

Daily Life with Christ. Love-16: Understanding the objective, universal, unchanging, eternal nature of love: The form/matter constituency of all extra-mental objects, including the biblical text.



(Online copy at <http://www.fbcweb.org/Doctrines/031618.pdf> and <http://www.fbcweb.org/doctrines.html>).

George: I don't know what you mean by form and matter. Don't you think we need to start with presuppositions? Isn't it a matter of where you start.

Stephen: Yes, it is all about where you start. But if you start with presuppositions (propositional), then you start in the mind rather than reality as such. This is Idealism and it collapses into Anti-realism.

George: How can I be an Idealist if I agree with you on so many doctrines?

Stephen: Most of those doctrines that we agree on were developed during the time when Christians understood metaphysics. This is no longer the case. My guess is that over 99% of Christians, along with unbelievers, are idealists. We now live in the anti-metaphysical worlds of Rene Descartes (with regard to extra-mental things), Francis Bacon (Bible induction), Martin Luther (with regard to his nominalism in Christianity), Martin Heidegger (language Dasein), and Georg Gadamer (hermeneutics). They have all greatly infected the church. Instead of the biblical interpreter's intellect obtaining (through the efficient means of the Holy Spirit) the objective form/meaning in the biblical text, meaning is sought in the minds of others: e.g., the writer of Scripture, the reader of Scripture, the culture of the Bible, from other passages, and from language. Due to rejection of classical metaphysics, meaning is based on minds (the writer of Scripture or the interpreter) for the meaning cannot exist in the text itself—not in our materialistic Cartesian bodies-extended-in space world.

George: How does lack of understanding of classical metaphysics affect the meaning of Scripture?

Stephen: Lack of development of classical metaphysics—due to modern materialistic philosophies—effect the way one sees everything. There are two basic ways of looking at the world. Look at all the things around us. When you see all these beings around you, what do you see? Do you see objects/things extended in space, or do you see rich world of beings that are composed of form/matter? If you do not see form/matter in everything, then your basic orientation is materialistic, anti-metaphysical—for which you can thank the influences of Rene Descartes and scientism. Moreover, you have no foundation for direct realism and objectivity with regard to the biblical text because in such orientation the biblical text is just a material thing extended in space. This means that there is a gap between you and the text for which you may try all you want to directly acquire the meaning (like trying to get into the writer's intent or culture), but in the end meaning will be grounded in your mind rather than in the form/meaning in the text. Unless you understand the biblical text, like every other thing else you see, in terms of form/matter, you have no sound basis for it to be in your mind anymore than that chair over there. You cannot be in-formed if your mind cannot literally acquire the form.

George: How is it that I can come up with proper interpretations, which we both agree with?

Stephen: Because at a basic level we are all realists who abstract and obtain forms on some level, even if we get all mixed up and get a lot of things wrong (about God, the spiritual life, and the nature of man and creation) and are unable to give a rational account for objectivity. One can be an Idealist in approach and have a Realist's results due to the power of the human mind to override in some ways some of the Idealism. However, at bottom, one is an Idealist if he grounds reality on words, and a Realist if he grounds reality on the metaphysics of reality itself, which is determined by beings (what is), not language.

George: If you do not start with words or propositions, what do you start with? Don't you have to have certain presuppositions for knowledge?

Stephen: No! one starts with reality, with beings. By the way that question is the problem—trying to justify knowledge, a problem that is a direct result of Descartes' rejection of classical metaphysics. He shifted the focus from what we know, to how we know—from metaphysics to epistemology. This has been a curse in society in the church in many ways.

George: How do you start with beings and obtain universal objectivity?

Stephen: In contrast to representational Cartesianism, which seeks indubitable propositions with which one can construct a world view (modern Christian version is found in presuppositionalism), the foundation of Realism rests in the self-evident, undeniable first principles of thought and being—the objective extra-mental world of beings and the law of non-contradiction.