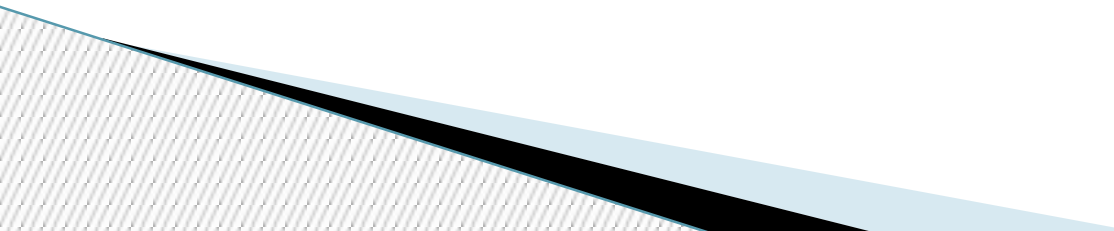
- ▶ Eggs should not be eaten. 2T.400,1860
- ▶ No school in the cities - 1870's
- ▶ Law in Galatians equals the ceremonial law

## Contradictory

## New Truth

- ▶ Get eggs of healthy fowls CD, 204, 1901 (*as in Knight, Reading, 1*).
- ▶ Schools in the cities - 1909
- ▶ Law in Galatians equals the moral law

# Different Levels of Learning

- ▶ In every field of study information is delivered at different levels
  - ▶ Thus, there are different grades of classification
    - Primary school
    - High school
    - College/university
- 



# Levels of Learning

- ▶ Primary school  
grades 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, etc.
- ▶ High school  
forms 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, etc
- ▶ College/university  
Bachelors (1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> years)  
Masters ( 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, thesis/dissertation)  
Doctorate (1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, dissertation)

- ▶ Information at a lower level does not necessarily follow through exactly to the higher level, but may change completely from one level to the next

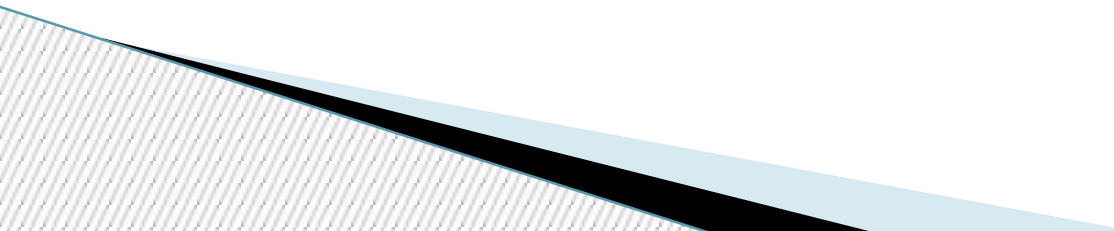
# Information Change

- Primary school: 2-4 is wrong
- High school: 2-4 is correct [answer = -2]
  
- Greek (1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> year): the Aorist tense describes only **past action**
- Greek Three onwards: the Aorist tense describes **past, present and future actions**
  
- Greek (1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> year): The present tense describes **present actions**
- Greek Three onwards: The present tense describes **past, present and future actions**

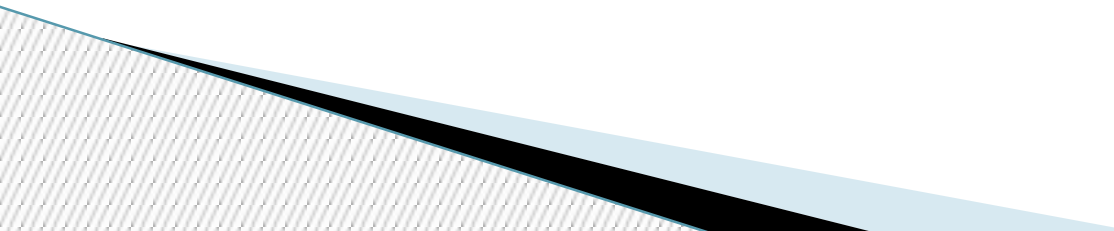
# Research Process

- Again, the research process is always engaged in unearthing new knowledge which may or may not agree with old information

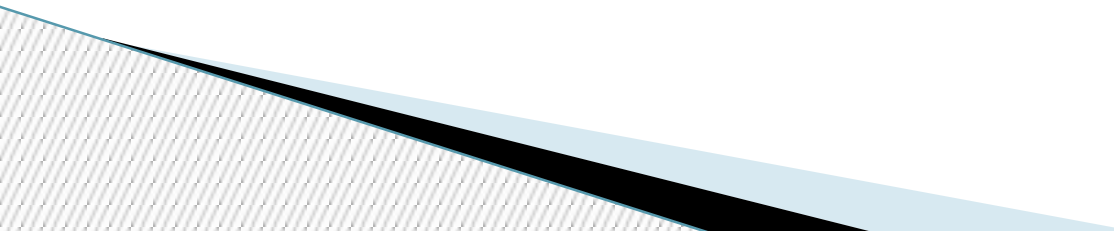
# Tension Between the Academy and the Pew

- The church consists of a mixture of people at different levels of understanding
  - In communicating theological information to the church, generally, the basic level (level one) has to be employed so as to facilitate cohesion and harmony in the church
  - The responsible researcher in the field of religion has to “maintain” the old knowledge, while presenting new knowledge so as to foster continuity and cohesion in the church
- 

