Pilate asked Jesus a very famous question, “What is truth?” Our Lord and heavenly Father, we’re grateful that You are all knowing and that You are faithful and true. We thank you that You have given us answers to Pilate’s question in Your creation and in Christ and Scripture. We thank you for the privilege of speaking up in behalf of the truth You have conveyed to a fallen and tragically needy world today. Teach us by Your Holy Spirit that we might be better defenders of our faith, and we pray that many may find Christ as Savior because of our dedication to this task. In Christ’s name. Amen.

Last time, we said that we are not sailors adrift without a compass on an uncharted sea of relativism. We can discover some fixed reference points by analyzing the common ground that gives significance to our distinctively human experience; from these factors shared by every human being, we derive criteria or standards of truth. First, internally we have common ground because all other people are human. Although none of the other apologists have developed this internal aspect, there are good reasons for agreeing with Carnell’s creative contribution in this existential area. First, as we analyze the significance of relating to others, we sense that all persons are obligated, respectfully to value themselves and other persons as themselves. We must respect the inalienable rights of all human beings to life and liberty if we are to have significant human life on earth.

Second, all mutually ought to treat one another fairly or justly? C. S. Lewis, my nefarious uncle—I wish he were related—developed this in his influential Case for Christianity. “In the most petty quarrels and the most major social issues, we rightly come to the defense of those who have been treated unjustly. Beyond respect and justice, we ought also to care about others’ well-being. Any proposed worldview must fit these obligations to respect the rights of each human being and to act according to the universal mutual responsibilities of relating to each other in justice and love.” Do the truth claims of naturalism, pantheism, or theism...
most coherently and viably account for the eternal fact that we ought to live unhypocritically in accord with moral law and moral values?

Second, our truth claims must also fit the data of the five sense reflecting physical things. In spite of Clark’s opposition to sense data as tests of truth conveying information about reality, we maintain this position and criterion for several reasons. We are more than victims of the countless physical influences upon our bodies. Any proposed worldview must fit these physical givens—the stage of external human experience. Which worldview best fits these external facts? Which accounts for the laws of nature most coherently? Is it mere naturalism? Is it pantheism or is it theism with an intelligent creation?

Third, we discover common ground in the basic laws of logic, making meaningful thought and communication possible in our relationships with one another. Our words must not convey contradictory notions or others will not know what has been said. On which worldview naturalism, pantheism, or theism can be best account for the permanent significance of truth in accord with the laws of logic?

We mentioned some brief reasons last time for maintaining these criteria in spite of skepticism about absolutes and an absolute relativism against any knowledge of universal and necessary principles. The opposition to nonnegotiable criteria is pervasive in East and West. Wherever you minister it may not be easy to get agreement on these universal and necessary guidelines, but unless both parties in a discussion have in mind that same thing by truth and play by the same rules, their words will pass like ships in the dark.

We need to defend the use of the law of noncontradiction even more fully because of the sustained challenges to it in recent philosophy and theology. There are a number of additional reasons why it must remain as a criterion of truth in spite of Van Til’s opposition to it. One, if contradict ourselves, we cannot communicate informatively. Two, all attempts to argue against the law of noncontradiction must assume it or the case could mean it’s opposite. So it is literally impossible to argue against the law of noncontradiction without presupposing its validity. When two statements affirm and deny the same thing at the same time and in the same respect, they wipe each other out. They render each other untenable. Contradictory propositions simply cannot
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both be true. One or the other must be false. So contradiction is the surest sign of error.

It is often alleged that the law of logic originated with Aristotle. He discovered it and he formulated it in a way that has been quoted for over 2,000 years, but people before Aristotle communicated and reasoned on the basis of it. It is inherent in the human mind by creation, and it is there because we were created in the image of a God who cannot deny Himself. God is not a man that He should lie. God’s judgments and words are faithful and true. Logic is a faithful use of the mind. God uses His mind faithfully. Whether John 1:1 may be translated logic instead of word as “The Word was with God and was God,” is debatable, but whatever the translation of that verse, the universal and necessary laws of logic originated with God not with Aristotle or any reductive empiricist.

