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Faithful Translation and Postmodernism: Norms and Linguistic Relativity

within a Christian Ideological Surround

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Abstract

Christian communities of the future will necessarily confront the challenges of a postmodern linguistic relativity that reflects the increasingly diverse normative influences of globalization. Empirical procedures sensitive to the influences of ideology may be essential in Christian attempts to understand and to be understood more accurately within this complex postmodern context. Illustration of that possibility has occurred through use of empirical translation schemes associated with the Ideological Surround Model of the relationship between psychology and religion. Studies using this method have clarified the implications of Christian Self-Actualization, Christian Tolerance of Ambiguity, and Biblical Foundationalism. These data illustrate how psychological research could help the Church express biblically-based norms in a language that can be better understood both within and outside the Christian communities of postmodernity.

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Controversies and confusions within the increasingly interconnected world of globalization should make it clear why the Christian community will need psychological research to confront the challenges of its future. Defending that claim, however, is made difficult by the very confusions that create the need in the first place. "Postmodernism" is the term that signifies both the present confusions and the future challenges. Christian efforts to define and to evaluate postmodernism often lead to controversy, but that may be the whole point. Difficulty in defining, and especially in evaluating terms, might be a central empirical indicator of the postmodern situation. Precisely this difficulty is why the Christian community will need psychological research in its future.

As described by a recent Christian commentator, postmodernism reflects "distrust toward the modern concept of universal reason and related claims to know objective truth" (Smith, 2005, p. 53). Such distrust rests, in part, on what has been described as the "linguistic turn" in philosophy, which is the assertion that "language stands between us and the 'real world'" (p. 53). Here, the postmodern assertion is that any experience of so-called "reality" must already be influenced by words that orient an observer to experience and must always be understood by relating words about that experience to other words associated with other experiences. Since transcendent knowledge of language-in-itself is beyond human reach, all discourse is trapped in a relativity of "various discrete languages. And since we cannot know a supposedly objective world apart from language, we *make* our own worlds by how we use our language. So language and world are internally related" (Smith, 53-54, his emphasis). Within constantly expanding

communication and transportation technologies of globalization, ever increasing experiences of diversity in this language-world relationship are what will make the definition and especially the evaluation of terms so difficult.

Postmodern presumptions of linguistic relativity can be deeply troubling to Christians who are committed to the Word as Absolute. But, even for troubled Christians, postmodernism is as full of potentials as of perils. Defined most literally, postmodernism is that which comes after modernism (e.g., Downing, 2006), and modernism itself could be described as a kind of "linguistic turn" growing out of the Thirty Years War that ravaged Europe from 1618 to 1648. At that time, "The intellectual debate between Protestant Reformers and their Counter-Reformation opponents had collapsed, and there was no alternative to the sword and the torch" (Toulmin, 1990, p. 17). Circumstances demanded development of "a vocabulary whose sense did not depend on prior agreement about the nature of God and the structures of cosmos and society ordained by him" (Stout, 1988, p. 161). A "linguistic turn" toward a modernist "vocabulary" of reason and science sought to reduce the violence by eliminating the necessity of prior agreements about God. That vocabulary had at least some origins in a Descartes (1968/1637) who could use the clear and distinct ideas of his reason to prove the existence of God, but evolved slowly into a Freud (1961/1927) who could dismiss all religion as an illusion for reasons that should be clear and distinct for everyone.

In short, modernism originated in Christian faith, but was gradually transformed into an anti-religious secularism. Seen in this light, therefore, postmodernism is to some degree a post-secularism. Even for its Christian critics, postmodernism should consequently be at least somewhat of a good thing. The so-called "objectivity" of secular

rationality now seems to be as much the social construction of a very particular

relationship between language and the world as is belief in the Word as Absolute. New

possibilities have opened up. Christian theorists, for example, can now argue with

increasing plausibility that "'scientific' social theories are themselves theologies or anti-

theologies in disguise" (Millbank, 1990, p. 3). A new freedom is being achieved. Faith in

the Word as Absolute is being liberated from a "dictatorship of reason" that Freud once

essentially advocated (1964/1933, p. 213).

     From this perspective, the perils of postmodernism should seem less troubling.

The task for the Christian community is largely the same as it has always been. "Every

generation must 'translate' the Gospel into its unique cultural context" (White, 1995).

Now as in the past, the practices of translation can rest upon a commitment to the Word

as Absolute, but "reason" seems increasingly limited as a kind of Esperanto through

which that process can occur. For the Christian community, "Postmodernity is not so

much abandonment of the idea of universal truth as it is the abandonment of the

assumption that such truth will be readily apparent and thus accepted by anyone of right

mind" (Weaver, 2001, p. 109). The challenge seems clear.  The Word as Absolute must

be translated into terms that can be understood across communities within the

postmodern context of a "linguistic" relativity of "right minds."

## Translation, "Right Minds," and the Ideological Surround

     That the Christian community will need psychological research to confront the

challenge of translation is one implication of the Ideological Surround Model of the

relationship between psychology and religion (Watson, 1993, 1994, 2006). According to

this model, all religious and secular systems of thought are ideological. Social scientific

responses to the postmodern situation will, therefore, require the development and use of ideologically sensitive methodologies. Relative to at least some definitions of "ideology," such methods will also have a potential to advance the goals of Christian translation.

As defined by MacIntyre (1978), ideologies are characterized by three interlocking elements. First, ideologies make assertions that can be related to empirical observations, but they invariably rest upon non-empirical foundations. The claim that God created the universe is just one example, as is the alternative argument that the universe began with a Big Bang. Innumerable observations can be organized around each assertion, but definitive empirical proof or falsification of one origin over the other appears to be impossible.

Second, the somewhat non-empirical foundations of ideologies have normative implications. An ideology "does not merely tell us how the world is and how we are to act, but is concerned with the bearing of the one upon the other" (MacIntyre, p. 6). The organization of social life will often depend, for example, on whether God or naturalistic processes are presumed to be at the heart of the universe. Arguments over abortion may supply the easiest example. Is a fetus a person created in the image of God, or is it just the early stages of an essentially materialistic, biological process? Answers to this and many other questions will reflect the at least implicit and often explicit norms that are associated with ideologies.

