

Want to teach the Christian faith? Then make the case for Christ. Break the gospel down to essential components as does *The Four Spiritual Laws*. Because these laws are basically just facts, you then demonstrate them through apologetics (proving, for instance, that the only reasonable explanation for the empty tomb is that Jesus was raised from the dead). Finally, take this information to individuals who don't know it, lead them one by one to 'encounters with Jesus' and then to 'decisions for Christ'. Then plug these people into communities that maintain and strengthen their new faith. Keep reinforcing these principles and their proofs through preaching and teaching. Build further claims on them like buildings on secure foundations. Teach these baby Christians to study, pray, use their gifts, and witness on their own in Bible studies and courses on Christian doctrine (9-13).

Want to teach the Christian faith? Then introduce people to Christian life as a whole. Welcome them into your Christian community even if they don't belong. Show them prayer, praise, forgiveness, preaching, repentance, service, and sacrifice by acting in ways consistent with the story of Lord Jesus Christ, whether or not those ways make sense to them at first. Have them do the activities of Christian faith alongside you whether or not they believe, even if it disorients and frustrates them. One day they may embrace this life and faith as their own (64).

What distinguishes these two approaches? The first springs from modern convictions about knowledge and the world that have characterized the West since the Enlightenment in the seventeenth century. Kallenberg contends that the second better fits the good news itself (48-49). It returns to the way Christians had taught, learned, and witnessed in apostolic times (53-54). It better respects how the world works in all sorts of ways, from amoebas to wild boars to colors on home exteriors to scientific paradigm shifts (17-28). Finally, it reflects the convictions of a growing share of both our wider culture and philosophers of knowledge (12-13).

In more detail, Kallenberg's argument comes down to three basic points:

First, contrary to the modern conviction that language works when it accurately pictures the world beyond it, 'linguistic holism' understands that language is part of the world, "a socially involved enterprise that by its very nature engages human subjects" (24). In other words, we can never really learn about something while keeping ourselves at a distance from it or approaching it 'objectively' or 'neutrally'. **Learning requires both teacher and students to embody the object of our thinking** (48-50). Here both relativistic refusals to respect the demands of Christian faith and aggressive apologetics for Christian faith violate the message itself, for Christ is both intrusive and rejectable. Both stances dominate in our culture; that says a lot about us.

Nor can we think prior to our own language, apart from it, or perhaps even experience things beyond it (39). Thus **learning means expanding our language – and by immersion**. As there is no learning baseball without mastering the use of words like *ball*, *foul*, *shortstop*, and *inning*, (and no learning these terms apart from participating in baseball in some way), so there is no learning Christian life apart from mastering precise uses of terms like *God*, *sin*, *grace*, and *church*, and no learning these terms apart from activities like church attendance and prayer (cf. 40-41). Learning these traditions is a matter not of translation (as so many of our churches try to do by presenting Christianity as something 'relevant' to outsiders), but mentoring/coaching, discipling/training, and apprenticing/practicing (51-58).

Christians should recognize and welcome these realizations as compatible with the doctrines of both creation and salvation, in which nothing stands out of relationship with anything else, but in which all things are related through, in, and under Christ the Word of God.

Second, contrary to the modern conviction that real knowledge progresses steadily as it builds on indubitable assumptions to more and more secure conclusions, ‘epistemological holism’ understands that **understanding is communal and changes through ‘conversion’**. This happens through paradigm shifts in which members leap from one way of seeing things to a more helpful one, rather than attaining growing certainty on the basis of compelling logic. Learning Christianity does not necessarily involve making steady progress. It may be an exercise in suddenly relieved frustration – as it was for Paul, Augustine, and Luther (and me too) (61-62).

Christians should recognize and welcome this realization as a newfound respect for change as repentance, renewal, and transformation. Since Christianity (like baseball) is linguistic, exposure and conversion amount to the acquisition and shift to a helpful new conceptual language (38-42).

Third, contrary to the modern conviction that the individual is the most (or only) significant unit of learning, ‘metaphysical holism’ understands that teaching at the social level is just as important as teaching at the personal level (21). The most profound expression of communal and personal identity is *narrative context* (34ff). **Moving from one paradigm to another means telling our story in a fundamentally different way, literally changing social identities and communal loyalties** (42-46). When a whole group makes such a move, it changes both its communal story and the identities of its members, even the unconverted ones (32ff). Since becoming Christian means joining a community, learning Christianity involves being enlisted into the life of such a community as a guest and provisionally taking on community responsibilities (58-64). Indeed, since things interrelate at every level of complexity, it means a narrative shift in the whole universe.

Christians should be familiar with and welcome this realization, for from the beginning we have gathered to tell the story of God in Jesus Christ as *our* story too.

Q: Does the second approach seem troubling to you? manipulative? natural? promising? too risky? liberal? relativistic? superior? consistent or inconsistent with proper faith? The answer may say something about how committed you are to Enlightenment modernity.

Q: Here is an analogy to consider: If the topic of these two approaches were baseball rather than Christian faith, then which approach would you favor? What if it were urban gospel music? calculus? English composition? Is gaining familiarity, appreciation, and skill in Christian life and doctrine fundamentally different from learning these other subjects? (You may have noticed that this course is structured more like the second approach than the first. That tells you how I would answer.)

Q: How did you learn the meaning of the words ‘computer’? ‘rap’? ‘drive’? ‘pray’? ‘terrorism’? Does Kallenberg’s argument fit your own personal life, your family, your city and country, and the way your own social circles work?