From the perspective of Christian theology, consistency is not above God nor imposed on God. That central law of logic expresses the very nature of God, and God always speaks and acts in accord with His nature. He does not speak or act arbitrarily. God is not a man that He should lie (Numbers 23:19). He will not lie nor repent (1 Samuel 15:29). He never lies (Titus 1:2), and it is impossible that God should prove false (Hebrews 6:18).

We are often told that we cannot retain the criterion of logical noncontradiction and must accept a total relativism because physical scientists have been unable to resolve the conflict in their observations of light. Light appears at times as particles and at other times as waves. The problem here is that people are jumping to a hasty generalization because they themselves have not been able to resolve this apparent contradiction, it cannot be resolved. Unfortunately, their conclusion often confuses a subcontrary relation in logic with a contradictory relationship. There are four basic kinds of proposition. The universal affirmative—all students are Bronco fans, the E proposition, the universal negative—no students are Bronco fans, or the I proposition, particular affirmative—some students are Bronco fans, and the O, the particular negative—some students are not Bronco fans. So in terms of the vowels, A E I and O, you have those four possibilities.

In the case of the physical observations, neither of the universal statements has been proved by the scientists. It is not the case that all the phenomena of light are particle-like, nor is it the case that none of the phenomena of light are particle-like. Rather, what we have are two particular propositions, the I and the O
propositions. I, some of the phenomena of light are particle-like and O, some of the phenomena of light are not particle-like. These two are subcontraries. Now there is no logical problem if I say some Subarus are good cars and a few Subarus are lemons. That doesn’t require us to throw over all logic because that could be said of any make of car. The fact is that we have subcontrary relations in most of our statements. We would only run into contradiction if we said all Subarus are very good cars and then some are lemons. That would have an A proposition contradicting an O proposition in Aristotle’s square of opposition. Or if we said no Subarus are reliable and yet then said some are reliable methods of transportation, we would be contradicting ourselves.

The scientists in regard to light are not contradicting themselves because they are not dealing with either of the universal propositions, they are not affirming anything universally in the affirmative or the negative. The two subcontrary propositions, the I and the O propositions, are not even apparent contradictions or paradoxes. They are subcontraries, both of which may be true. A few years ago Dr. Alfred Lande, called Mr. Quantum Theory, lectured at Denver University. In his lectures and in his book, *New Foundations of Quantum Mechanics*, he affirmed the result of his years of research; “Electrons sometimes under certain circumstances behave in a wave like manner, but always remain particles.” Dr. Lande has resolved this paradox and alleged contradiction that has appeared in countless philosophy of religion books and theology texts to say that we ought to abandon the basic principle of noncontradiction in philosophy and theology. These other writers may not have worked their way through it, but it can be worked through and it has been resolved without contradiction. “Electrons are always particles. Sometimes under certain conditions they act in a wave-like manner.” There is no reason to overthrow all Aristotelian logic or of classical reasoning because of such a report from the students of physics. We keep the principle of noncontradiction then and it has not been overthrown in this case.

Dr. J. Oliver Buswell, Jr. wrote an interesting article on “The Place of Paradox in Christian Thought,” and pointed out that those who find themselves involved in paradox continually have set themselves up for it. They have defined God as totally different from humans, God’s mind as absolutely other than the human mind. They have overlooked that our minds are created in the image of God’s mind to think His thoughts after Him. And because often people have defined eternity and God in terms of the passive,
impersonal principle of Plato and Aristotle, the unmoved mover, without emotions and without personality, and then have tried to relate that impersonal entity to living, breathing, pulsating human beings, they have ended up with countless paradoxes or apparent contradictions that they cannot resolve. The answer to this is that you start with the God of the Bible who is far from passive and far from an impersonal principle. You start with the living God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the heavenly Father of Jesus Christ and the One to whom the Holy Spirit speaks and you relate that living God to His image bearers who have been created in knowledge after the image of their Maker (Colossians 3:10).

