

Thinking about Believing: Approaching the Christian Faith Today

David Suryk for the *Illini Christian Faculty and Staff*, 12 September 2002

Most Christian groups on campus have just completed new student outreach or will do so soon. Then comes the fun part of helping them get involved in the life of their respective fellowships. As we begin this new school year, we've met lots of people as well as people from a wide variety of backgrounds. The Graduate InterVarsity Christian Fellowship made over 100 new contacts including lots of International students and visiting scholars. At our first two meetings we've had almost 100 attend each time and most of these are Christians. But many of the new contacts are not yet Christians and come from various religious backgrounds including atheism.

As you think about your departments, colleagues and friends, you realize of course that many of them are not committed Christian believers. You might be tempted to think that they will never come to faith in Christ. While it's true that some won't, we must not believe that none will.

What I want to do in these next few minutes is to help us think a bit about believing, or about approaching the Christian faith today. That is, how to think about how one comes to belief in Christ. I have two goals in mind in this talk. The first is to stimulate our thinking on how we might approach our colleagues and friends who are skeptical concerning the Christian faith. The second goal is to encourage us to go deeper in our thinking about the Christian faith itself. These goals hopefully will have the practical effects of helping us to better appreciate Christ and his kingdom and so to give us some intellectual courage as we think about our academic disciplines as well as we help our non-Christian colleagues and friends come to faith in Christ.

I've come to realize over the years that people don't just need some new piece of information about Jesus Christ or some more effective or more relevant "plan of salvation". Often, rather, the barrier to faith for them is something that comes prior to that. What they need help in is in thinking about **how to believe something that is a radically new claim about reality**. The good news of the kingdom of God is a radically new claim about reality. It's not new in the sense that most people in our culture haven't heard about Jesus and the Christian church. But it really is new in that **it's a new way of viewing reality that we're talking about**--and most people haven't grasped that fact. It is about the True Light that came into the darkness of the world and which now illuminates reality in new ways.

Jesus spoke about new wine and new wineskins. What Jesus says about new wine and new wineskins is absolutely crucial for us today, for it addresses how we should think about believing, how we should approach Christian faith today. If Jesus is the new wine, then what are the new wineskins? Indeed, what are the old wineskins?! I think Jesus and the New Testament writers are challenging people to think outside the box, outside the narrow confines of their traditional ways of thinking. So what is the

new wineskin? I think the new wineskin is ***allowing Jesus to define the terms and rules of the game (so to speak), allowing him to establish the perspective from which to view reality, allowing him to set the agenda for how to live our lives.*** In Jesus's day this meant initially how to be a genuine Israelite and think about God's purposes in the world. But His vision was always--and continues to be--aimed more broadly towards how to be truly human, how to live as God's renewed humanity in a world which, though at present is in "bondage to decay", will one day be totally renewed and "brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God" to use Paul's words in Romans 8.

As Jesus revealed himself, he both did and did not fit the expectations of the people who heard him speak and saw him do miracles or what John called "miraculous signs". Yes, Jesus performed miracles. "Ah, he's a prophet like Moses or Elijah," they thought, "Okay. We've got him figured out." But wait! Jesus spoke as though he were equal to the Father! "Oi! He's a blasphemer! He's demon-possessed." You see, it's all about categories. Your categories of thought will almost invariably determine your conclusion as to who Jesus is or what to make of him. You might work through the gospel of John in particular for how this works itself out. But let me look at a few instances that are illustrative for us.

You'll remember Philip and Nathanael in the first chapter of John:

Philip found Nathanael and told him, "We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote--Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph."
"Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?" Nathanael asked. (NIV, here and throughout)

Very simply and playfully, John introduces us to the idea that **Jesus will challenge our traditional ways of viewing who he is and what he came to do.** He is new wine and to understand him you need new wineskins.

