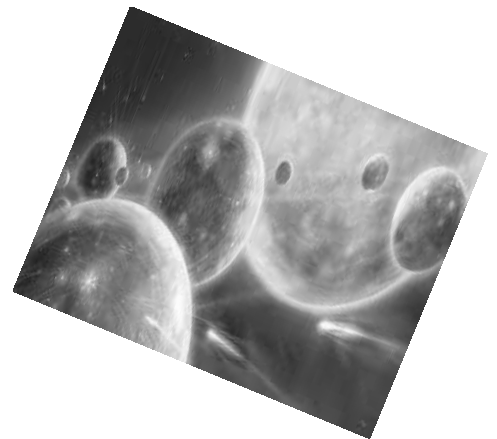


Theological Worlds: A Brief Overview

Before venturing forth as an astronaut to the various Worlds it is best to have a map before us describing the multiple soulscapes we will encounter. The summary on this page is the work of my colleague Sara Weatherman, C.M., of Longmont, Colorado.

World 1: The journey from Separation to Reunion. People longing to find our way home. They yearn for harmony and inclusiveness. The cycles of life – birth, death, and rebirth – are central. World 1 people are always looking for a new way of seeing, and are often contemplative. God is Eternal Now, present in the cosmos. Christ is the Revealer of God.

World 2: The journey from Conflict to Vindication. These folks are often on the front lines of justice issues because they long for a level playing field, justice for all. Working toward the Kingdom of God on Earth provides strong motivation. God is in the future pulling us toward that Kingdom. Christ is the Liberator who frees us to fight for the freedom of others.



World 3: The journey from Emptiness to Fulfillment. Similar in some ways to World 1, but the focus is on the Self, being the best one can be. God is within – we are made in God's Image. Wholeness is important, as are feelings and a sense of community. Christ is our model of this Wholeness. Many self-help books are aimed at people in this world.

World 4: The journey from Condemnation to Forgiveness. God is seen as judge, Christ as Savior. Much of "church language" comes from this world, as does much in our order of worship.

World 5: The journey from Suffering to Endurance. For many, life is just getting from one day to the next, with good friends walking beside them. God is Emmanuel; Christ is the Suffering Servant who walks beside us. Dependability and tenacious faith, in spite of it all, are significant.

Each "World" has its favorite Scripture passages, its favorite hymns, and language it uses to describe faith. All five worlds can be found in Psalm 23 or the Lord's Prayer. The boundaries of the world are porous; we move among them as needed.

Grid

Pulsating Logic	World 1	World 2	World 3	World 4	World 5
Obsessio/ Defining Quandary	Alienation/ Separation	Hostile Powers/ Conflict	Emptiness	Condemnation/ Culpability/ Guilt	Recalcitrant Powers/ Suffering
Epiphania/ Incorporation	Union/ Harmony	Vindication/ New Earth	Fulfillment/ Wholeness	Forgiveness/ Adoption	Endurance/ Perseverance
Struggle for Meaning	Authenticity in the face of an overwhelming cosmos	The dilemma of history as chaotic	Possibilities for the unfulfilled self	Passing through the valley of the shadow of personal guilt	Living means persisting on the edge of absurdity
Quest	Alienation to Belonging	Injustice to Justice	Death to Life	Condemnation to Pardon	Duplicity to Integrity
Feel	Longing	Anger/Rage	Ache/Void	Guilt	Overwhelmed
Action	Sensing	Co-creating	Becoming	Confessing	Being Reliable
Self-Image	Orphan/ Pilgrim	Warrior	Outcast	Fugitive	Victimization/ Refugee
Atonement	Love as the tearing of the veil	Love as taking our part	Love as filling to overflowing	Love as forgiving the unworthy	Love as persevering with long-suffering
Christ	Revealer who lifts the veil	Liberator who breaks my chains and with whom I join in the fight	Model Human who teaches me how to be whole	Savior who redeems me from my sins	Suffering Servant who walks with me through life
God Location	Eternal Now	The Future Horizon	Within	Judgment Throne	Emmanuel (God With Us)
Proponents	Tillich, McFague, Neo- liberalism	Gutiérrez, Fiorenza, Liberation Theology	Cobb, Heyward, Process & Relational Theologies	Barth, Niebuhr, Neo-orthodoxy	Wiesel, de Beauvoir, Existentialism

Three Ways to Conceive the Theological Worlds



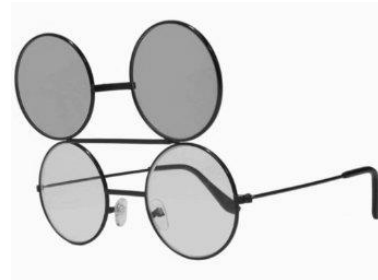
Separate spheres

Totality unto themselves

Crashing about

Lenses through which our perception is focused

Interactive as filters directing our attention and screening information



Separate yet interactive components which make the full or whole picture

Can be rearranged

Individual components are compromised without the others

Two Sets of Continuums to Keep in Mind

First set arises in the exploration of the Theological Worlds

Obsessio ----- Epiphania
(angst) (aha!)

- Persons may be attracted to a world due to the angst in their life
- Persons may be attracted to a world due to the pattern of resolution the world presents

Second set arises as persons construct mental pictures of spiritual realities

Concrete ----- Abstract
(literal) (metaphor)

- There is no “correct” spot on this continuum
- Concrete/literal construction tends to lead to more solid, and therefore less flexible images
- Abstract/metaphorical construction tends to lead to more fluid, and therefore less solid images

NOTE: These two sets of continuums provide a better tool to understand spiritual dialogue than the worn and trite conservative-liberal divide, by helping us understand the deeper motivations for our religious views.

Obsessio

An obsessio is the horn of human angst
which gores us and leaves us
wounded and bleeding.



W. Paul Jones describes the obsessio as:

*“...whatever functions deeply and pervasively
in one’s life as a defining quandary, a conundrum,
a boggling of the mind, a hemorrhaging of the soul,
a wound that bewilders healing, a mystification that renders one’s life cryptic.
Whatever inadequate words one might choose to describe it,
an obsessio is that which so gets its teeth into a person
that it establishes one’s life as plot.”*

Epiphania

An epiphania is the
healing balm which mends
the gored soul.



W. Paul Jones describes the epiphania as:
*“...that which keeps the function of obsessio
fluid, hopeful, searching, restless, energized, intriguing,
as a question worth pursuing for a lifetime.
it keeps one’s obsessio from becoming
a fatal conclusion that signals futility.”*