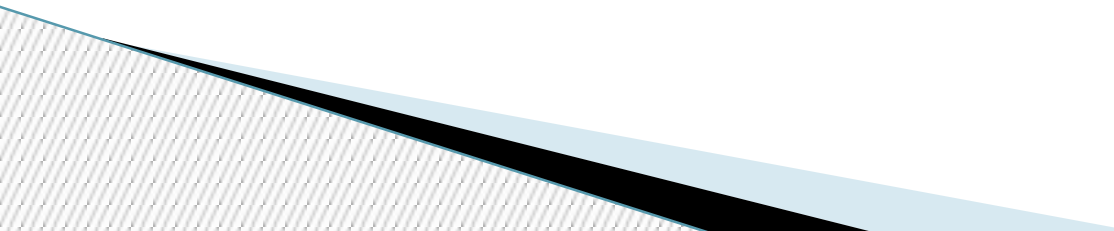
# Characteristics of The Different Levels of Theological Delivery



# Theological Delivery in the Church

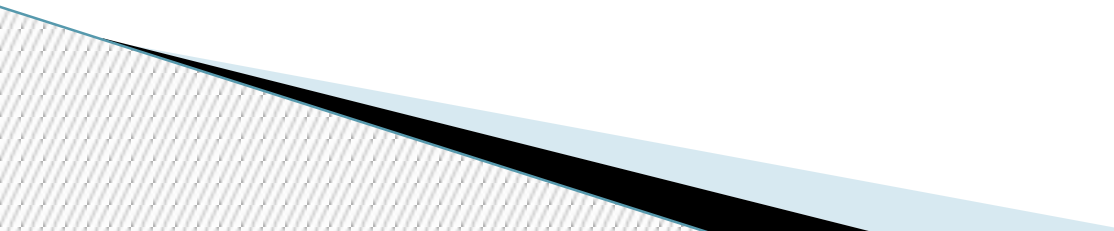
- ▶ Is usually general information
  - ▶ Is usually at the basic level
  - ▶ Is usually delivered by non-specialists
  - ▶ Is usually a repackaging of previous information
  - ▶ Designed to foster faith and cohesion in the body
  - ▶ Not designed to ask tough questions, but to foster faith and offer encouragement
  - ▶ Is usually not aware of the advance exegetical questions, therefore, is not involved in seeking for answers
  - ▶ More concerned with application, than with exegesis
- 

# Delivery in the Academy

- ▶ Is more concerned with presenting the results of the latest research
  - ▶ Questions, reshapes or removes the lenses through which old information in the church is processed
  - ▶ Is concerned with cutting new paths, uncovering and creating new knowledge
  - ▶ Is delivered by specialists
- 



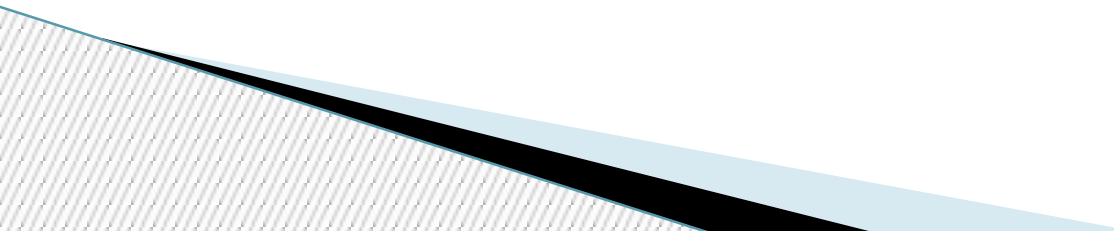
# Delivery in the Academy

- ▶ Just as scholarly journals in all disciplines are usually ten years ahead of textbooks in the same discipline, so likewise that which is commonplace in the academy is usually years ahead of what is generally discussed in church
  - ▶ Can create a tension between the church and the academy
  - ▶ This tension can result in the “death” of the academician but with the acceptance of his ideas long after his death (by the next generation or so)
- 

# Questions of the Academy not Asked in Church

- ▶ Who wrote the Biblical text/passage and to whom was it written, and why?
- ▶ In what language(s) was the Biblical text/passage written?
- ▶ What are the linguistic constructions used and how do they influence the meaning of the text/passage?
- ▶ What are the diachronic and synchronic meanings of the words used?
- ▶ What is the textual (manuscript) history behind the Biblical text? How did the passage evolve in the manuscript tradition?

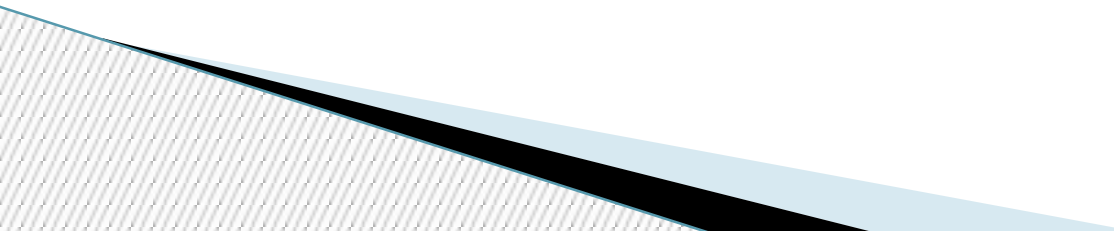
# Questions of the Academy not Asked in Church

- ▶ What is the date of writing of the Biblical passage?
  - ▶ What are the historical, philosophical, political, sociological and cultural factors that influenced the writing of the text/passage?
  - ▶ What is the theological worldview of the author and how did this worldview influence his message?
  - ▶ Is the author presenting historical facts or theological truths?
- 

# Questions of the Academy not asked in Church

- ▶ What is the literary genre used to convey the message?
- ▶ In what form(s) did the passage exist before it was written?
- ▶ What is the history of interpretation of the passage and how does this history influence current meaning?
- ▶ What is the denominational lenses through which the passage is being interpreted?