While God is far greater than we are and while His mind is infinitely greater than ours, God’s mind is not totally other or removed from our thinking as Kierkegaard said “by an infinite, qualitative distinction.” God’s qualities mentally are not totally other, infinitely other, in every respect from our way of thinking. Dr. Buswell concluded his article by saying, “We ought to treat paradoxes like the measles—quarantine them until you get over them—and do not glory in such logical nonsense.”

We continue to argue for the principle of noncontradiction then as essential to discovering truth in any area of life, including philosophy and theology. As McTaggart said, “No one ever broke the laws of logic, but what the laws of logic broke him.” Well, from these significant factors of common ground between Christians and non-Christians, we can conduct civil discussions. We can make progress in the direction of truth, and we develop our criteria on our universal and necessary principles by which to test any claim of any cultist or any devoted follower of any religion or philosophy. Any claim to be considered true in everyday experience in solving a murder mystery or in religion must be logically noncontradictory. It must empirically fit the facts of experience, both internal and external.

Carnell spoke of this test of truth in a two-fold way—systematic consistency. By consistency he meant logically noncontradictory. By systematic, he meant that truth would fit the facts both external and internal, or empirically or existentially. The same criteria can be more easily followed when stated in a three-fold way. A true proposition is characterized by one, logical noncontradiction, two, empirical adequacy or the fitting of the facts externally, and three, existential viability, fitting the facts internally. Having defended a Carnellian approach to testing truth claims in a pluralistic world, there remains some benefits to this approach in
the art of apologetics.

What are the advantages of Carnell's three-fold criterion as employed by Francis Schaeffer and others? The three criteria inter-relate to provide more needed checks and balances on the claims of philosophical, religious, and political fanatics like Jim Jones, David Koresh in Waco, Texas, and other Muslim, Jewish, Hindu, Buddhist, or Christian extremists. We need as many checks and balances as possible when it comes to claims from people like these charismatic leaders. And the other approaches to apologetics and testing truth claims have only a single approach or criterion or a double criterion. But Carnell’s approach has a three-fold criterion, a more severe or acid test.

Criteria including internal values are needed in this time of moral crisis. When the coming generation cannot tell right from wrong ethically, we need an approach that defends the Hebrew Christian morality. In a time when people do not even care, we need an approach that defends the Hebrew Christian values of love that are worth living and dying for. In a time when the coming generation cannot tell reality from unreality, we need a Carnellian approach to developing a sense of reality concerning what is real after all. And in a period when the coming generation seems to have been unprepared to distinguish truth from error, we need a full-orbed verificational approach to determine what is indeed true and not false. So we need these criteria of truth for metaphysics, for morality, and for epistemology.

Carnell’s three-fold appeal to the coherence of logic, fact, and values also speaks more directly to the contemporary cultural war over values and to the crisis of morals arising out of the effects of the enlightenment on the present century. Carnell’s incorporation of fact and logic was created in 1948 when published in his *Introduction to Christian Apologetics*. His discussion of values in his *philosophy of the Christian religion* is a unique contribution unparalleled in other writers. So is his appeal to moral principles in Christian commitment and his targeting of the psychological value of love in the kingdom of love and the pride of life. And with this, he would include mystical experience in the sense of person-to-person encounter or the conversion experience of those who have heard the Gospel.

Carnell’s three-fold criterion, furthermore, is applicable to the ethical values essential for life as a whole person in society, in a healthy family, and nation, and culture. We need also to defend
the absolute virtues of basic Judeo-Christian morality to show the need for the great spiritual Physician. Only when people realize they are sick will they seek His healing power. Then we can defend distinctively Christian claims concerning Jesus as the Messiah universally. But as Luther said, “We need to proclaim the law before we preach the Gospel.” Our Lord never said it would be easy to defend the faith in a fallen world. When you have to defend the use of these criteria, I suggest a development like the following: First, people are human. We are not mere bodies, prisoners of our physical programming. We are not heartless, headless, or desireless. We are not mere computers or machines. We are not mere objects tossed about by the raging, cultural sea. As active subjects, we act self-consciously or intentionally. We are agents capable of transcending our present purposes. We can stand outside of ourselves and evaluate our jobs, our goals, our achievement, and our attitudes. Having freely chosen among alternative ends, persons move toward the chosen goals and govern their own lives by the goals they seek, whether in sports, entertainment, medicine, politics, or religion.