Finally, the norms of ideologies are sociologically significant because they necessarily define who does and who does not belong within the conceptual boundaries of a community. MacIntyre (1978) suggests, for instance, "There is a Christian account of why Christians are Christians and the heathens are not."  And, of course, a community

dedicated to naturalism will define members and "heathens" relative to very different, somewhat non-empirical beliefs and norms. More generally, postmodern pluralism represents an increasingly vast array of community-specific definitions of members and "heathens." This fact, as much as anything else, describes the challenge of linguistic relativity that the Church will have to confront in its future.

Once again, within a Christian ideological surround, postmodernism is "not so much abandonment of the idea of universal truth as it is the abandonment of the assumption that such truth will be readily apparent and thus accepted by anyone of right mind" (Weaver, 2001, p.109). Language compatible with Christian norms of universal truth must be translated into the ideological language structures of a wide range of postmodern communities, and reason alone, as the frequent target of postmodern critique, will increasingly be limited in its ability to advance that goal.  Translation, nevertheless, can presuppose the existence of "right minds." Across all communities, right minds will be governed by norms that, among other things, designate members and "heathens." Typically, such norms will favorably assess members and unfavorably evaluate "heathens." Or to say the same thing differently, right minds across all communities will be defined by norms of inclusion and norms of exclusion.

For Christians, a further assumption will be that "right minds" of all communities will be fallen, and will never be completely "right." Errors in applying norms of inclusion and exclusion may represent an especially important problem for the goals of translation. Efforts to express the Gospel within other ideological surrounds will initially require the use of at least some aspects of non-Christian language to build a bridge to Christian language. Translation could not occur if language structures associated with non-

Christian *inclusion* were wholly identical to the language structures of Christian *exclusion*, and vice versa. Members of Christian and non-Christian communities often seem to assume something like this about each other, presumably in fear of compromising essential beliefs through the use of normatively inappropriate "translations." On the other hand, "right minds" might not be completely "right" in presupposing the impossibility of faithful translation. Opportunities to build linguistic bridges to another community could be missed. For "right minds" generally, a key difficulty will be to determine whether translation is or is not "right."

More specifically, Christians dedicated to testing the limits of translation may need to confront two most noteworthy problems. The first would occur within the Christian community itself. Legitimate opportunities for translation could be ignored if it were incorrectly assumed that a non-Christian language of inclusion perfectly matched the norms of Christian exclusion, or vice versa. A chance to speak thoughtfully with members of other communities could be missed as a consequence. A second problem would occur outside the Christian community. A language of exclusion might so negatively and unfairly describe Christian commitments that any expression of Christian language might be given little or no hearing within a non-Christian community. In this circumstance, the chance of even being heard would be essentially nonexistent.

How can such problems be overcome? One approach is to develop methods that, among other things, examine the possibilities of translation across ideologies. The modernist attempt to achieve "objectivity" in research by eliminating any values and norms related to God, cosmos, and society must be rejected because such values and norms are, "objectively" speaking, an unavoidable empirical "reality" of social life (e.g.,

Smith, 2003). Norms should be studied. And they can be studied, because for "right minds" across all communities, norms of inclusion and exclusion must at least implicitly meet certain basic standards of reliability and validity. This is true because ideological norms essentially operate as a kind of communal hypothesis about how members are "good" and are different linguistically and otherwise from "heathens," who are "not good" in one way or another. Such hypotheses can be tested by empirically placing the normative realities of social life within an ideological surround.

Within the Ideological Surround Model of the relationship between psychology and religion (Watson, 1993, 1994), the empirical analysis of translation schemes is just one among several methods for testing the at least implicit normative hypotheses of social life. This method also has an obvious potential for helping the Church meet the challenges of postmodern linguistic relativity (cf., Roth, 1987, 233-245). The approach is simple. Using standard questionnaire procedures, for example, the non-Christian expression of a psychological construct can be administered to Christian research participants along with a possible Christian expression of the very same statements. A positive correlation between responses to the non-Christian and Christian articulations of a construct would point toward the possibility of a faithful translation. Such statements would, in other words, display a potential for building a linguistic bridge between Christian and non-Christian communities.

A necessarily brief review of three studies will illustrate how empirical translation schemes might further the goals of Christian translation. The first study examined a potential misunderstanding within the Christian community itself about the opportunity to use the language of a non-Christian ideology in the process of translation. Two other

investigations suggested that supposedly objective social scientific research programs can work from at least implicit norms of exclusion that promote an unfair and dismissive description of Christian perspectives. In other words, the first study addressed the previously mentioned problem of missing an opportunity to speak with non-Christians. The other two studies were relevant to the problem of whether Christians can even be heard in the first place.

## Christian Self-Actualization

In recent decades, Christians have often been critical of the secular humanistic emphasis on the self, both within the wider culture and within the discipline of psychology more particularly (e.g., Vitz, 1977; Adams, 1986). Perhaps most obviously, humanistic calls for self-actualization seem to be fundamentally incompatible with ideological commitments that take the self-sacrificing love of Christ as the normative ideal. Humanistic and Christian norms of inclusion, in other words, seem to conflict with self-actualization and self-sacrifice defining what appear to be polar opposite ideals. This possibility is easily open to empirical analysis. Measures of self-actualization need only be examined in relationship with a plausible index of sincere Christian commitments. The Intrinsic Religious Orientation Scale, for example, records the attempt of believers to truly live their faith by making religion the master motive in their lives (Allport & Ross, 1967). One Intrinsic Scale items says, for instance, "My religious beliefs are what really lie behind my whole approach to life." Another asserts, "I try hard to carry my religion over into all other dealings in life." Christian critiques of humanistic ideology suggest that humanistic measures of self-actualization should correlate negatively with the Intrinsic Religious Orientation of Christians.