# Note

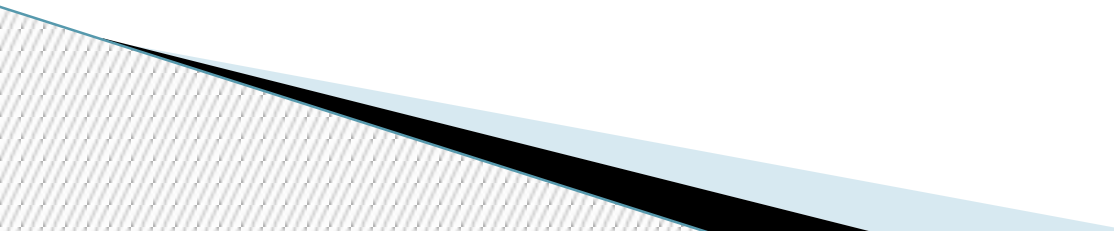
- The academy is the place for questioning and research
  - The pew is the place of harmonization and application of the results of the academy
  
  - The pew tends to study the Bible in light of the doctrines of the church, i.e. the doctrines that the church currently teach are assumed to be true, and used as the basis for determining and defining the result of scripture
  
  - The academy studies the doctrine of the church in light of the Bible. The doctrines are seen as neutral propositions that serve as a launching pad in the pursuit of creating new knowledge
- 

# Note

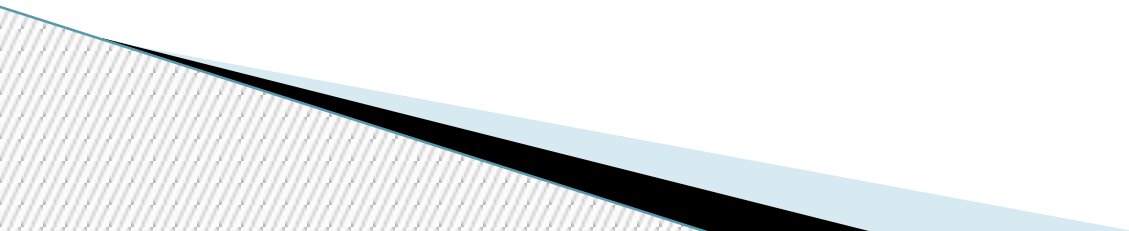
That different questions and methods are used by the church and the academy, does not mean that Church members are less intelligent than university practitioners.

It only speaks to the fact that although the academy and the church support each other, they have distinctive functions


When such questions are asked, the conclusions arrived at can be different from those obtained in the pew. This can result in.....



# Demonizing

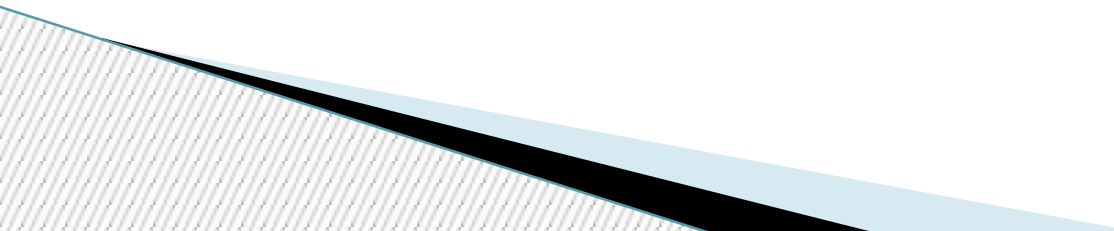


# Demonizing


- This is the process whereby the presenter of new information is negatively labeled and dismissed
  - Once the person is demonized, anything that the person communicates is seen as bad
  - Once the demonizing position is taken by the hearer, it becomes increasingly difficult to think objectively about what the 'demon' is saying
- 



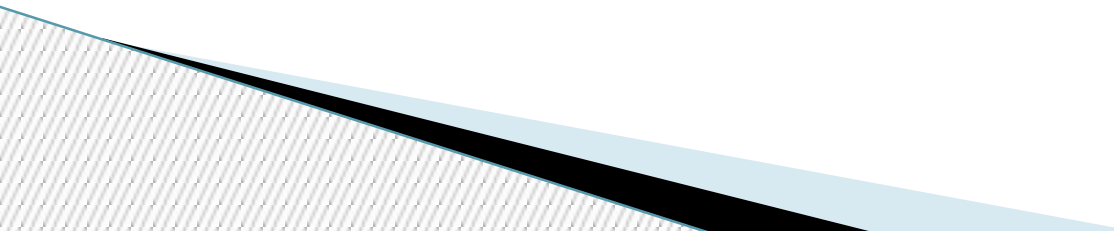
# Demonizing

- The “demonizer,” if allowed, will kill in the name of Jesus. If not physically, then socially or by character assassination
  - Millions were so killed in the Middle Ages and the same continues today all over the world
- 

# Why People Demonize

- When new information is given, it usually causes cognitive dissonance in the person hearing it for the first time
  - Our physical, emotional and physical beings do not like cognitive dissonance
  - In order to maintain inner stability, demonizing is sometimes used as a defense mechanism. If there is no need to contend with the “demon,” then there is no need to think, or to change one’s understanding of reality. Thus, one can remain happy in the current settled position
- 


# The Antinomy of Truth

- The opposite of a truth can be another truth
  - In other words, the opposite of truth is not necessarily falsehood
  - Thus if I am right, my opponent may also be right, although his ideas are opposite to mine
- 

# Examples

- ▶ Circumcision for Jews- true : 1Cor 3:= Gal 2:7-see Greek
- ▶ Circumcision for Gentiles - false Gal 2:3-5;5:2 [at the same time]
  
