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## The Postmodern Paradox: How the Christian Scholar has Both Declined and Thrived as a Result of Postmodernism's Influence in Higher Education

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## The Postmodern Paradox: How the Christian Scholar has Both Declined and Thrived as a Result of Postmodernism's Influence in Higher Education

### Abstract

The Christian scholar faces an interesting paradox concerning postmodernism's influence in higher education (Edlin, 2009). One of the key components of the modernism paradigm was the ability for humans to reason (Pells, 2007). Universities were based largely on a model in which young adults were expected to first acquire knowledge, principles, and skills, and then later apply that which was learned to their career ambitions, citizenship, or professional development (Willis, 1995). But in the 1960s and 1970s, higher education began to face increasing social pressure as the ideas of modernism associated with knowledge acquisition, power, and authority came under scrutiny and were replaced with plurality and skepticism (Maranto, Redding, & Hess, 2009). This trend largely grew out of the ideas of French philosopher Jean-Francois Lyotard and his work *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (Cary, 1999). Postmodernism has declared Christian scholarship null and void. Conversely, it has unintentionally reignited the quest to understand the spiritual nature of mankind and the world. Thus, Christian scholars have an opportunity to re-engage in a dialogue that had appeared to be closing (Martini, 2008). Ultimately, the Christian scholar must be grounded in an understanding of Biblical principles and open to the empowerment of the Holy Spirit if in fact they are to carry forth the great task of protecting the Truth with which they have been entrusted (2 Timothy 1:14) and they must not shy away from the conversation.

## **The Postmodern Paradox: How the Christian Scholar has Both Declined and Thrived as a Result of Postmodernism's Influence in Higher Education**

Patrick Otto, Oral Roberts University and Lani M. Malcolm, Cameron University

### **Abstract**

The Christian scholar faces an interesting paradox concerning postmodernism's influence in higher education (Edlin, 2009). One of the key components of the modernism paradigm was the ability for humans to reason (Pells, 2007). Universities were based largely on a model in which young adults were expected to first acquire knowledge, principles, and skills, and then later apply that which was learned to their career ambitions, citizenship, or professional development (Willis, 1995). But in the 1960s and 1970s, higher education began to face increasing social pressure as the ideas of modernism associated with knowledge acquisition, power, and authority came under scrutiny and were replaced with plurality and skepticism (Maranto, Redding, & Hess, 2009). This trend largely grew out of the ideas of French philosopher Jean-Francois Lyotard and his work *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (Cary, 1999). Postmodernism has declared Christian scholarship null and void. Conversely, it has unintentionally reignited the quest to understand the spiritual nature of mankind and the world. Thus, Christian scholars have an opportunity to re-engage in a dialogue that had appeared to be closing (Martini, 2008). Ultimately, the Christian scholar must be grounded in an understanding of Biblical principles and open to the empowerment of the Holy Spirit if in fact they are to carry forth the great task of protecting the Truth with which they have been entrusted (2 Timothy 1:14) and they must not shy away from the conversation.

### **Introduction**

The April 3, 2009, *Newsweek* cover story, "The Decline And Fall Of Christian America", by Jon Meacham proclaims: "There it was, an old term with a new urgency: post-Christian. This is not to say that the Christian God is dead, but that he is less of a force in American politics and culture than at

any other time in recent memory." Is this really the case? And what, if anything, can the Christian scholar do to alter or reverse this trajectory? The review of literature will show that the academy is also in a post-Christian state. What role will Christian scholarship play in the preparation of America's future teachers and educational leaders? Will Christian scholarship have a voice in the scholarly discussions held by these future educators?

### **Historical Development of Post-Modernism**

Even prior to the founding of the United States of America, institutions of higher education were being established throughout New England in order to prepare individuals for responsible citizenship. Christian scholarship provided much of the academic background for this process (Barton, 1993). These institutions were founded on the idea that in order for a man to be truly educated, he must be learned in a variety of subjects including, the classical texts, and ancient languages (Nivison, 2010). Yet, it was not long before the first educational reforms began to take place, and what was once deemed Truth and instrumental to the well-being of every educated person was gradually circumvented by progressively liberal ideology (Maranto, Redding, & Hess, 2009).

