

When a culture begins to break both down and up, back-to-"nature" enthusiasts attack the reflective mode of existence in the name of spontaneity. Yesterday (with the death of the French monarchy) it was Rousseau against the Encyclopedists; today it is the Dionysiac wing of the human-potential movement against Judaism, Christianity, and all other life-styles dependent on a specific yesterday/today interaction. Programming one's inner life with ancient scriptures enslaves one to the past (as indeed it can, in scribism), desensitizing one to the present, including one's own body and the body social-political. Subtly the Zeitgeist teaches to hate the Bible as an ANTI-liberation document (most recently, as anti-woman). Structure and process are felt as enemies ("permissive" and "unstructured" being plus words), and authority shrivels down to respectful response to present experience. Self-discipline is suspect, for will not most people who discipline themselves discipline themselves to the (past) cultural values, which as nonspontaneous are evil? Justice is reduced to egalitarianism, love to humanism, leadership to group skills (especially the skill of guiding a group in processing its emergents), community to participation, salvation to socialization, and eternal life to the ecstasy of Communion in the Now. Of course not everybody in America today is infected with this factor dysagogic to taking the Bible seriously, but most who are in programs of New York Theological Seminary and other seminaries are infected to a significant degree. Over against those who reject scripture (in theory and/or practice), and against those who convert scripture into legal codex (moralism and legalism), NYTS stands for the Christian's developing an historical consciousness informed by the biblical way of seeing and living in the world, in interface with a prophetic-contemporary consciousness. We call this binocular vision/action "the Word/world interface" and "doing theology." The model or grid or, since it's to look through, window below is one aid to this CHRISTIAN CONSCIOUSNESS. Try using it from both ends--i.e., as a Bible-study device (facing some personal or public problem) and as an issue-confronting device (bringing a particular scripture to illumine a particular personal or public situation)....(The phrase "action/reflection" is basis for the vertical wording on the window, but note that the process is double action and double reflection. In the dominant present cultural mood, action is "in" and reflection, in line with our long antiintellectual tradition, "out"--so this hermeneutic is both cultural and countercultural, and as such both for and against both the traditional academic establishment and the present "alternatives" actionism.)

A WHAT HAPPENED (as visible from historical criticism, internal--the text itself--and external--the life-context of the passage, psycho-socio-eco-political)?

B HOW WAS WHAT HAPPENED UNDERSTOOD AND RESPONDED TO? The second part of this question throws us back into "A," which may throw us back into "B," depending on the simplicity/complexity of the action/reflection visible in and through the passage.

C WHAT IS HAPPENING (in our worlds, now; in the situation we are prayerfully seeking to illumine with scripture)? (Situation definition.)

D HOW SHOULD I/WE, AS CHRISTIAN(S), IN THE LIGHT OF "A" AND "B" AND SUBSEQUENT HISTORY, UNDERSTAND AND RESPOND TO WHAT IS/IS NOT HAPPENING? The latter two questions should include "is not": what, in the light of the gospel, is being left out, and how should it be introduced? Self-reflection should be included: what is/is not happening to me/us in this situation? who am I / should I be here and now?

	THEN	NOW
ACTION	A	C
REFLECTION	B	D