- ▶ Meat offered to idols should not be eaten (Act 15): true
- ▶ Meat offered to idols can be eaten (1Cor 8,10): true
  
- ▶ Do not eat an animal that died of itself:== true
- ▶ Eat animals that die of themselves-Gentiles:=== true
  
- ▶ No interest (usury) for Israelites – true
- ▶ Interest for Gentiles – true [at the same time]

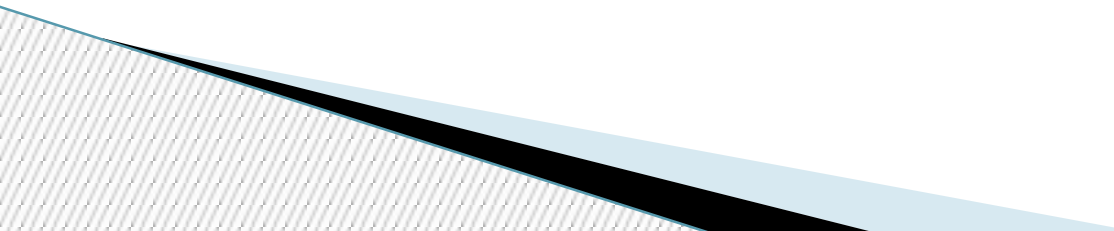
# The Burden of Being Right

- Sincere religious people are usually very concerned about being absolutely right
  - While this is good, it also has its negatives
  - The burden of being right can imply that, “If I am right then my opponent must be wrong”
  - The ‘absolutely right’ attitude cannot accommodate the antinomy of truth
- 

# The Burden of Being Right

- Religious people are usually very afraid to re-examine long cherished positions, because change usually means losing one's salvation
- In other words, salvation is tied to correct doctrinal understandings
- Note: Although correct doctrines are very very important, it should not be forgotten that no-one is saved by correct doctrines. It was not correct doctrines that went to the cross for us. It was a person- Jesus Christ. Correct doctrines are only particular understandings of Jesus. It is not Jesus. Our understanding of Jesus will always be limited, and in some cases, faulty.

# The Burden of Being Right

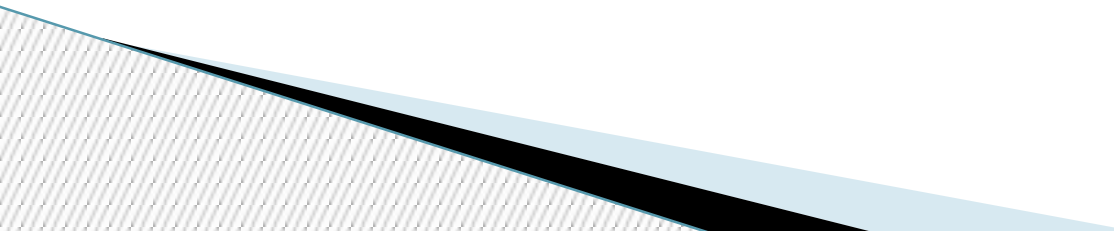
- ▶ Therefore, being theologically right cannot be equated with being saved; neither being theologically wrong be equated with being lost
  - ▶ Salvation has to do with accepting a person [Jesus] and being in a relationship with that person. It does not depend on how well one understands the person (Gal 5:4)
- 

# The Burden of Being Right

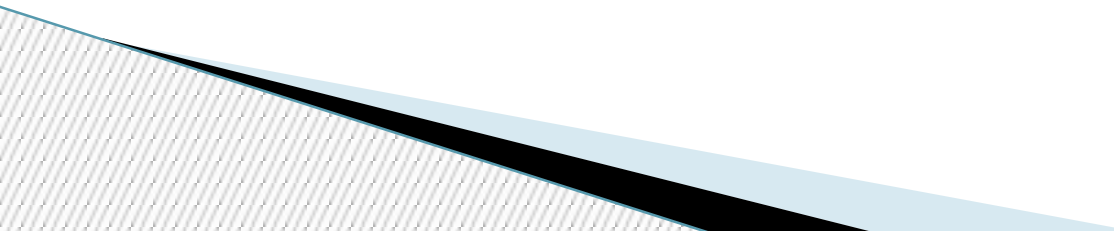
- ▶ Therefore, if one's salvation does not rest upon his or her correct doctrinal positions then one is free to re-examine his/her position without the fear of eternal damnation in the process (fishing from the boat)



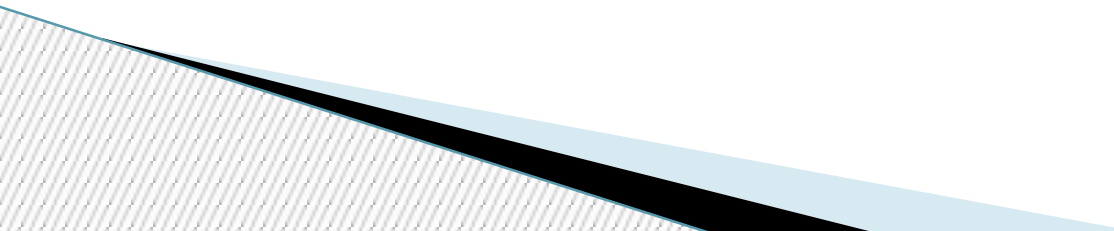
# God's Grace and Truth Positions

- ▶ God manifests himself in the lives of people because they are in a **relationship with him**, even though their theological positions are not 100% accurate
  - ▶ The manifestations of God in these instances however, are mistakenly taken to mean an affirmation of the doctrinal positions as correct, even though they are wrong.
- 