In one study examining a largely Christian sample, the Intrinsic Scale did, in fact, display a small, but statistically significant negative correlation with a measure that expressed self-actualization in explicitly secular humanistic terms ($r = -.25$, $p < .001$; Watson, Hood, Morris, & Hall, 1985). This particular self-actualization scale was chosen over other possibilities because it included statements that seemed to have clear anti-Christian ideological implications. Illustrating such items were self-reports that "I don't feel guilty when I'm selfish," "I do not always tell the truth," and "people need not always repent their wrong-doings" (Shostrom, 1974). At an intuitive level, some degree of incompatibility, therefore, seemed to exist between humanistic and Christian languages of the self, and the significant negative correlation empirically confirmed that possibility. But, do such data mean that the language of self-actualization has absolutely no place within the Christian community? Do Christian norms of exclusion so closely mirror humanistic norms of inclusion that faithful translation is wholly impossible?

Research suggests otherwise. A small, positive correlation can also be observed between the Intrinsic religious motivation of Christians and their responding on the Short Index of Self-Actualization ($r = .18$, $p < .01$; Watson, Milliron, Morris, & Hood, 1995). The Short Index is a 15-item questionnaire that reflects secular humanistic conceptualizations of self-actualization, but does not include statements that seem as obviously anti-Christian (Jones & Crandall, 1986). This positive correlation, therefore, suggested that Christian and humanistic norms of inclusion are not wholly antithetical. Critics might argue, however, that the small magnitude of this relationship uncovered only a minimal, practically unimportant overlap between humanistic and Christian understandings of self-actualization. In other words, such data perhaps demonstrated that

no noteworthy opportunity exists for building a bridge between Christian and humanistic ideological languages of the self. But, could a deeper compatibility appear if the Short Index expression of humanistic self-actualization were translated into a more explicitly Christian language?

To test that possibility, three potential Christian translations were developed for each of the Short Index items (Watson et al., 1995). The Short Index and potential translations were then administered to a sample of 179 state university Christians along with 100 students from a smaller Christian college. Based upon the appearance of a positive correlation between the humanistic and corresponding Christian articulations of self-actualization, one to three successful translations were observed for each Short Index item. Illustrative translations appear in Table 1. One humanistic assertion of self-actualization, for example, was, "I can like people without having to approve of them." A successful Christian translation said instead, "Christ's love for sinners has taught me to love people regardless of their background and lifestyle." Again, this was a successful translation because tendencies to agree with the ideas expressed in these two statements correlated positively (.20, $p < .01$). This humanistic statement, therefore, had at least somewhat the same meaning as the proposed Christian translation, at least for the students examined in this study.

All successful translations were combined into a single Christian Self-Actualization Scale with the results depicted in Table 2. Three aspects of these data were most noteworthy. First, the Intrinsic commitments of Christians correlated much more robustly with the Christian (.60, $p < .001$) than with the humanistic (.18, $p < .05$) articulation of self-actualization. Not surprisingly, therefore, Christians expressed their

religiously relevant understandings of self-actualization more strongly in a language reflecting their own ideological perspectives than in the more alien language of humanistic psychology.

Second, the Christian translation of self-actualization was associated with generally beneficial implications when correlated with other scales. Specifically, the Christian translation displayed significant positive correlations ranging from .27 to .37 ($p < .001$) with the Short Index of Self-Actualization and three other putative measures of healthy self-functioning. Hence, the Christian Self-Actualization Scale offered a generally valid assessment of Christian self-adjustment.

Finally, Christian Self-Actualization tended to be more predictive of healthier self-functioning in the Christian college than in the state university sample. For the Rosenberg (1965) Self-Esteem Scale, this contrast proved to be statistically significant ($Z = -2.18, p < .05$). All kinds of reasons undoubtedly explain why some Christian students attend a Christian college rather than a state university. Presumably among them, however, would be a pattern of commitments that makes religious faith a more central personal concern. Stronger correlations in the Christian college sample, therefore, seemed to support the plausible suggestion that Christians enrolled in a Christian college were, on average, more strongly integrated within the ideological frameworks of their own religious beliefs than those attending a state university.

More generally and importantly, however, the data of this study made it clear that a perfect overlap is not obvious between Christian norms of exclusion and humanistic norms of inclusion. Awareness of the incompatibilities that do exist is, without question, essential in maintaining normatively appropriate boundaries between Christian and

secular humanistic ideological frameworks. On the other hand, tendencies to exaggerate those incompatibilities could lead to a misleading polarization that violates Christian beliefs in the Truth. Such tendencies could also cause Christians to miss legitimate opportunities for translating their beliefs into secular languages of the self. With the availability of faithful translations, Christians could perhaps converse more meaningfully and compellingly with those "right minds" that live within the increasingly influential secular humanistic communities of our culture.

**Christian Tolerance of Ambiguity**

Any attempt of Christians to engage in meaningful conversations with non-Christians must of course rest upon legitimate opportunities to be heard. Not only in the wider culture, but also within the social sciences, a long tradition exists of characterizing Christians and sincere followers of other faiths as obsessive, narrow-minded, cognitively rigid, and intellectually defensive (e.g., Freud, 1961/1927; Batson, Schoenrade, & Ventis, 1993). Why would non-Christians ever want to discuss anything with such people? An open exchange of ideas would seem to be impossible. Within ideological surrounds dedicated to "open-mindedness," Christian thought and language may seem to require immediate rejection based upon community-essential norms of exclusion.

How empirical evidence might reinforce such an unflattering depiction of Christians is suggested by data presented in Table 3. In this study, a largely Christian sample expressed its religious commitments by responding to the Intrinsic Religious Orientation Scale and to a single-item 10-point scale for rating personal interest in religion (Watson & Morris, 2006). These research participants also responded to the Budner (1962) Intolerance of Ambiguity Scale along with several other measures that

seemed relevant to issues associated with the "open-minded" ideological rejection of traditional religion.