Think too of Nicodemus in John 3:

Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a member of the Jewish ruling council. He came to Jesus at night and said, "Rabbi, we know you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the miraculous signs you are doing if God were not with him." (1-2)

This "we know you are a teacher who has come from God" is category language. The miraculous signs are an indicator that God is with him. But Jesus goes on to attempt to shatter the narrow box Nicodemus and other Pharisees have placed him in. Notice verses 3-15:

In reply Jesus declared, "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again."

"How can a man be born when he is old?" Nicodemus asked. "Surely he cannot enter a

second time into his mother's womb to be born!"

Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. You should not be surprised at my saying, 'You must be born again.' The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit."

"How can this be?" Nicodemus asked.

"You are Israel's teacher," said Jesus, "and do you not understand these things? I tell you the truth, we speak of what we know, and we testify to what we have seen, but still you people do not accept our testimony. I have spoken to you of earthly things and you do not believe; how then will you believe if I speak of heavenly things? No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven--the Son of Man. Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life."

Do you see what Jesus is doing with Nicodemus? He has not understood the ancient prophecies concerning what God would do in the New Age to come. And so Nicodemus and Israel herself are in danger of not seeing what's right before their eyes-- that is, that the New Age was already arriving in Jesus Christ! To Nicodemus's "We know" language, Jesus replies with "we speak of what we know".

Jesus is the radically new thing in the world. He is God's Word who broke into the world he created and who came in human flesh. Traditional categories are earthly categories--even when God is said to be involved. But Jesus is the one who comes down from heaven. He is the Son of Man prophesied in Daniel 7. He is the water-sprinkler and the Spirit-giver of Ezekiel 36. He is the one who will turn our hearts of stone into hearts of flesh. He is the one who brings the life of heaven to all who repent and believe. Nicodemus is Israel's teacher; why doesn't he get it? It's all about categories.

Lastly, let's look at John chapter 6. Jesus has miraculously fed the crowd of 5000-plus and gone to other side of the lake. A large crowd, having filled their stomachs with food, now looks for him and find him on the other side. Jesus then accuses them of only going after earthly food, food that spoils, food that cannot give life. As the conversation with the crowd of disciples continues, the situation worsens. Let's pick up the story in verse 57:

Just as the living Father sent me and I live because of the Father, so the one who feeds on me will live because of me. This is the bread that came down from heaven. Your forefathers ate manna and died, but he who feeds on this bread will live forever." He said

this while teaching in the synagogue in Capernaum.

On hearing it, many of his disciples said, "This is a hard teaching. Who can accept it?"

Aware that his disciples were grumbling about this, Jesus said to them, "Does this offend you? What if you see the Son of Man ascend to where he was before! The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life.

Yet there are some of you who do not believe." For Jesus had known from the beginning which of them did not believe and who would betray him. He went on to say, "This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless the Father has enabled him."

From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him.

In some respects Jesus fit their ordinary categories or ways of thinking. And so some of them follow him. They are amazed at his feeding of 5000 people from a few fishes and loaves. But they later find it impossible to swallow the fact that he is the bread of life or that to feed on him and to drink his blood is life. That's too much.

Why did they turn back? The answer clearly is that Jesus no longer fit into their categories of understanding. He's deviated in ugly ways from what they want or expect of him. They could follow a revolutionary king who would gather an army and overthrow the Roman pagan rulers to establish the kingdom of God--especially one who seems to have special powers from God. But no, they couldn't follow a man who was talking nonsense or who doesn't want to carry out their nationalistic agenda. So they stopped following. Notice that these who turned back are all people whom John called 'disciples'! They followed, they listened, they learned, but ultimately they turned back no longer following. Jesus would later be killed on a cross as an enemy of Judaism and a rival to the Roman emperor.

But again, it's all about categories.

