

Lecture 14: The Upper & Lower Story (I)

Father, we thank You for today, we thank you for the loveliness of this time of year. We ask You to be with us now, we pray that as we think about the dilemma of our contemporaries that You will give us wisdom and understanding. We ask it for Jesus' sake, Amen.

Introduction and Review: Having introduced the “upper and lower story” dichotomy, Professor Barrs now examines the specific impact this concept has had on Christian theology. He begins this two-part lecture by looking at three major figures who have contributed to the modern emphasis on religious existentialism.

The Upper & Lower Story (I)**I. The Problem of Reducing Faith to an Abstraction: Three Examples****A. Bertrand Russell (*Why I Am Not a Christian*)**

1. The Humanist view
 - a. Science in the “rational story” - purposelessness of life
 - b. “Build the soul’s habitation” on this “foundation of despair”
2. Reflective of western culture
 - a. Science and knowledge (the “rational”) lead to absurdity
 - b. Faith becomes an irrational abstraction
3. Impact in eastern culture
 - a. Islam
 - b. Exportation of technology includes exportation of ideas

B. David F. Strauss (*Life of Jesus*)

1. Humanism in theology
 - a. “Rational” approach to the Bible leads to doubt
 - b. Irrational claim of “eternal truths”
 - c. Paradoxical need to “reestablish dogmatically what has been destroyed critically”

C. Frances Young (*The Myth of God Incarnate*)

1. Early church belief in direct divine intervention versus modern belief in earthly causes

<p>TRAGIC - acceptance of truths without literal or scientific meaning</p> <hr/> <p>TRIVIAL - knowledge that literally life is senseless</p>
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2. Faith is “like music”
3. A dangerous dichotomy
 - a. Leads to “sacred versus secular” distinction
 - b. Religion becomes “just another experience”