Did you know that what killed off the ancient Greeks-&-Romans was bathing? Read the last ¶ of this 1903 newspaper item (clipped, then, by my father). Then read the whole article. And think how many 3rd thoughts it's taken to get, on skin-knowledge, from then to now. Then was a century ago (minus 1 yr.): a century from now, will our conventional wisdom (2002) seem as shockingly ignorant as the 1903 c.w. seems to us? 1st thoughts: we walk around in the world. 2nd: we explore the world. 3rd: we walk to the end of the world & off into the darkness, where--behold!--new light reaches us.

The sad scarsity of third thoughts

1 In philosophy 101 (1936), Dr.Rosenberg (no, a Christian) put on the chalkboard nine dots (as here, above) & asked us so to connect them with four lines that (1) no dot would remain untouched & (2) the four lines could be traversed without (a) any reversal & (b) lifting the chalk. Assuming that the lines must be confined to the box, we soon discovered that the project was impossible. So much for 1st thoughts, thoughts inside the box. Then we tried by including 1 or 2 loci outside the box: again, impossible. So much for 2nd thoughts. But we were elated when somebody thought the 3rd thought, coming at the square from 3 exterior loci (as here, below). (Thus, this Thinksheet's title.)

On p74 of the No.1/02 PRINCETON SEMINARY BULLETIN, I was pleased to find the old 9-dot problem in a tribute to Prof.Jas.Loder, with whom I had a conversation on campus concerning a student who needed his outside-the-box thinking if she were to be admitted. The problem gets used in his "third movement of the logic of the Spirit" in Loder's THE TRANSFORMING MOMENT (Colorado Springs: Helmers & Howard, 1989, 35-7). In PSB it's described as "a demonstration of the power of the human mind to reconstitute the relationship of figure to ground, and thus solve problems." An intellectual hero of Loder's was Kierkegaard, who referred to this kind of outside-the-box thinking as "the positive absurb"--analogia spiritus. Paul Lehman saw this thought-mode as essential to perceiving "the God-man structure of reality." (The figure/ground rendition of this mental reality is from gestalt psychology/psychotherapy, which I experienced with Fritz Perls.)

2 Now here are the article & the diagrams:

UIRER: THURSDAY, DECEMBER 10, 1903

PROFESSOR ATTACKS PRACTICE OF BATHING

CHICAGO, Dec. 10.—"When people leave off bathing there will be little or nothing for the doctors to do. Pneumonia, colds and a *hundred other ills result from the foolish habit of washing the* body."

"To bathe is to be dirty, for you thereby make a sewer of the skin. Blood, attracted by the skin, gives up products that should be left to seek a natural outlet, and soils the skin."

The foregoing declarations, made by Prof. John Dill Robertson last night at the annual meeting of the Chicago Eclectic and Surgical Society, aroused the interest of the members.

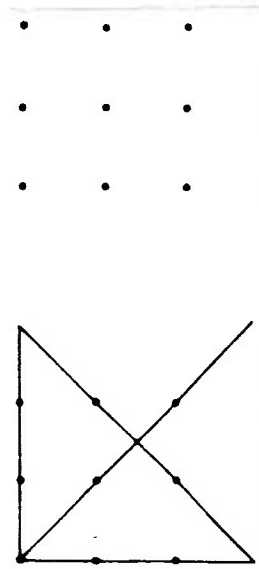
"Do you practice what you preach?" enquired one of the hearers.

"I have not taken a bath for two years," replied the doctor. "I keep clean by changing all my clothing once a day."

Prof. Robertson not only advised that bathing be stopped, but he asserted that the theory that the closing of the pores of the skin would result in death is false. He said:

"Where does the city get its brain and brawn?. From the country, where the farmer boy does not take a bath during the entire winter, and would not in summer were it not that he enjoys swimming. A nation becomes weak and retrogrades in consequence of bathing.

"Where are the glories of ancient Greece and Rome, whose public baths were the wonder of the world?"