Let's leave John's Gospel and turn to the apostle Paul. Here is a man steeped in traditional categories of thought but who made an astounding turn around in his understanding of reality. Paul was deeply educated, intensely brilliant, full of religious fervor. He was by his own account, "of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for legalistic righteousness, faultless." (Phil 3.4-6) How in the world could this man go from being Saul the persecutor to Paul the apostle? Well, yes, the grace of God. It's always God at work in the salvation of his people. But it's also true that the Spirit of God had to change **how Paul thought about the world and God's activity in it**. In Romans 12.2 Paul urged his readers "Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then

you will be able to test and approve what God's will is--his good and perfect will." How we think is critical to how our lives are changed.

I just want to look at one illuminating aspect of Paul's thinking. Remember that Paul as Saul was intensely monotheistic. The thought of God having Jesus as his only begotten Son was anathema. Paul as Saul grew up daily saying the Shema. 'Shema' is Hebrew for 'hear' and comes from Deut. 6.4: "Hear, O Israel. The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the LORD with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength." What Paul does on several occasions is to speak of Jesus as the one Lord, along with God as Father! Take for example 1 Corinthians 8.6, in Paul's discussion of food sacrificed to idols. He wrote, "... for us there is but one God, the Father from whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live." Utterly amazing! What Paul does is take the Shema he's said daily since his youth and then puts Jesus squarely in the middle of it! Why would he do this? ***It's because his categories of thought were exploded on the road to Damascus.*** God in his grace, expanded Paul's ability, or maybe better, his willingness to think differently. Paul as Saul thought he had understood who God was. But it wasn't until he looked at Jesus that he came to understand who God really was. To get the picture of God right he had to see who God was in Jesus Christ. And again, back to John's gospel: Jesus told his disciples that to see him is to see the Father. That's radical. It's a new way of thinking about believing.

Thoughtful people at the University of Illinois today have a difficult time hearing the good news of Jesus often ***because they have categories of thought that preclude them from giving the Christian message a good hearing. They have old wineskins that preclude them from accepting the new wine of the Gospel.***

I want to suggest a few old wineskins, categories of thought, ways of thinking about believing the Christian faith that I see and share a few stories along the way. Hopefully we'll have some time for you to share the categories of thought you see on a daily basis that keep your colleagues and friends from believing.

There are different ways I could go from here in this talk. One is to survey the various worldviews that people hold and see how to respond to them as Christians. Another is to lump the worldviews into naturalisms in their varieties and into theisms in their varieties. Another way is to look at the larger thought constructs known as Modernism and Postmodernism. With these last distinctions, some Christians might find themselves sympathetic to Postmodernism and its helpful critique of Modernism. While other Christians find themselves appalled at Postmodernism with its relativism and seek to return or retrench to Modernism.

I've decided to go a bit more narrowly and, as far as the above options and distinctions go, I'll let

the chips fall where they may. I want to focus on **how** to think about believing, **how** to approach the Christian faith today.

Two popular ways of thinking about how to believe stem from a feature of Western thought that is known as **the privatization of religious faith**. You'll remember that the idea here is that one's religious faith is a personal commitment that is confined to the private sphere of the person's life, to his or her so-called "spiritual" side of life. Think here maybe, of Oprah. But she's not alone. Much of America and including the University of Illinois, think in terms of privatized faiths. You see this in a faculty member who says it's okay if you're a Christian, but don't let you're Christian faith enter the public sphere. To do so is to push your personal beliefs, values, opinions onto others. This means too that your religious faith is not to have a bearing on your academic discipline. Oh, your faith might motivate you to do research, but it must never be allowed to **inform your research** or--shudder the thought--**constrain your research**, we are told. According to privatization, religious faiths are like hobbies: they might be fine activities but should not rule your life.