We can control, rule, or govern ourselves by the grace of God. We can even transcend our basic patterns of thought by radically changing our minds. Insofar as we can repent and convert, we are souls or spirits. Our inner-spiritual identity continues through infancy, childhood, adolescence, maturity, old age, death, and divine judgment. Our personal uniqueness and accountability is not illusory, but real as we anticipate the consequences of our choices for time and eternity. But as great as is our potential, we are not God, nor are we gods, we are like God in our ability creatively to conduct our lives purposefully, morally, and faithfully. We transcend our knowledge of ourselves when we recognize that other people also exist and cultivate relationships of respect, consideration, trust, and love.

The dignity of life is a key issue for our generation to face and resolve. The coming generation of apologists will neglect the comprehensiveness of Carnell’s approach to their own detriment. Rather, the wise will build upon it and creatively apply it to the issues of their generation. Because the internal data are less familiar than the external, we develop them further here as Carnell did in some of his less familiar works. I sum up for you now his Philosophy of the Christian Religion, one of the outstanding treatments of the ability of Christianity to satisfy the highest human values.
He argues that “The hypothesis of Christianity’s truth fits the data of human inner experience or of values.” Granting we are created by God, fallen in sin, aware of God’s highest, but seeking to find fulfillment in the creature rather than the Creator, we can explain the following phenomena. And I’ll be mentioning some nine lesser values here which people serve. First, people prize pleasure as the highest value. They are hedonists who seek to find what is most enjoyable in life. As we seek happiness, we seldom find it. Happiness is usually a byproduct of some other more worthy goal. And even the commitment to happiness results in dissatisfaction, for those who pursue happiness with all that is within them end up bored, frustrated, full of guilt feelings, finally exhausted and in total despair. One cannot keep living for kicks and drunken highs or drug highs and go on to live a full seventy years of life, and many a rock star artist has died because of an overdose in seeking greater pleasure.

Others, in a second place, seek their highest satisfaction in material security. The Marxists were looking for this socially and eventually again in making material security our highest goal. We will find boredom with all of our finest artwork and our latest internal decorations in our homes. We will be frustrated and disappointed with the accumulation of goods and end up in the despair that a Michael Jackson and others may be experiencing at this time. You can only think of a Marilyn Monroe and of so many people who have had everything it seems the world could offer, but have not been satisfied, have not found fulfillment of the highest values in life.

Some go beyond pleasure and materialism to pour themselves into the scientific method as the highest good. The logical positivists and many involved in scientism rather than good science in a theistic world finally face the meaninglessness of qualitative values, having tried to reduce everything to the quantitative measurements of their physical instruments. They end of with an inability to know what science is good for. The scientists could create the atomic bomb, but they could not tell the President of the United States what to do with it—what was right, what was wrong; should it be dropped on Hiroshima or not? The possibility of destroying the race with atomic power is a frightening reality in the nuclear age.

In the fourth place, some go beyond science to give themselves to logic. As the supreme value, the sell all that they have to buy this pearl of great price, only to find that when the mind is fulfilled, the
other aspects of our nature as a whole person are not. And they find often that they are characterized by intellectual pride and then guilt feelings for neglect of spouse or children or neighbor. They are bored after so many years of commitment to syllogistic reasoning and repetition of the fallacies. The motivation of love is missing when sheer logic is our god and the exhaustion of mental power finally comes in older age; a vacuum is left because of a lack of personal I/thou relationships.

Others say a higher value yet is humanism, and they give themselves to this highest value with ultimate devotion, but an abstraction such as humanity is unsatisfying. It is simply not possible to love humanity in general, a universal, empty, abstract notion. Humanism as such does not provide sufficient motivation or power in adverse conditions to love our neighbors who may be very unlovely. So the stronger our sense of the humanist ideal, the stronger our sense of guilt for failing to live up to it. Humanism shows our need for a power beyond ourselves.