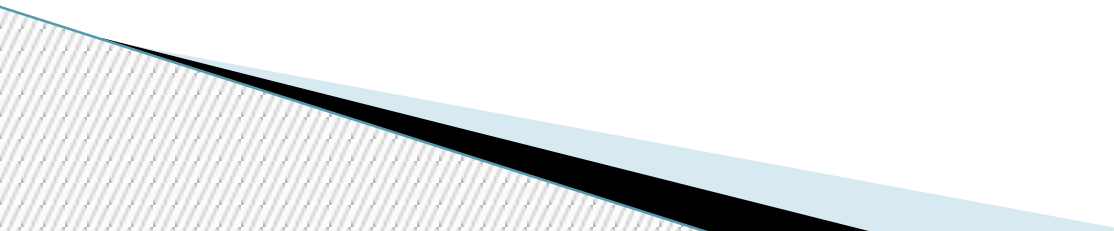
# God's Grace and Truth Positions

- ▶ Thus, people are unwilling to re-examine or change their doctrinal positions. It is reasoned (sometimes unknowingly) that since God is manifesting himself in their lives (while holding certain understandings ) then their theological conclusions must be correct
  - ▶ Grace is thus misunderstood and substituted for correct doctrinal understanding
- 

# God's Manifestation in the Midst of Inaccuracies

- ▶ To Abraham even when he lied and “sold” his wife (Gen 12:10-20; 20)
  - ▶ To Abraham, Jacob, and other patriarchs who had many wives (Gen 21; 29; 1Sam 1)
  - ▶ To David while being a murderer. Note: On his death bed he was still making a hit list (1Kings 2:5,6,8,9)
  - ▶ Most of the Bible writers who believed that God was responsible for both good and evil (Isa 45:6)
- 

# God's Manifestation in the Midst of Inaccuracies

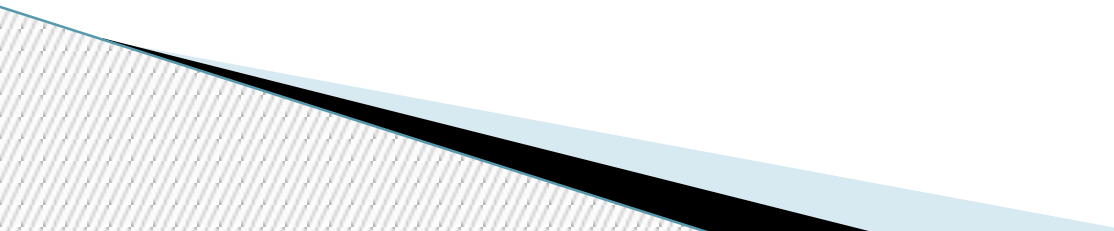
- ▶ Peter while he was still a racist (See Acts 1, 2; 10; 11)
  - ▶ Paul even though he believed in slavery (Eph. 6:5-9)
  - ▶ Ellen White, while she believed in the shut-door theory, the amalgamation of man and beast, the eating of pork, the idea that Sabbath must be kept from 6 p.m. on Fridays to 6 p.m. on Saturdays, etc.
- 

# ELLEN WHITE

- ▶ *There is no excuse for anyone in taking the position that there is no more truth to be revealed, and that all our expositions of scripture are without an error. The fact that certain doctrines have been held as truth for many years by our people, is not a proof that our ideas are infallible. Age will not make error into truth, and truth can afford to be fair. No true doctrine will lose anything by close investigation. E G.White, RH, Dec 20, 1892.*

# ELLEN WHITE

*We have many lessons to learn and many, many to unlearn. God and heaven alone are infallible. Those who think that they will never have to give up a cherished view, never have occasion to change an opinion, will be disappointed. E.G. White, RH, July 2, 1892.*



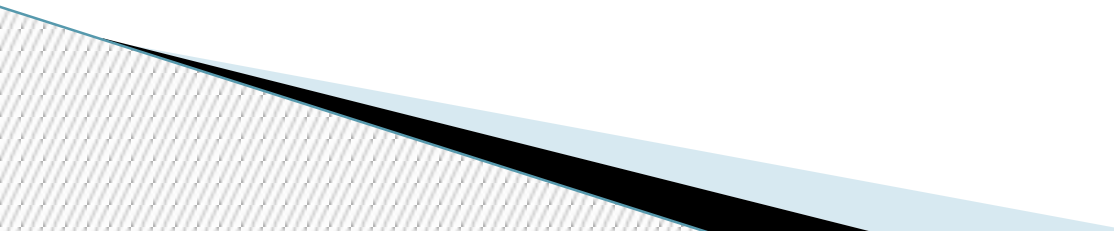
# Kohlberg's Stages of Moral Development

Lawrence Kohlberg: Moral philosopher and scholar in the area of child development, Harvard Center for Moral Education, He stated:

- ▶ An individual passes through six different stages of moral development.
- ▶ These stages are thought processes, i.e., different modes of thinking

# Stage 1

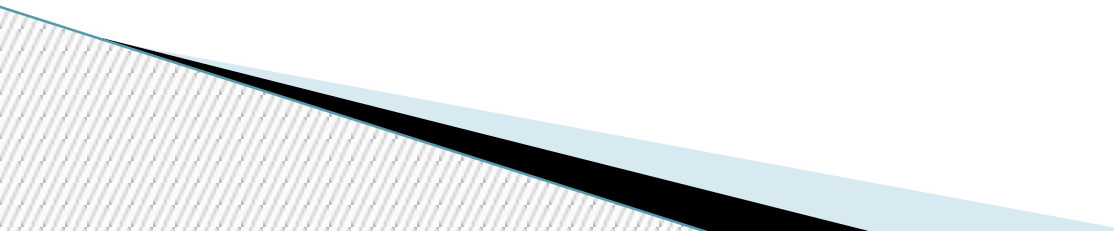
## Punishment and Obedience Stage

- ▶ No sense of intrinsic right or wrong or obligations to rules
  - ▶ Avoidance of physical punishment and hope for reward are the motivations of behavior
  - ▶ The physical consequence of an action determines its goodness or badness, regardless of the human meaning or values
  - ▶ Justice is obedience of the weak to the strong and punishment by the strong of those who deviate
- 