Oddly enough the privatization of Christian faith has another negative effect. I remember explaining the Vision of Graduate InterVarsity to a group of graduate students in Daniel Hall. I mentioned that we have four ministry commitments, one of which was the interaction of faith, learning, and practice. After the brief talk a Chinese graduate student approached me. She was not a Christian and wanted to ask me about something I had said. She asked me to "say more about this faith integration." I explained that the lordship of Jesus Christ had to come to bear on all activities of our lives including our academics... that the truth of Christ must inform how we think about and live in our academic and professional disciplines. Her response to me is memorable. She said, "Oh, I didn't realize how relevant the Christian message was." How relevant! Imagine all the academics who have dismissed the relevancy of Christ because they had never seen the implications of belief in Christ for what mattered most to them in academia!

Two categories of thought or old wineskins flow from the privatization of faith. One is religious, the other not. The first is **religious pluralism**. If faith is seen as inherently a private matter, something that is merely a personal belief although shared with others in a community of faith, then faiths with competing truth claims are all seen to be "true"--but true only with a small "t". There are many on campus whose category of thought is that all religions are basically the same, or boil down to the same thing, or aimed at the same God whoever he, she, it or they are, and are said to be equally true in some sense of "true."

Keith Yandell is a Christian philosopher teaching at UW-Madison. He once told me of a memorial service he attended of a Madison faculty member. He said that the tradition at Madison is that if a faculty member has no religious faith then they hold the service in the Unitarian Church near campus. What

struck Keith as he sat in the church is that it was filled with colleagues of their deceased friend as well as those who came out of departmental duty was that he noticed faculty members he knew to be Christian, Jewish, Muslim, and atheists. The service--in typical Unitarian style--continued with a variety of music from different religious traditions. Poems were read from Emerson and Wordsworth. Passages were read from the Old Testament, the New Testament, the Koran, and the Baghivad Gita. Keith said he kept looking at his non-Christian friends and wondered what was going on their minds. As a Christian he thought the whole service was a sham. As a Christian he didn't appreciate the Koran and Vedic scriptures being read as though Christianity and the other religions were all basically the same. He said he knew the Muslim faculty member thought the same thing from his Islamic faith.

The new wineskin here is **helping religious pluralists see that what they are doing is imposing a Western category of religious pluralism imperialistically upon each and every faith community**. To tell committed Jews or Muslims or Christians that their faiths are all really the same in the end is not merely offensive, but both imperialistic and intellectually defective. Keith Yandell remembers from that memorial service how strongly he thought that planners of the service didn't take *any* of the faiths seriously. Often religious pluralists aren't aware that they view reality through these Western lenses. Such revelation to them might open a way for investing the truth claims of Christ.

For almost 50 years, Bishop Lesslie Newbigin was a British Christian missionary to India. He has done much to help us Christians in the West think through our own Western culture and how we view reality. In his book, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* he wrote the following:

When I was a young missionary I used to spend one evening each week in the monastery of the Ramakrishna Mission in the town where I lived, sitting on the floor with the monks and studying with them the Upanishads and the Gospels. In the great hall of the monastery, as in all the premises of the Ramakrishna Mission, there is a gallery of portraits of the great religious teachers of humankind. Among them, of course, is a portrait of Jesus. Each year on Christmas Day worship was offered before this picture.

Jesus was honored, worshipped, as one of the many manifestations of deity in the course of human history. To me, as a foreign missionary, it was obvious that this was not a step toward the conversion of India. It was the co-option of Jesus into the Hindu worldview.

Jesus had become just one figure in the endless cycle of *karma* and *samsara*, the wheel of being in which we are all caught up. He had been domesticated into the Hindu worldview. ***That view remained unchallenged.*** (3, emphasis mine)

What Dr. Newbigin found was that he needed to **challenge the way they thought about believing**. He needed to challenge not just their religious beliefs but also how they approached believing itself.