Others, in the next place, may devote themselves to a nonbiblical god as the highest source of fulfillment, but a merely transcendent god, so totally other that he is irrelevant to human nature, does not fulfill the life of one who is created for personal fellowship with God eternally. And a merely imminent god confuses humans with deity and provides no fellowship with a personal being who is eternal. A finite personal god may feel for us in our problems, but is unable to help us and has made no provision to remain just and to justify the ungodly by forgiving sin and removing guilt. So Brightman’s finite god and the pantheistic imminent gods and the deistic transcendent god who has left the world like a busy businessman on a trip are not fulfilling of the highest values in human existence.

There are those who seek, then, fulfillment in the supreme value of love in the sense of universalism. Agape love is not love to get pleasure or to get material things, it is self-giving love for the well-being of others, but an abstract concept of even self-giving love is unrealistic and lacks power. It denies the data of experience that people need an end to the day of grace. It would be pointless for me to make an assignment in this course if we did not set a deadline for it to be handed in, and it is futile for God to call upon us to love and to serve others justly if indeed there is not a deadline for human history and a time of final grading and evaluation. The abstract universalism denies that Jesus taught the reality of hell and denies that He in teaching this demonstrated self-giving love.
In forfeiting fellowship with Jesus Christ as the supreme example of agape love, the universalist forfeits fellowship with the Father. Read 2 John 9, “He who does not continue in the doctrine of Jesus Christ, does not have God.”

Shall we give ourselves in order to find fulfillment then in the next place to a religious institution, such as the Roman Catholic Church or the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints or any other church that claims to have a pope or president who can speak *ex cathedra* with infallibility? Admittedly, the Roman Catholic Church’s claims for antiquity, authority, power, and grander are appealing, but its teaching of salvation by works makes both love and righteousness unattainable. In magnifying the details of the law, it misses the weightier matters of the law—justice and love. The advocacy of self-justification leads to pride rather than repentance. Pelagianism, the view of salvation by works or self-effort, does not fit the facts of our assent to the law of love, or our inability to live up to its ideal, or our continuing sense of responsibility nevertheless. At some point individuals resting in the authority of their church must decide when their leader speaks *ex cathedra* and when he or she does not.

In fact, Carnell goes so far as to conclude that the claims to infallibility are pretentious and blasphemous. No finite, fallen human being, however well-developed spiritually, is ready to speak with infallible authority for God. Only those specially called, providentially prepared, and miraculously inspired prophets and apostles in biblical times had that ability.

Carnell concludes then in *The Philosophy of the Christian Religion* that the highest value in life is love for God and humans in reaction against the institutional church as the final authority. It is this view which needs to be emphasized, along with the importance of a biblically informed love for God and humanity.

Soren Kierkegaard had stressed love for God and humans. He impressed people with the importance of passionate commitment and that we could be worshipping idols in our humanism and our ordinary good living rather than the God of all. The tragedy is that Soren Kierkegaard neglected the importance of objective evidence as a key to reality and objective logical and moral principles to ethical and moral fulfillment. He neglected the objective, imputed righteousness that provides for peace and so was a very troubled person. Institutional organizations are unavoidable and under divine judgment, but they cannot be regarded the ultimate
instrument and end of all of our devotion to God.

In conclusion then, the highest values are fulfilled in a biblically informed love for God and humanity. Such Christian faith involves reflective commitment, not merely compassionate commitment. On sufficient evidences, a sinner trusts Christ and enjoys forgiveness. The believer has nothing of which to boast, but receives the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ. One loves God and all others because created in the image of God, so that Christianity provides the soundest humanism and the reason why we should love others. In addition to that, it provides the power to do that which none of the other philosophies and religions can supply. Christ gives an abundant life that robs us of nothing but our sin. The Christian enjoys wholesome pleasures throughout life. Our economic needs are met, so long as we work. Stewardship provides for those who cannot work. Scientific knowledge is possible because nature’s regularity is sustained by God, and it’s pursued with interest to discover His purpose. Logic is an instrument, not an end in itself utilized to the highest ability in loving God with all of our mind. In short, all things belong to you as a Christian, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or things present or things to come, all belong to you and you belong to Christ and Christ belongs to God. Whatever there is in the other options is yours in Christ.