In its origins, the Intolerance of Ambiguity Scale was devised to record cognitive rigidities attributed to the authoritarian personality. High levels of responding theoretically reflect such psychological liabilities as defensiveness, fear of novel circumstances, submissiveness to sometimes abusive authority figures, and an inability to handle complexity. Membership within the ideological surrounds of "open-mindedness" presumably would be defined by an antireligious tolerance of ambiguity, an emotional ability to cope with uncertainty, a need to think deeply about experience, and a motivation to embrace change. Open-mindedness, in other words, should be made manifest in *Intolerance* of Ambiguity scores that correlated positively with religious commitments and Emotional Uncertainty (Greco & Rogers, 2001) and negatively with Need for Cognition (Cacioppo, Petty, Feinstein, & Jarvis, 1996) and Desire for Change (Greco & Roger, 2001).

Precisely this pattern of relationships in fact appeared. Not just an Intrinsic Religious Orientation, but even a mere expressed interest in religion, predicted higher levels of Intolerance of Ambiguity. Intolerance of Ambiguity was also associated with lower Need for Cognition, reduced Desire for Change, and an emotional inability to cope with uncertainty. At first glance, the implications seem clear. Christian motivation and interest helped define a psychological pattern of cognitive and emotional rigidity. But did the Intolerance of Ambiguity Scale fairly express the full cognitive potentials of Christians? Did failures of the Intrinsic Scale and the Religious Interest Ratings to correlate with Need for Cognition, Desire for Change, and Emotional Uncertainty suggest

the existence of unsuspected complexities in how Christian commitments might be related to the ideological surround of "open-mindedness"?

Is it possible, for example, to express a Christian *Tolerance* of Ambiguity by translating the Budner (1962) scale into a Christian rejection of each articulation of cognitive intolerance? To test that possibility, two potential translations were developed for each of the 16 Budner Scale statements. Successful translations were expected to correlate negatively with the original scale item. A Christian *Tolerance* of Ambiguity, in other words, should be incompatible with and thus display an inverse linkage with an *Intolerance* of Ambiguity. As indicated in Table 4, 13 successful translations were obtained, with 13 other potential translations displaying non-significant relationships with the corresponding Budner item. Unexpectedly, six translations were associated with positive rather than negative correlations, suggesting that a Christian Tolerance of Ambiguity was in fact consistent with an Intolerance of Ambiguity. Research participants, for example, simultaneously tended to assert that "what we are used to is *always* preferable to what is unfamiliar" and that "*sometimes* God wants us to embrace completely new, unfamiliar experiences as a way of becoming more mature."

Implications of these three types of items were explored by combining each set of statements into separate scales and then by examining their relationships with other measures. In other words, the negative, non-significant, and positive correlating items were combined into Negative, Non-Significant, and Positive Christian Tolerance of Ambiguity Scales. Table 5 summarizes the associations of these three variables with other measures.

Four findings were most noteworthy. First, the three Christian Tolerance of Ambiguity Scales displayed internal reliabilities that were at least roughly adequate for research purposes and exhibited fairly robust relationships with each other. Christian Tolerance of Ambiguity, therefore, seemed to operate as a logically coherent construct.

Second, the Positive Scale correlated positively with Intolerance of Ambiguity, as dictated by the methodology used to identify these items, and also predicted higher levels of the Intrinsic Religious Orientation and Religious Interest. This Positive Christian Tolerance of Ambiguity Scale, therefore, was relevant to religious commitments, but was *not* simultaneously associated with lower Need for Cognition, greater Emotional Uncertainty, or a diminished Desire for Change. Christian beliefs compatible with the Budner (1962) measure, therefore, once again failed to predict the apparent liabilities associated with the original Intolerance of Ambiguity Scale****.

Third, the Non-Significant items combined together were like the Positive Scale in correlating directly with the Budner (1962) scale, an Intrinsic Religious Orientation, and Religious Interest. This Non-Significant measure, nevertheless, moved in a more "open-minded" ideological direction because it also correlated positively with Desire for Change. In other words, a Christian Tolerance of Ambiguity pointed toward the possible existence of Christian motivations for change.

Finally, the Negative Scale confirmed that a Christian Tolerance of Ambiguity can be compatible with at least some aspects of an ideological commitment to "open-mindedness." This was obvious in the inverse relationship of this Negative Scale with Intolerance of Ambiguity along with direct relationships with the Intrinsic, Religious Interest, Need for Cognition, and Desire for Change variables. In short, it was in fact

possible to use empirical translation schemes to articulate a thoughtful Christian tolerance of ambiguity that was also defined by an openness to change.

More generally and importantly, these Christian Tolerance of Ambiguity data revealed that supposedly objective research methods have a potential to ideologically position Christians within norms of non-Christian exclusion without fully appreciating the complexity of Christian beliefs. A study that merely examined relationships of Christian commitments with the original Budner (1962) scale would fail to present an ideologically balanced understanding of the issue. Again, correlations observed for the Negative Christian Tolerance of Ambiguity items, in particular, documented that Christians can express a religiously sincere embrace of ambiguity that is associated with thoughtfulness and a desire to change. Results of this investigation, therefore, indicated that efforts to avoid bias in the social scientific analysis of religion may need to include procedures that explore the potential influences of ideology on observed outcomes.

### Christian Biblical Foundationalism

Even more complex and subtle influences of ideology have been uncovered by combining empirical translation schemes with other Ideological Surround methodologies. Relevant to these even more subtle influences have been observations that Right-Wing Authoritarianism and Fundamentalism correlate positively, and often quite robustly, with the Intrinsic Scale (e.g., Altemeyer, 1988; Genia, 1996). Again, the Intrinsic Scale served in the Christian Self-Actualization and Tolerance of Ambiguity studies as a rough empirical indicator of sincere Christian commitments. For anyone ideologically opposed to religion, the implications of the Right-Wing Authoritarianism and Fundamentalism data must seem clear. Any favorable interpretation of Christianity based upon the

Intrinsic Scale must be dismissed. Such findings merely mask the operation of a rigid and essentially "fascist" regime of religious understanding.