Some faculty members who call themselves Christians have done what Dr. Newbiggin said he once realized he had done. In his own words:

It was only slowly, through many experiences, that I began to see that something of this domestication had taken place in my own Christianity, that I too had been more ready to seek a "reasonable Christianity," a Christianity that could be defended on the terms of my whole intellectual formation as a twentieth-century Englishman, rather than something which placed my whole intellectual formation under a new and critical light. I, too, had been guilty of domesticating the gospel. (3)

Dr. Tom Wright wrote the following on idolatry that helps us understand why this domestication of Christian faith takes place:

All idols started out life as the god somebody wanted. At the more sophisticated level, the god I want will be a god who lives up to my intellectual expectations: a god of whom I can approve rationally, judiciously, after due consideration and weighing up of theological probabilities. I want this god because he, or it, will underwrite my intellectual arrogance. He will boost my sense of being a refined modern thinker. The net result is that *I* become God; and this god I've made becomes my puppet. Nobody falls down on their face before the god they wanted. Nobody trembles at the word of a home-made god. (***For All God's Worth***, [Eerdmans, 1997, 23-24])

If we are to help the religious pluralist think outside the confines off their intellectual box, then we Christians must not hold our own version of a domesticated god. Here I plug the many writings of N.T. (Tom) Wright. You'd benefit in particular from his ***The Challenge of Jesus*** (IVP, 1999) and ***What Saint Paul Really Said*** (Eerdmans, 1987). He will deepen your understanding of Jesus and you'll end up with a higher view of Jesus.

Another way to go out of the privatization of faith is to say that religious beliefs are false. This is the **naturalistic frame of reference**. If religious pluralism asserts that all religious faiths are all equally true, the Naturalist asserts that all religious faiths are equally false--and false with a capital 'F'.

For many if not most here at the U of I, the naturalistic frame of reference is the default category of thought. And, according to them, it is up to the Christian to prove to the Naturalist that the Christian faith is true. The burden of proof is on the Christian to prove the existence of God. And what's more, she must do so in some way that's acceptable to the Naturalist. For the Naturalist, the Christian can believe any crackpot theory she wants. But if she wants to convince the Naturalist that her "private faith" is true with a capital 'T', then the burden of proof is on her to do so and the case must be exceedingly strong to overcome the default position of unbelief.

What's the new way of thinking of believing here? One new way of thinking has to do with burdens of proof. I'll quote from Stephen Evans's fine book, *Why Believe? Reason and Mystery as Pointers to God* (Eerdmans, 1996), pp. 21-22 and I think you'll get the idea. Steve Evans is a fine Christian philosopher and wrote the following:

People who think [that religious belief is presumed to be guilty until proven innocent] imagine the religious situation to be something like the following: Suppose you are having an argument with someone over how many species of animals there are. Both of you agree that there are many species of cats, dogs, cows and so on. You, however, believe in one species of monsters residing in the Loch Ness. Your opponent claims that the burden of proof is on you if you want to believe in such monsters. Without strong positive evidence you would do better to refrain from believing in the Loch Ness monster.

Perhaps in this situation the burden of proof would be on you to come up with evidence for your belief. Perhaps if that evidence is less than conclusive it would be wiser to suspend or withhold judgment. After all, we don't usually believe in monsters if we have no evidence of their reality. But belief in God is not at all comparable to belief in such a monster.

One important difference is that the Loch Ness monster is merely "one more thing." The two people who disagree about the monster agree about all the other animals. God, however, is not merely "one more thing." The person who believes in God and the person who does not believe in God do not merely disagree about God. ***They disagree about the very character of the universe*** [emphasis his]. The believer is convinced that each and every thing exists because of God and God's creative activity. The unbeliever is convinced that natural objects exist "on their own," without any ultimate reason or purpose for being. In this situation there are no neutral "safe" facts all parties are agreed on, with one party believing some additional "risky facts." Rather, each side puts forward a certain set of facts and denies its opponents' alleged facts. There is risk on both sides.