During the late 18th and early 19th centuries, universities began to experience the first of many transformations as social and political pressure deemed that a classical education was no longer sufficient to provide for the needs of the newly founded nation (Maranto, et al., 2009). In this sense, the concept of what was considered useful education was undergoing just one of many reforms with the introduction of modern literature and science. Yet, during this revolution in curriculum, university leaders paid particular attention to ensuring that any new truths discovered through these other fields of study were understood "within the framework of an immutable moral and divine

Truth” (Nivison, 2010, p. 463). In this sense, institutions of higher education were in a constant balancing act to retain those curricular components deemed essential to a young adult’s moral development and acquisition of self-discipline while simultaneously responding to social, political, and cultural trends (Nivison, 2010). What began as an earnest attempt to provide what college leaders deemed a useful education has become an ever-increasing attempt by institutions of higher education to acquiesce to the social, political, and cultural trends, leaving behind the classical components and what was once deemed divine Truth.

### **Rise of Modernism**

From about the mid-19th century until the mid-20th century, leading thinkers of the day began to question the concept of a compassionate Creator and the certainty of the ideas associated with traditional Christian values such as belief in an absolute truth that existed outside oneself (Oliver, 2001). It was this breaking away from tradition and what were deemed outdated ways of thinking in light of a newly industrialized society that became the foundation of the modernist movement. Thinkers such as Charles Darwin and Karl Marx were instrumental in establishing modernism and their influence continues to be felt in institutions of higher education (Horowitz, 2006).

One of the key components of the modernism paradigm was the ability for humans to reason (Pells, 2007). It was during this time that the scientific method was born, which brought about the idea that the only worthwhile knowledge was that which could be attained through objective, detached observation and reason. In other words, knowledge that did not have a sound scientific basis and could not be empirically verified was considered unimportant and virtually worthless to the progress of mankind (Cary, 1999). Because certain domains such as theology, art, and philosophy could not be empirically verified, they were often marginalized in the academic sphere, and thus, the spiritual component of education became a compartmentalized, private experience that did not warrant attention in the academic arena (Litfin, 2004).

### **Introduction of Postmodernism in Academia**

Throughout the 20th century, the modernist movement continued to dominate academia.

Universities were based largely on a model in which young adults were expected to first acquire knowledge, principles, and skills, and then later apply that which was learned to their career ambitions, citizenship, or professional development (Willis, 1995). But in the 1960s and 1970s, higher education began to face increasing social pressure as the ideas of modernism associated with knowledge acquisition, power, and authority came under scrutiny and were replaced with plurality and skepticism (Maranto, et al., 2009). This trend largely grew out of the ideas of French philosopher Jean-Francois Lyotard and his work *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (Cary, 1999). Lyotard’s work is based on the idea that the metanarratives that largely governed the modern era were simply stories designed to legitimize certain versions of the truth and could not be trusted due to the fact that they were largely created and supported by power structures such as the university (Cary, 1999). Lyotard readily admitted that these metanarratives were so tightly intertwined in the culture and curriculum that denying their existence would prove futile; however, introducing what he referred to as “incredulity towards metanarratives” (Lyotard 1979, p. xxiv) could provide an opportunity to question these long held truths as well as the institutions that had long since generated and supported them. While postmodernists such as Lyotard questioned the longstanding hierarchies and traditions of the university, the ideas he and other postmodernists espoused gradually began to make their way into the classroom and scholarly activity of these institutions beginning largely in the humanities and later moving into the sciences (Cary 1999). It was, however, his “incredulity towards metanarratives” and the epistemological concerns he raised that had the greatest impact on the academic culture and has led to the even further dismantling of the “divine Truth” that once formed the foundation for higher education in America. This was in spite of the fact that Lyotard failed to provide a substantive argument espousing why such a shift in attitude was necessary for human progress (Schulz, 2007).