Two immediate reactions seem most important. First, Christian and other forms of religious commitment can undoubtedly move in authoritarian directions. A commitment to Truth would require awareness of and sensitivity to such potentials. Second, however, at least some Christians presumably maintain commitments to a biblical worldview without operating within a narrow-minded, authoritarian ideological surround. The Christian Fundamentalist Belief Scale (Gibson & Francis, 1996), for example, includes twelve items that define core assumptions that virtually all traditional Christians would affirm. These include beliefs in the virgin birth, the resurrection, Jesus as the son of God, and the Bible as the word of God. At least some Christians would expect that commitment to these "fundamentals" of belief would not necessarily predict a "fascist" form of faith.

On the other hand, the Religious Fundamentalism Scale of Altemeyer and Hunsberger (1992) does not so much measure belief in particular fundamental doctrines of the faith as it records a specific interpretative stance relative to those beliefs. Among other things, this scale links fundamentalism with a vision of God as damning and punitive, with a kind of ideological splitting in which everyone within the religious community is "good" whereas everyone outside that community is "evil," with a demand to literally interpret and rigidly follow the Bible, and with a rejection of all scientific evidence that seems to conflict with the Bible. Other items essentially suggest that fundamentalist beliefs about Satan and about the existence of evil lack any empirical validity, and instead represent the mere psychological projection of personally

unacceptable tendencies on to a mythical being. The overall implication of this particular

scale is that any commitment to the fundamentals of Christian faith must invariably

reflect an arrogant, condemning, superstitious, anti-scientific, and defensive form of

religiosity.

Within an intrinsically Christian ideological surround, however, fundamentals of

the faith, like beliefs in the virgin birth and in the resurrection, presumably can be

associated with more open-minded and affirming interpretative possibilities than those

suggested by the Altemeyer and Hunsberger (1992) Scale. Table 6 illustrates an attempt

to use empirical translation schemes to begin exploring that possibility. In these

procedures, each Altemeyer and Hunsberger item was translated into a language that

seemed to be less ideologically biased against Christians. The effort here was to articulate

the basic ideas of the original scale into terms that were more humble, less condemning,

and non-defensive and that were empirically grounded, open to scientific insights, and

motivated by a loving concern for people outside as well as inside the faith. Successful

translations were identified in positive correlations with the Intrinsic Scale. This criterion

was used, because again, the hope was to identify beliefs that proved to be compatible

with a more open, less judgmental intrinsically Christian ideological surround.

One item from the Altemeyer and Hunsberger (1992) scale, for example, argued,

"God's true followers must remember that he requires them to constantly fight Satan and

Satan's allies on this earth." One successful translation correlated .47 ($p < .001$) with the

Intrinsic scale and said, "The atrocities of 20th Century history should convince us that

the Bible is right about the reality of Evil and about our responsibility to constantly fight

against Satan and Satan's allies on this earth." The translation, in other words, attempted

to identify empirical realities that would reflect problems that would be "evil" even within an antireligious ideological surround. Another Fundamentalism item asserted, "To lead the best, most meaningful life, one must belong to the one true religion." A successful translation tried to make the same point in a more loving, less implicitly judgmental manner, "Only by accepting the love and forgiveness that God has given us through Christ can we achieve the best, most meaningful life that we can aspire to in this world." The correlation between this translation and the Intrinsic Scale was .62 ($p <$ .001). Again, other examples of successful translations are presented in Table 6.

Based on factor analytic considerations, fifteen of the successful translations were combined into a Biblical Foundationalism Scale. The hope of this procedure was to create a measure that would avoid the possible ideological limitations of the original Altemeyer and Hunsberger (1992) scale. Correlations of the Intrinsic and this newly constructed ==Biblical Foundationalism Scale== with other measures are reviewed in Table 7.

Interpretation of these data first requires an understanding of one other aspect of this project. Again, empirical translation schemes represent only one of several Ideological Surround methodologies. Another involves the direct rational analysis of so-called "objective" psychological scales to determine if they are ideologically biased. The Right-Wing Authoritarianism Scale (Altemeyer & Hunsberger, 1992) contained statements that seemed to be blatantly biased against Christians. One reverse-scored item said, for instance, "People should pay *less* attention to the Bible and the other forms of religious guidance, and instead develop their own personal standards of what is moral and immoral." The only way that a Bible-believing Christian could avoid the authoritarian response would be to reject belief in the Bible. Such items seemed to guarantee an

ideological ambush of Christians in that the presupposed authoritarian liabilities of

Christian faith were tautologically defined in terms of at least potentially non-

authoritarian factors that determined Christian community membership in the first place.

Rational analysis procedures attempted to control for this kind of problem.

In the rational analysis procedures, ideological meanings of the 30 Right-Wing

Authoritarian items were analyzed by a group of Christian graduate students. As

interpreted by those students, twelve items appeared to be Anti-Christian because they

essentially defined Right-Wing Authoritarianism in terms of basic Christian beliefs. In

addition to the anti-Bible item already mentioned, a further example was the reverse-

scored belief, "The sooner we get rid of the traditional family structure, where the father

is the head of the family and the children are taught to obey authority automatically, the

better. The old-fashion way has a lot wrong with it." Eleven other items seemed

ambiguous in that no clear consensus appeared among the Christian students in how they

should be evaluated. An example was the statement, "It is always better to trust the

judgment of the proper authorities in government and religion, than to listen to the noisy

rabble-rousers in our society who are trying to create doubt in people's minds." Seven

final items appeared to be Pro-Christian because faith seemed to require a rejection of the

authoritarian response. The graduate students decided, for instance, that Christians should

reject the authoritarian assertion, "What our country really needs, instead of more 'civil

rights,' is a good stiff dose of law and order."

As Table 7 reveals, the Intrinsic and Biblical Foundationalism Scales correlated

positively with both the more doctrinal Gibson and Francis (1996) Christian

Fundamentalist Beliefs Scale and the more apparently anti-religious Altemeyer and

Hunsberger (1992) Fundamentalism Scale. These two measures also correlated positively with Intolerance of Ambiguity and with Right-Wing Authoritarianism. With regard to possible ideological influences, strong positive correlations of the Altemeyer and Hunsberger Scale with the Anti-Christian and Ambiguous Right-Wing Authoritarianism items suggested that at least some of the variance associated with these three measures might depict Christians unfairly. In other words, the Altemeyer and Hunsberger and the Anti-Christian and Ambiguous Right-Wing Authoritarianism variables displayed a potential to serve as useful empirical indicators of ideological bias against Christians.