# Stage 1

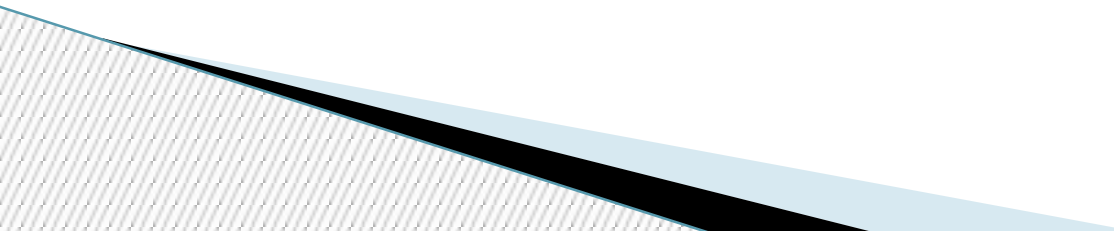
## Punishment and Obedient Stage

- ▶ Inability to generalize from principle to application
  - ▶ Rules are understood very concretely so they must be spelled out in details
  - ▶ Ruler establishes his right to rule by display of power, threats of punishment and hope of reward
  - ▶ Mercy and failure to punish seen as weakness
- 

# Example Stage one Reasoning

- ▶ “Don’t run across the street or mommy will spank you”
- ▶ No reason given, only consequence. That’s what the child can best understand at that level

# Stage 2: The Reciprocity Stage

- ▶ Human relationship viewed in terms of the market place
  - ▶ “You scratch my back, and I’ll scratch your yours ”
  - ▶ “If you hurt me, I’ll hurt you”
  - ▶ The concept of equal sharing and fairness– if your slice of the cake is ‘X’ big, then mine must be ‘X’ large also
- 

# Examples of Stage 2 Behavior

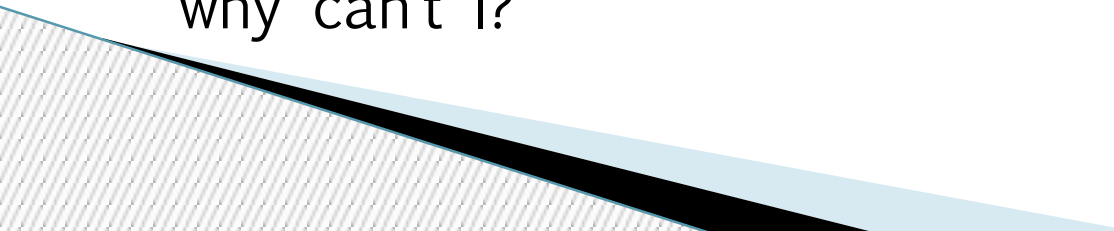
- ▶ “An eye for an eye,” “a tooth for a tooth”
- ▶ Gang warfare

# Stages 3, 4: Conventional Stages

- ▶ The uncritical acceptance of rules and standards of one's group.

# Stage 3

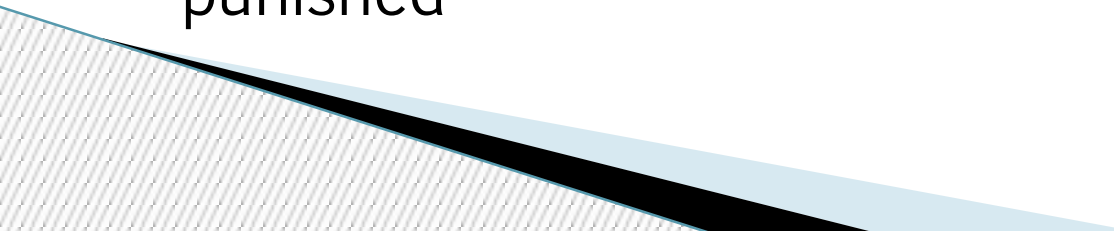
## Uncritical acceptance of Rules

- ▶ The inability to put oneself in the shoes of another and imagine his/her perspective
  - ▶ One earns approval by being conventionally 'respectable' and 'nice'
  - ▶ Retribution is collective, individual vengeance not allowed
  - ▶ Forgiveness put above revenge
  - ▶ Failure to punish is unfair. "If he can get away with it, why can't I?"
- 

# Example

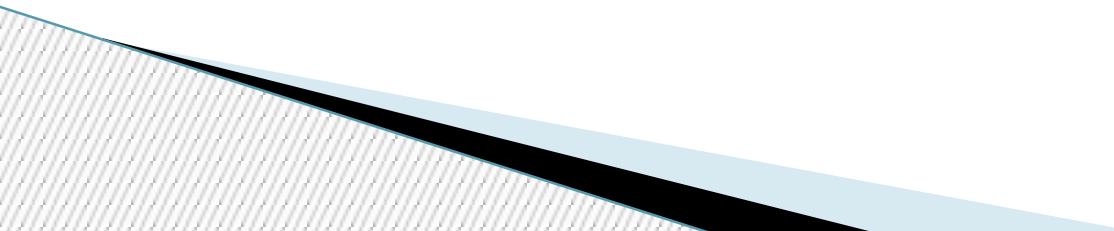
- ▶ A teenager justifying his behavior by saying:  
“Everyone is doing it”