Because of the overreliance on reason and the cold, rational objectivity of modernism, the postmodernism paradigm appealed to many people groups who felt they and their ideas had been marginalized throughout the 20th century.

Gradually, a shift in educational practices began to occur as the traditional transmission of knowledge and accepted truths gave way to social constructivism and the rejection of reason (Williams, 2007). Martini (2008), in his address to the Catholic Church, declared the postmodern movement a “revolt against an excessively rational mentality” (p. 18) and that we must accept the fact that we now live in a world in which there is a “spontaneous preference for feeling over the will, for impressions over intelligence... This is a world in which sensitivity, emotion and the present moment come first” (p. 17). In one school of thought, the value of the human being was once again returning to the forefront whereas it had largely been disregarded during the modern movement. Yet, this restoration was occurring in a very different way than it had during the classical and romantic periods (Cary, 1999).

Psychologists and educators were beginning to realize that the cold, impersonal principles of behaviorism did not always neatly apply to human behavior and learning and that there was not always a clear, rational explanation for human phenomena. Human beings were not a stable, fixed set of traits that remained consistent over time but were in fact dynamic creatures that experienced the world in very individual, subjective ways (Cary, 1999). It was the realization that without the moral and ethical constraints which are provided by an adherence to a fundamental, absolute truth that exists outside the self and which had largely been discarded during the advancing of modernism that would eventually lead to the cultural crisis taking place in western society today (Maranto, et al., 2009).

### **Postmodernism and the Cultural Crisis**

While postmodernism has done much to restore the importance of human experience, it has done so at the expense of the moral truths and standards that once served to protect the freedom and rights of each individual being (Edlin, 2009). At first glance, the relativism provided by postmodernism may seem appealing in that it supposedly gives equal weight to each individual’s perspective of truth, but this raises the question as to what standard exists when two perspectives of truth collide at the cost of another’s freedom, human rights, or professional standing (Horowitz, 2006). Who then has the authority or right to determine which version of

truth is more valid than the other? Are we in fact moving towards a world driven by what Tran (2010) calls a “mobile conscious” in which the idea of the “Christian Story” being the “meta-narrative against which all personal narratives are evaluated” is no longer sufficient for providing a foundation upon which moral and spiritual developments are grounded (p. 201)? These are questions that raise significant concern within the postmodern paradigm and have been a source of heated debate, particularly between those who continue to hold fast to postmodernist ideals and Christian scholars who believe truth is not made or created as is postulated by postmodernists but rather is discovered through revelation of the divine (Henry & Agee, 2003).

With this move away from the concept of absolute truth has also come an ever-increasing hostility towards those persons who continue to espouse a belief in a worldview grounded in the idea that truth does in fact exist and can be understood (Horowitz & Laksin, 2009). In Chapter 3 of the book, *The Christian College Phenomenon*, Weeks and Isaak (2012) point out one result of academic hostility toward Christian scholars. In summarizing two recent studies exploring the religious faith of university faculty in the United States, Weeks and Isaak lament that according to the studies, only 1 percent of the faculty in the elite universities profess to being “born again Christians” while 37 percent of the faculty in these schools profess atheism or to being agnostic (Weeks & Isaak, 2012). This alone must have a great effect on the volume of Christian academic scholarship. Even in universities that still claim to be evangelical in nature, faculty members may be more inclined to identify with their specific disciplines than the mission of the school, knowing that to openly profess a Christian worldview may compromise future career opportunities in non-sectarian schools (Moll, 2009). Hiebert (2010), in his study of academic freedom in public and Christian Canadian universities, found similar issues for faculty members in public universities conducting their work from a Christian worldview as those experienced by faculty in American universities. What was most troubling was the fact that many faculty members felt Christianity had been singled out from other worldviews. As one sociology professor stated: “I was forbidden to include such [mention of his Christian worldview], yet commented that had my worldview been other than Christian, it would have been welcomed (as

I've observed with Baha'i, native spirituality, humanism, and Buddhist)" (Hiebert, 2010, p. 431). Such statements by faculty members are disturbing in light of the fact that these same institutions of higher learning are often commended for their tolerance and commitment to open dialogue. While discrimination against Christian scholarship in the secular or the Christian academy is not the direct focus of this article, it is one of many causes drawing postmodernism to declare Christian scholarship as being null and void. This discrimination has been studied and should warrant further study.