3 Third thoughts often emerge from stepping away from the scene of 1st & 2nd thoughts in or to **observe** what is happening to (1) language? Has it moved off into unproductive abstractions, or bogged down into equally unproductive concretions? (2) people? Are they still in the picture, or are they only, alone, in the

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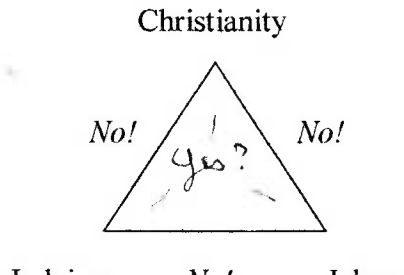

picture? (3) society? Is it stabilized, moving left (loose, permissivist), moving right (tight, moralistic/legalistic)? (4) the arts? Nostalgic, mediating, innovative, futuristic? (5) philosophy & religion? Traditionalist/modernist? idealist/realist? analytic-critical/synthetic-appreciative? (6) transcendence? Im/personal (which?), gaining/losing private &/or public attention?

4 The article's Chicago professor (U. of C., quite possibly) was thinking outside the lines: a century ago, almost all Chicagoans were bathing at least occasionally (spring & fall?). The 9-dot cube/square problem *required* thinking outside. But this triangle, if the world is to make progress in religion-peace, requires *inside* thinking. Consider:

5 The model is the medieval shield of the Trinity. The three negs ("**is not**" in the center of each line) attack modalism, the heresy that Father/Son/Spirit are not "persons" but only modes of the One God (usually relating each to an historical epoch: pre-incarnate, the Father; incarnate, the Son; post-incarnate [the epoch/stage/period of the Church], the Holy Spirit). Also usually, the persons of the Trinity are named at the points: top, "Father"; left, "Son"; right, "Spirit" or "Holy Spirit." (Sometimes three symbols instead of the three names.)

In the center? "GOD," with lines to the points & "**is**" on each line--forming three reversible assertions: The Father is God / God is the Father; the Son is God / God is the Son; the Spirit is God / God is the Spirit.

Now lets segue to the "Abrahamic [or "Western"] religions" triangle (above):

6 Again the contrast is between on (or around) & in. The Trinity triangle has 12 reversible assertions--the six internals (stated in §5) & these externals (implied in §5): the Father is not the Son / the Son is not the Father; the Son is not the Spirit / the Spirit is not the Son; the Spirit is not the Father / the Father is not the Spirit.

Here, the six external assertions are these: Judaism is not Christianity / Christianity is not Judaism; Islam is not Christianity / Christianity is not Islam; Judaism is not Islam / Islam is not Judaism. But instead of repeating the Trinity triangle's "is not," I've put an emphatic "**No!**" on each line. The historical & present reality is that we have three distinctly identified negatively (as well as positively) religions which are also three competing oppositions which have been both positively-creatively & negatively-destructively productive: the sibling movements in the family of Abraham make the household noisy, & nobody can leave home.

7 The Qur'an teaches there are three **revelations**: the Torah to Moses, the Gospel to Jesus, the Qur'an to Muhammad. Why, then, are they not bound together (as the Mormon Bible has OT/NT/Book of Mormon, the process seen as cumulative)? Why? Because the Qur'an is seen as supercessionist: Muslims with Qur'an in hand have no need for the Bible (from whose stories, OT & NT, the Qur'an differs frequently in details & sometimes in essence [e.g., Jesus is not the Son of God, is not crucified/resurrected]). Indeed, the very presence of a Bible is, in official Islam, considered a pollution--the extreme being Taliban execution of Muslims in whose home a Bible was found.

Christianity is a deviation from Judaism, Islam is so from Christianity. But since (Islam teaches) all of the prophets, including Moses & Jesus, were Muslims, actual Jews & Christians are deviants from God's truth & are tolerated, when minorities, only as less than first-class citizens (e.g., must pay extra taxes, must not witness to Muslims [who, if they convert out of Islam, are subject to death]).

8 God grant us in Abraham's household the third thoughts we need to discover what best to put in the triangle's center--what **yes!** to counterbalance the **no! no! no!** on the outside. What can induce the three religions to say yes to one another? Any common values/visions? Common penitence for the suffering our past & present conflicts are inflicting on humanity? A common hope of, & effort toward, an Abrahamic Declaration of Human Rights? A fresh approach to the other religions?