Such a possibility was evaluated by reexamining the Intrinsic and Biblical Foundationalism Scales after partialing out the Altemeyer and Hunsberger (1992) Religious Fundamentalism Scale and the Anti-Christian and Ambiguous Right-Wing Authoritarianism items. The assumption was that these partial correlations would make it possible, at least to some degree, to statistically control for the language of anti-Christian ideological perspectives that may have been built into some of these scales. Table 8 most importantly demonstrates that the Intrinsic Orientation did in fact predict *lower* rather than greater Intolerance of Ambiguity and Right-Wing Authoritarianism once the potential influence of apparently anti-Christian ideological language was accounted for statistically. These linkages were also obvious within the context of positive Intrinsic Scale correlations with both the Biblical Foundationalism and the Christian Fundamentalist Beliefs Scales. Such data, therefore, suggested that a sincere, intrinsic commitment to the fundamentals of a biblical worldview could be compatible with an open-minded rejection of a "fascist" regime of understanding.

Again, this conclusion in no way implies that traditional Christian commitments are never associated with liabilities like a narrow-minded literalism and authoritarianism. Surely, they sometimes are. Rather, the point is to challenge any social scientific research program that essentially equates traditional biblical commitments with "fascist" ideological frameworks. Any such equation should be evaluated carefully. As the partial correlations of this project revealed, the social scientific construction of knowledge about religion can be influenced by the complex and often subtle influences of ideology. Such research, in other words, is not, and presumably within a postmodern context, can never be wholly "objective." All research programs -- Christian, anti-Christian, and otherwise -- will invariably be framed within the norms of inclusion and exclusion that define an ideological surround, and those norms can promote the creation of misleading empirical findings. Since ideological factors can never be eliminated completely from the research process, their potential influences should become a part of the empirical analysis itself. The Ideological Surround Model assumes that this kind of research can yield a more balanced form of understanding that avoids the deceptive masquerade of resting upon a neutral "objectivity."

Deserving further emphasis was the manner in which the non-authoritarian potentials of Christianity became apparent in this study even when procedures rested upon the use of scales that seemed almost designed to ideologically ambush Christians. At least some Christians would likely believe that even stronger evidence supporting the open-minded and non-"fascist" potentials of their faith would become apparent in research programs that did not originate within such an anti-religious ideological surround. They would explore the possibility of creating completely new scales that

could demonstrate even more clearly how a sincere Christian commitment to biblical fundamentals could actively promote a resistance to authoritarian regimes of understanding.

## Conclusion

In some ways, social life today is probably much like the social life that has always confronted the Church. Now, as in the past, the Church must find a language that speaks to people who live in a multitude of ideologically diverse communities. "Right minds" of every community will be socially constructed to use a language that organizes existence in terms of implicitly and sometimes explicitly articulated norms of inclusion and exclusion. The challenge will be to express biblically-based norms in a language that can be heard and understood outside of Christian communities.

It is within this context, among others, that the Christian community will need psychological research to confront the challenges of its future. The linguistic relativity of postmodernity is a fact of social life that can be studied like any other. Empirical translation schemes and other ideological surround methodologies (e.g., Watson 1993, 1994) can help ensure that the normative diversity of postmodernity does not prevent Christians from hearing and from being heard correctly. In practical terms, these two problems may *always* be at least somewhat related. Christians may not hear the biblical possibilities in a humanistic language of self-actualization. At the same time, however, secular humanists may refuse to listen to Christians because they do not understand the potentials of a biblically-based self-fulfillment. Empirical explorations of a Christian Self-Actualization, therefore, may simultaneously address issues related to the "hearing" of Christians and to the "listening" of secular humanists.

Some skepticism may exist about the necessity of using empirical methods to explore ideological issues of relevance to the Christian community. Why even bother with social scientific procedures? Why not, for example, just analyze such concerns rationally? A first response to this skepticism is that results of the Christian Tolerance of Ambiguity study revealed that rational analysis alone may not always be adequate. In that procedure, at least some rationally plausible expressions of a Christian *Tolerance* of Ambiguity correlated positively rather than negatively with a non-Christian *Intolerance* of Ambiguity. Again, research participants simultaneously asserted that "what we are used to is *always* preferable to what is unfamiliar" and that "*sometimes* God wants us to embrace completely new, unfamiliar experiences as a way of becoming more mature." The "always" of the non-Christian statement and the apparently incompatible "sometimes" of the Christian belief can undoubtedly be brought into conformity with logic through rational analysis. The necessity of doing so, however, is not obvious in the absence of empirical social scientific evidence.

A second response to skepticism about the need for empirical methods is more general and noteworthy. The idea that "rationality" can easily resolve the problems of ideology presupposes the availability of a "neutral" rationality for accomplishing that purpose. But precisely this presumption is increasingly untenable within the postmodern context. All rationality seems to operate with the orbit of ideological concerns. The gravitational pull of those concerns can presumably promote rational conclusions that are as misleading as the data that can be obtained through so-called "objective" empirical methods. Rationality itself, especially as used in the social sciences, must be placed within an ideological surround. Methods described as "comparative rationality analysis"

have been devised for that purpose (Watson, 1994), and will be described in a second paper in this series describing the implications of the Ideological Surround Model for a Christian Psychology (Watson, in press).

In a third and final response to that skepticism, it is important to remember that social scientific evidence may be essential in trying to communicate Christian perspectives to members of other communities. Christians, for example, may use their own practical rationality to argue against any suggestion that biblical commitments must always reflect some "fascist" regime of understanding. Christians might find such arguments to be compelling, but at least some non-Christians will be skeptical that such claims are anything but idle speculation. Empirical evidence cannot be dismissed as idle speculation. Use of Ideological Surround methodologies to suggest the anti-authoritarian potentials of Biblical Foundationalism illustrated just the first step of a research program that could argue against an excessively generalized non-Christian condemnation of belief in Christian "fundamentals." In other words, empirical methods may have advantages over reason alone when the attempt is to encourage members of other communities to at least hear Christians.