# Stage 4: The Law and Order Stage


- ▶ The normal adult morality of all civilized societies
  - ▶ Respect for properly constituted authority
  - ▶ Conformity to fixed rules and laws
  - ▶ The uncritical acceptance of rules and standards of one's group
  - ▶ Defense of the given social or institutional order for its own sake
  - ▶ Justice is a matter of relation between the individual and system of laws
  - ▶ Violation must be rewarded and lawbreaking punished
- 



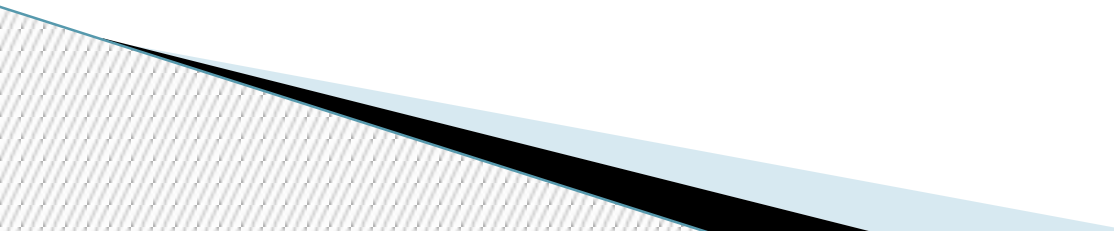
# Stage 4: The Law and Order Stage

- ▶ Injustice is failing to reward work and punishing demerit
  - ▶ Justice normally refers to criminal or forensic justice
  - ▶ Justice demands that the wrongdoer be punished, that he 'pay his debt to society.'
- 

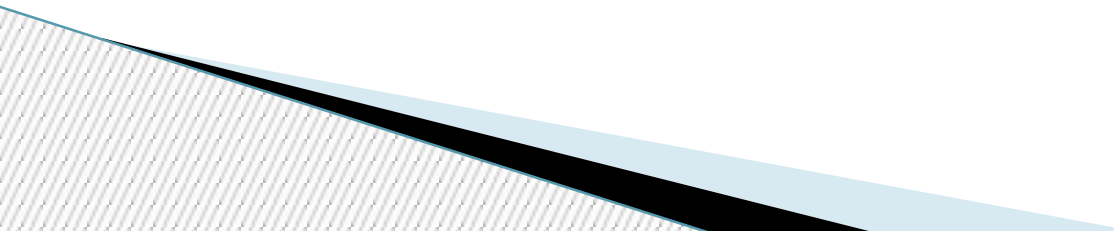
# Stage 5,6: The Principle Levels of Operation

- ▶ Only about 25% of adults reach stages 5 and 6
  - ▶ Moral action not defined by a checklist of rules, but from logical application of universal, abstract, moral principles
  - ▶ The emphasis is on natural or inalienable rights and liberties that are prior to society and must be protected by society.
  - ▶ The freedom of an individual must be limited by society only when they infringe on someone else's freedom
- 

# Stage 5,6: The Principle Levels of Operation

- ▶ The concept of retributive justice, seen as individual retaliation (stage 1) and collective retribution (stages 3 & 4) disappears at stage 5.
  - ▶ The statement, “Justice demands punishment,” which is a self-evident truism for the stage 4 mind, is just nonsense at stage 5
  - ▶ Retributive punishment is neither rational nor just, because it does not promote welfare of the individual
  - ▶ Justice is distributive justice, i.e., equally proportionate to circumstances and need
- 

# Stage 6: Universal Ethical Principles

- ▶ Reasoning and decision-making based on universal ethical principles, the most basic of which is respect for the equal and innate worth of human beings as ends in themselves
  - ▶ Having rights mean more than individual liberties, and represent universal claims of each individual on another for equal consideration of his/her interests in every situation
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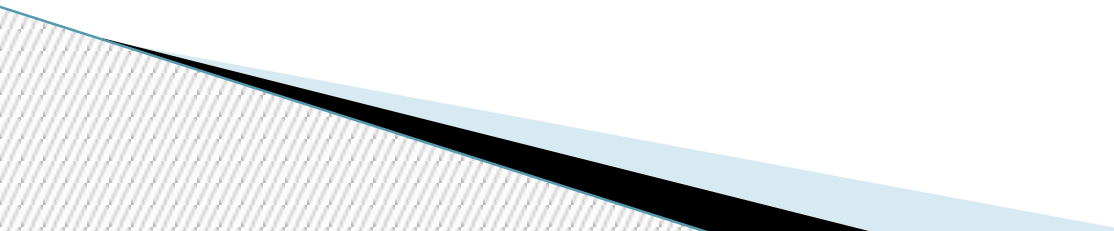
# NOTE

- Only 10 percent of adults ever reach stage 6
- The majority of people remain at stage 4
- Societies differ in number of individuals reaching the various stages
- Individuals do most of their thinking at one stage are able to comprehend moral reasoning at all levels below their own, but not more than one level above their own
- Thus if God wanted to communicate with a stage 2 person, he would have to use thought forms appropriate to their level or no higher than stage 3

# Biblical Examples

- ▶ What stage of communication and moral development do the following situations suggest:
- ▶ The 2<sup>nd</sup> , 4<sup>th</sup> , 10<sup>th</sup> commandment (Exo 20)
- ▶ Answer of the lawyer (Lk. 10:27)
- ▶ God's pronouncements (Ezk. 5:13; 6:12, 13; Mic 5:15)
- ▶ Jeremiah's questions (Jer. 12:1), compare God's answer in v5
- ▶ Eye for eye justice (Deut 19:21)
- ▶ The avenger of blood (Deut 19:6)