A second important difference between the case of God and the case of the Loch Ness monster is that... religious beliefs imply something fundamental about how life should be lived. Insofar as religious beliefs embody themselves in actions, suspending judgment is not possible. Even if it were possible to suspend judgment intellectually, it would by no means enable a person to avoid risk. ***It is clear that the faith of the religious believer and the faith of the atheist are equally risky.*** It is hard to see why any special burden of proof falls on the religious believer. [Bold emphasis mine]

This discussion is in the context of burdens of proof in arguments, and it rests on the idea that

believing in God is a different kind of thing than is believing in the existence of other kinds of things. And this is a switch in how we think about believing. It is, again, about our categories of thought. The practical implication is of course that when we talk to our non-Christian colleagues and friends, we need to help them think about believing, about how to approach the faith--even faith in naturalism. And when we do our academic research--as far as is appropriate to the nature and content of our research--we need to bring a different perspective to the table, a different way of thinking about our academic areas of research.

Some more stories. One is the story of the Society of Christian Philosophers. Some of you might already know this story. By the late 1970s, the philosophy of religion was pretty much considered a dead-end field. Then a group of Christian philosophers including Alvin Plantinga and Nicholas Wolterstorff then from Calvin College, William Alston and a few other brave souls, decided to form the Society of Christian Philosophers. They mailed out letters to every member of the American Philosophical Association announcing what they wanted to do. They received about 80 responses. Over the next decade they worked hard to challenge the traditional ways of thinking about philosophy and about the Christian faith. Many are doing philosophy from the point of view of the Christian faith. And the Society of Christian Philosophers is now the largest subdivision in the APA. What's more, many philosophy professors have become Christians as the result of seeing reality in ways newly opened to them.

I met an Illinois Wesleyan student, a religion major, who didn't believe any of the religions was true but he was interested in religions generally as a legitimate field of study. We began meeting and I found myself helping him to think about believing. He said he wasn't taught any of how we critique belief systems and was very happy to meet with me. He and I continued to meet and he eventually became a committed Christian. He is now working on his PhD in philosophy at Ohio State University and continues in his faith and trying to work in his field from the Christian faith. [Update 2006: He finished his PhD and currently teaches at Calvin College.]

This past year I've had the pleasure of meeting with non-Christians--Internationals and Americans. I met last year with a group of Chinese scholars and graduate students having a meal together and then going through a variety of passages from the Bible as part of our dinner-discussions. One evening last semester we read John 11--the story of Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead and saying he is the resurrection and the life. After we finished reading the passage aloud, a Chinese woman said politely but confidently, "I don't believe Jesus really brought Lazarus back from the dead. But it's a nice story anyway." Then Dr. Weiping (his first name), a Chinese professor of philosophy, pointed and said, "I agree with her". That started a very helpful discussion.

I asked them why they didn't believe the Lazarus story. They said because people don't come back from the dead. I asked them how they knew that and they said because they believed that God did not

exist. Again, it's about categories. I suggested that if they believed that God did not exist then of course they could not believe that God raised Lazarus back to life. But then I discussed with them the idea that maybe **Jesus was challenging their categories of thought**. They had old wineskins--naturalistically constructed wineskins--that kept them from accepting the new wine who is Christ our Lord.

They were both wearing glasses so I had a ready object lesson before me! I asked them if they had been raised being told since they were young that God did not exist. They said, "Why sure." I then pointed to their glasses and said that they were wearing "atheistic" glasses and that that's why they couldn't see evidence for God's activity in the world. I then suggested that what Jesus and our Bible studies were trying to do was to suggest that they were wearing glasses with lenses with wrong prescriptions. Jesus was **challenging the way they view reality, the way they thought about believing**. They both said they hadn't thought of that before and it seemed to open up a new way of approaching the Christian faith, a new way of thinking about believing. As yet, neither one is a Christian and both have returned to China. But the seeds have been well-planted and -water. We continue to pray for fruit.