Evaluation of Ideological Surround methodologies should, of course, be conditioned by numerous caveats. Three deserve special emphasis. First, Ideological Surround methodologies should never work from the assumption that present realities are normative. Just because it is empirically possible to translate Self-Actualization, Tolerance of Ambiguity, or any other construct into some version of Christian language in no way guarantees that such translations are normatively acceptable. The critic of a particular translation scheme might argue that these data instead document a drift of

Christianity toward "heathen" norms. Such a critique, nevertheless, would itself be a hypothesis that could be tested empirically. By exploring proposed translations and subsequent critiques, psychological researchers could use Ideological Surround methodologies to help the Christian community better articulate and understand itself.

The second caveat is implied in the first. The further assumption, therefore, is that Ideological Surround procedures are not sufficient to resolve the interpretative conflicts of postmodernity. Such procedures do not rest upon a modernist confidence in the ability of so-called "objective" methods to operate in the absence of influences by so-called "subjective" normative commitments. Within this model of the relationship between psychology and religion, method cannot and should not escape ideology. Instead, ideological meanings can and should determine and evaluate method just as the Truthful findings of method can and should serve as a source of feedback and discipline for ideology. The Christian community may need psychological research to confront the challenges of its future, but that is by no means all that it will need. All members of the Christian community will need to participate in the social construction of attempts to explain how Christian meanings can and should be expressed and understood within the often confusing contexts of postmodernity.

Finally, members of not just Christian communities will believe that they should be heard correctly. No community wants to have words put into its mouth. Being heard and hearing correctly are never easy when communities are socially constructed to operate according to different norms. Non-Christians are no more blameworthy for their failures to appreciate the possibilities of a Christian Tolerance of Ambiguity and a Biblical Foundationalism than are Christians for misunderstanding the possibilities of a

language of self-actualization. Members of one ideological community are just naturally

limited in their abilities to understand members of others. Ideological Surround

methodologies could be used by any community to promote greater understanding (see

e.g., Ghorbani, Watson, & Khan, 2007). That understanding might or might not lead to

more productive relationships across communities. At the very least, however, the

postmodern relativity of norms might become more responsive to the empirical realities

of social life. Or to say the same thing differently, those normative relativities could be

made more accountable to Truth. Any process that held the empirical realities of social

life more accountable to Truth would presumably be very much compatible with

Christian norms of inclusion.

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Table 1

*Illustrative Christian Translations of Direct and Reverse-Scored (R) Humanistic*

*Statements of Self-Actualization*

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Humanistic Statement of Self-Actualization

  Christian Translation                                                                    Inter-item r

I feel that people are essentially good and can be trusted.
      God's love and trust of me has taught me to love and trust other people.     .32***

I can like people without having to approve of them.
      Christ's love for sinners has taught me to love people regardless of
      their background and lifestyle.                                                                .20**

It is better to be yourself than to be popular.
      My faith gives me the strength to be myself rather than going along
      with the crowd.                                                                                      .20**

I feel that I must do what others expect of me. (R)
      I feel compelled to do things that are expected of me by other
      Christians. (R)                                                                                        .33***

I have no mission in life to which I feel especially dedicated. (R)
      I feel that God has no mission for me in life. (R)                                    .27***

I am bothered by fears of being inadequate. (R)
      I am afraid that I cannot live up to God's expectations for me. (R)        .27***

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$* p < .05$        $** p < .01$        $*** p < .001$

These data are based on Watson *et al.* (1995), $N = 279$. Statements followed by "R" were

reverse scored.

Table 2

*Correlations of Christian Self-Actualization Scale (CSA) with Intrinsic Religious Orientation, Self-Actualization, and Self-Esteem Scales in Combined and Separate State University (SU) and Christian College (CC) Samples*

| Measures | Combined Sample Data | | Sample-Specific CSA Data | | |
| | Intrinsic | CSA | SU | CC | Z |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Intrinsic Scale | - | .60*** | .53*** | .50*** | 0.32 |
| Short Index of Self-Actualization | .18* | .37*** | .33*** | .46*** | -1.22 |
| Coopersmith Self-Esteem | .27*** | .29*** | .18* | .35*** | -1.45 |
| Rosenberg Self-Esteem | .20*** | .36*** | .28*** | .51*** | -2.18* |
| Phillips Self-Acceptance | .18** | .27*** | .19* | .36*** | -1.46 |

$* \ p < .05$       $** \ p < .01$       $*** \ p < .001$

Sample size was 279 with $N = 179$ and 100 in state university and Christian college samples, respectively (Watson *et al*., 1995). Z values reflect one-tailed tests of the hypothesis that the Christian College (CC) sample ($N = 100$) would display stronger positive correlations of Christian Self-Actualization (CSA) with the other self-functioning measures than would the State University (SU) students ($N = 179$).

Table 3

*Correlations among Intolerance of Ambiguity, Religious Variables, Need for Cognition,*

*Emotional Uncertainty, and Desire for Change Scales*

| Variables | 1. | 2. | 3. | 4. | 5. | 6. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Intolerance of Ambiguity | - | .28*** | .24*** | -.41*** | .25*** | -.48*** |
| 2. Intrinsic Religion | | - | .74*** | .01 | -.01 | -.01 |
| 3. Religious Interest | | | - | .01 | .01 | .00 |
| 4. Need for Cognition | | | | - | -.34*** | .38*** |
| 5. Emotional Uncertainty | | | | | - | -.36*** |
| 6. Desire for Change | | | | | | - |

* p < .05        ** p < .01        *** p < .001

These data are based on Watson and Morris (2006), N = 648.