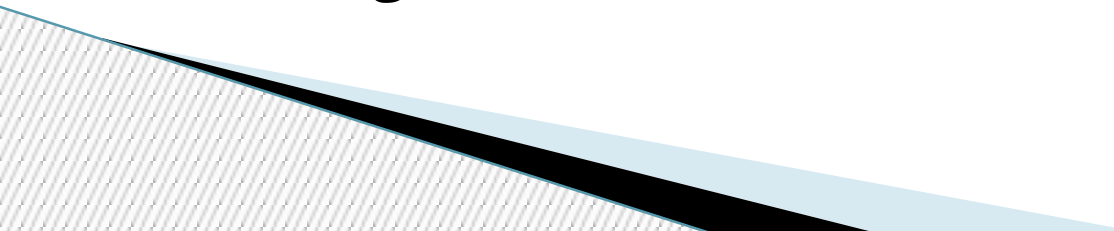
# Biblical Examples

- ▶ What stage of communication and moral development do the following texts suggest:
  - ▶ Amos 5:21, 24
  - ▶ Matt 5:21, 22, 38, 39
  - ▶ Matt 20:1-16
  - ▶ Mark 2:27
- 

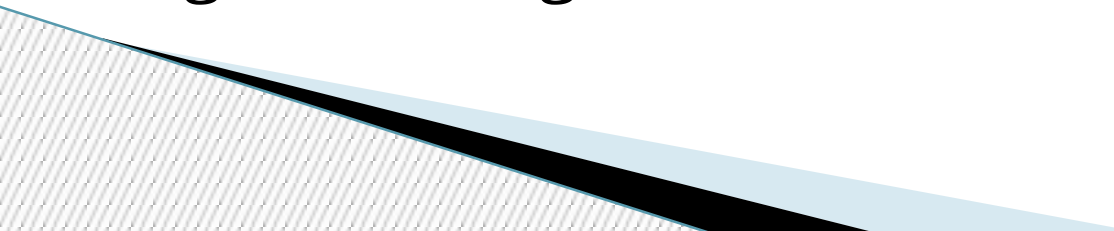
- ▶ Conflicts occur in church because people are doing their thinking at qualitatively different levels of cognitive and moral development



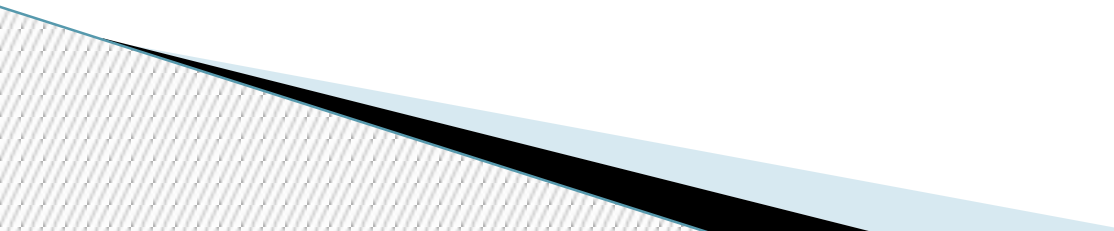
# *Lateral Decollage*

- ▶ The compartmentalization of one's thinking by which one's level of cognitive development in a particular area does not filter completely into the other areas of his thinking
  - ▶ E.g. a scientist may function at stage 5, with regard to scientific information, but at stage 1 or 2, theologically
  - ▶ [A person's theology may lag behind the rest of his thinking]
- 

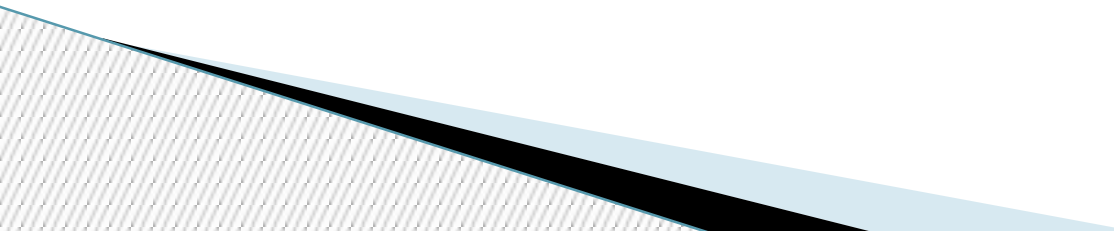
# Theology Students

- Begin with an advantage and a disadvantage
  - Advantage in that they usually have a store of theological knowledge upon which to build
  - Disadvantage in that the same theological knowledge creates a perceptual screen that can block or limit the intake of new knowledge
  - The old information also become a basis for greater cognitive dissonance
- 

# Thoughts to Ponder When Doing Theology

- Just as no one is saved by good works, so likewise no one is saved by correct doctrines
  - While this does not give license to embrace incorrect doctrines, it eases the burden of being 'absolutely right' at all times. In other words, the diligent student does not hinge his/her salvation on correct positions and thus can afford to be 'wrong' while he/she is doing his inquiry.
- 

# Thoughts to Ponder When Doing Theology

- Adopt an inquiring attitude
  - Nothing is wrong with asking questions. It all depends on the attitude with which we ask
  - Read more, listen more, mediate more, and talk less
  - Cultivate a passion for knowledge
  - Always depend on Jesus
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# Note

- Scholarship must deal with the evidences that a scholar presents, not with judgments and assumptions of the scholar's motivation

**THE END**