A year and a half ago I spoke to a group of Internationals on the Gospel and what it means to believe. Several of the Chinese scholars wanted to talk with me further and so we met again. Victor, a philosophy visiting scholar, told me that each worldview had its own norms of rationality, its own notions of what counts as truth and that it was just **impossible** for a person with one worldview to view things from a different worldview and impossible to change worldviews that I was suggesting. I said his statement was **empirically false!** He laughed and asked why I thought so. I said every day people become Christians out of the various religions and worldviews including atheism! He laughed again and said I was right and that he knew a few of them. I also said that the fact that he and I were exchanging complicated ideas in English spoke to the fact that we can partially understand one another's frame of reference. He agreed. He too is back in China and we hope to see fruit some day.

Let me tell you about Anthony, an American masters student of piano performance who just graduated this past May. We met all last semester investigating the Christian faith. He too was an atheist who found the Bible impossible to believe. He had a minor in philosophy and so we talked about his categories of understanding. Together we read ***Mere Christianity, The Case for Faith, and The Case for Jesus*** and looked at lots of Bible passages. At every turn I asked him to try to set aside his preconceptions and try to see what's going on from the perspective of the Gospel. Remember Philip and Nathanael I mentioned at the beginning. To Nathanael's, "Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?" Philip replied, "Come and see." I bid Anthony to come and see who Jesus is. I was thrilled later this summer to hear from him that he had come to faith in Christ! Anthony's perspective has changed by the grace of God and by people willing to help him see reality from a different perspective. [Update 2006: Anthony is teaching piano, with his wife, in Ohio and both are committed Christians.]

One crucial way to help others learn how to believe is to help them into the Scriptures, into the biblical view of reality, into the life of Christ so that they too might come and see the good news of the Gospel. We then let the Scriptures and power of the Gospel do its work.

C.S. Lewis once wrote: "I believe in Christianity as I believe that the Sun has risen, not only because I see it, but because by it I see everything else." (in "Is Theology Poetry?") I think Jesus is calling us to help university folk think about how to believe this new reality that is Jesus Christ. And we must continue to pray that God would change their thinking. It's not just a matter of thinking differently, but in repenting and believing the Good News. People are in darkness and sin, and in need of the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. So let us be what just we are--salt and light. Amen.

Some helpful resources [Updated: 2006]

- William Abraham, *The Logic of Evangelism* (Eerdmans, 1989)
 _____, *Crossing the Divine Threshold* (Eerdmans, 2006)
- Clifford Christians, "Worldview Pluralism", *Christians & Scholarship*, Volume 1, Number 2, 1998
- William Dyrness, *How Does America Hear the Gospel?* (Eerdmans, 1989)
- Douglas Jacobsen and Rodney J. Sawatsky, *Gracious Christianity: Living the Love We Profess* (Baker Academic, 2006)
- George Marsden, *The Outrageous Idea of Christian Scholarship* (Oxford, 1997)
- Basil Mitchell, *The Justification of Religious Belief* (Oxford, 1973)
- Richard J Mouw, *When the Kings Come Marching In: Isaiah and New Jerusalem*, rev 2nd ed. (Eerdmans, 2002)
 _____, *Uncommon Decency: Christian Civility in an Uncivil World* (IVP, 1992)
- Lesslie Newbigin, *The Light Has Come: An Exposition of the Fourth Gospel* (Eerdmans, 1982)
 _____, *Foolishness to the Greeks* (Eerdmans, 1986)
 _____, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Culture* (Eerdmans, 1989)
 _____, *Truth to Tell* (Eerdmans, 1991 out of print)
 _____, *The Open Secret*, 2nd ed. (Eerdmans, 1995)
- Vinoth Ramachandra, *Faiths in Conflict? Christian Integrity in a Multicultural World* (IVP, 2000)
 _____, *The Scandal of Jesus* (IVP, 2001)
- N.T. Wright, *The Challenge of Jesus* (IVP, 1999)
 _____, *What Saint Paul Really Said* (Eerdmans, 1997)
 _____, *Paul: In Fresh Perspective* (Fortress Press, 2006)
 _____, *Simply Christian: Why Christianity Makes Sense* (Harper San Francisco, 2006)