Table 4

*Illustrative Negative, Non-Significant and Positive Christian Tolerance of Ambiguity*

*Translations with Budner (1962) Intolerance of Ambiguity Scale Items*

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| Budner Scale Item | Inter-item |
| Christian Translation | Correlation |

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**Negatively Correlated Item (overall number of items = 13)**

Often the most interesting and stimulating people are those who don't mind being different and original. (R)

    For me, the most stimulating and interesting Christians are those who have the courage to be different and original just as our Lord was different and original.                                               -.24***

Many of our most important decisions are based upon insufficient information. (R)

    Faith is essential because our most important decisions are based upon insufficient information.                                                     -.12**

**Non-Significantly Correlated Items (Overall number of items = 13)**

In the long run, it is possible to get more done by tackling small, simple problems than large complicated problems.

    Sometimes God expects us to make progress by tackling large, complicated problems rather than trying to concentrate only on small, simple problems.                                                     .02

People who insist on a yes and no answer just don't know how complicated things really are. (R)

    God sent us the Holy Spirit so that he could guide us beyond our simplistic yes and no answers                                                     -.06

**Positively Correlated Items (Overall number of items = 6)**

What we are used to is always preferable to what is unfamiliar.

    Sometimes God wants us to embrace completely new, unfamiliar experiences as a way of becoming more mature.                                                     .11**

There is really no such thing as a problem that can't be solved.

    Only in sinful pride can we assume that there is really no such thing as a problem that cannot be solved.                                                     .10*

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* $p < .05$     ** $p < .01$     *** $p < .001$

These data are based on Watson and Morris (2006). Statements followed by R were reverse scored.

Table 5

*Correlations of Christian Tolerance of Ambiguity Measures with Intolerance of*

*Ambiguity, Religious Variables, Need for Cognition, and Uncertainty Response Scales*

| Variables | Christian Tolerance of Ambiguity Items | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| | Negative | Non-significant | Positive |
| Negative Items | - | .62*** | .49*** |
| Non-Significant Items | | - | .81*** |
| Positive Items | | | - |
| Intolerance of Ambiguity | -.14** | .18** | .26*** |
| Intrinsic Religious Orientation | .32*** | .56*** | .64*** |
| Religious Interest | .29*** | .48*** | .52*** |
| Need for Cognition | .20*** | .03 | -.05 |
| Emotional Uncertainty | -.02 | .07 | .07 |
| Desire for Change | .27*** | .13** | .02 |
| Descriptive Statistics | | | |
| α | .67 | .84 | .82 |
| M | 2.73 | 2.62 | 2.60 |
| SD | 0.51 | 0.74 | 0.86 |

* $p < .05$      ** $p < .01$      *** $p < .001$

These data are based on Watson and Morris (2006).

Table 6

*Direct and Reverse (R) Scored Fundamentalism Items and Translations Correlating*

*Positively with the Intrinsic Scale*

---

God will punish most severely those who abandon his true religion.
>     God has created a universe in which punishment is the unavoidable consequence of failing to follow the love and sacrifice modeled by Christ. (.40***)

When you get right down to it, there are two kinds of people in the world: the Righteous, who will be rewarded by God, and the rest, who will not.
>     When you get right down to it, there are two kinds of people in the world: the Righteous, sinners who have accepted the forgiveness of God, and the rest, sinners who God hopes will accept his forgiveness in the future. (.44***)

No single book of religious writings contains all of the important truths about life. (R)
>     No single individual has the wisdom to recognize all truth; so God gave us the Bible as a guide in our struggles to discover the complex truths that life presents us. (.46***)

Whenever science and sacred scripture conflict, science must be wrong. (R)
>     God's hand is in all creation and in all truth; so conflicts between faith and science should not frighten us, but rather should inspire us to seek God's truth. (.52***)

Satan is just the name people give to their own bad impulses. There really is no such thing as a diabolical "Prince of Darkness" who tempts us. (R)
>     The bloodshed of human history makes it clear that evil cannot be dismissed as the effect of merely "bad human impulses." The reality of evil is captured instead in the biblical depiction of Satan as the "Prince of Darkness" who tempts us. (.49***)

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* $p < .05$     ** $p < .01$     *** $p < .001$

The correlation with Intrinsic Scale appears in the parenthesis. Sample size was 307.

These data are based on Watson, Sawyers, Morris, Carpenter, Jimenez, Jonas, and

Robinson (2003).

Table 7

*Correlations among Religious, Intolerance of Ambiguity, and Right-Wing Authoritarianism Measures*

| Measures | 1. | 2. | 3. | 4. | 5. | 6. | 7. | 8. | 9. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1.  Intrinsic Orientation | - | .67*** | .69*** | .58*** | .16** | .57*** | .06 | .51*** | .67*** |
| 2.  Biblical Foundationalism | | - | .73*** | .71*** | .24*** | .66*** | .20*** | .62*** | .70*** |
| 3.  Religious Fundamentalism | | | - | .60*** | .37*** | .72*** | .22*** | .67*** | .77*** |
| 4.  Christian Fundamentalist Beliefs | | | | - | .27*** | .58*** | .25*** | .53*** | .57*** |
| 5.  Intolerance of Ambiguity | | | | | - | .50*** | .42*** | .47*** | .38*** |
| 6.  Right-Wing Authoritarianism (RWA) | | | | | | - | .63*** | .93*** | .88*** |
| 7.  RWA-Pro Items | | | | | | | - | .54*** | .27*** |
| 8.  RWA-Amb Items | | | | | | | | - | .73*** |
| 9.  RWA-Anti Items | | | | | | | | | - |

* p < .05        ** p < .01        *** p < .001

These data are based on Watson et al. (2003).

Table 8

*Partial Correlations among Religious, Intolerance of Ambiguity, and Right-Wing Authoritarianism after Controlling for Religious Fundamentalism and the RWA-Amb and RWA-Anti Items*

| Measures | 1. | 2. | 3. | 4. | 5. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1.  Intrinsic Orientation | - | .27*** | .25*** | -.18*** | -.19*** |
| 2.  Biblical Foundationalism | | - | .45*** | -.15** | -.07 |
| 3.  Christian Fundamentalist Beliefs | | | - | -.01 | .05 |
| 4.  Intolerance of Ambiguity | | | | - | .25*** |
| 5.  Right-Wing Authoritarianism | | | | | - |

* p < .05        ** p < .01        *** p < .001

These data are based on Watson et al. (2003).