### **Application Opportunities Afforded by the Postmodern Movement**

While the postmodernist trend has in a sense created a hostile environment for those worldviews that assert absolute truth, it has, on the other hand, cultivated an environment where there is no neutrality in terms of perspective (Maranto, et al., 2009). While some may find this idea disturbing, it can in fact be a liberating opportunity for the Christian academic, for if there is no neutrality, then the Christian perspective carries just as much legitimacy as any other point of view. Just as the Christian academic voices thoughts and ideas are colored by faith, so too are the Muslim, Buddhist, or secular humanist. Even those persons who claim no religious affiliation cannot elude the influence of faith in politics, evolution, or other presuppositions have on scholarly activity (Edlin, 2009). Could this be an opportunity, as one faculty member stated, for Christians to "reap the fruits of it [postmodernism]" (Hiebert, 2010, p. 433)? Could the difficult dialog and the big question concepts that are beginning to percolate through the large educational foundations be an opening for Christian scholarship to reenter the academic discussion (Jacobsen & Jacobsen 2012)?

In addition, Christian scholars must acknowledge the fact that while they may find the present postmodern environment unsettling, none of what has or is occurring surprises an omniscient, omnipresent, all-sovereign God. There are many ways in which the Christian stands to benefit from the situation. According to Martini (2008), the present climate is an "opportunity to show better its [Christianity's] character of challenge, of objectivity, of realism, of the exercise of true

freedom, or a religion linked to the life of the body and not only the mind" (p. 18). Martini's mention of a religion "linked to the life of the body and not only the mind" (p. 18) speaks directly to the critics of modernism who found the overemphasis on reason and rationality an incomplete explanation of the human experience. Martini, also points to the fact that a faith understood as posing some dimension of risk is often more attractive to those searching for answers, particularly in a time in which persons are eagerly seeking to understand the mystery of human existence.

Another issue in which Christian academics hold the potential to benefit from the postmodern movement is in terms of assimilating the theoretical with the practical life application (Willis, 1995). Critics of modernism and the university structure often cite the lack of application for a liberal arts theory-based education in today's society. In this sense, many Christian universities have actually led the way in terms of engaging students in all academic disciplines in service learning projects designed to promote involvement outside the traditional classroom setting. In doing so, service learning helps encourage students to "reflect on what they've experienced and bring the fruits of their concrete value engagements back to their learning (and challenging) of theory" (Willis, 1995, p. 60). By encouraging students to apply what they are learning in the classroom to the outside world, Christian scholars (regardless of whether they are serving in a private or public university) is able to equip the student with valuable life experiences while simultaneously helping bridge the gap between theory and application, which is still present in many academic settings today (Henry & Agee, 2003).

It has been observed that the Christian is often called upon in times of crisis. Theirs is the voice of hope, truth, or condolence when a friend, neighbor, or coworker has heard bad news or experienced a tragedy. The Christian scholar has only to look to the not so distant past for an example of a voice of hope and truth when a culture is (was) in crisis. C.S. Lewis's wartime BBC radio broadcasts that became his book *Mere Christianity* were heard by a nation desperate for hope, truth, and consolation. His work provided the bridge between theory and practical life application (Baggett, Habermas, & Walls, 2008). Today's Christian scholars may or may not

be called upon to speak to the nation in a time of crisis, but they can speak hope, truth, and consolation to individuals, their classes, civic groups, church groups, the local media, and in their academic scholarship. Like Lewis, Christian scholars have the opportunity to postulate academic theory, founded on absolute Truth to provide guidance that has a practical application for the specific audience, academia and society at large.

In addition to promoting the need for life application and dismissing the idea of ideological neutrality, Schulz (2007) reminds us that postmodernism has also raised awareness for other important educational goals such as increasing classroom diversity, cultivating open dialogue, and encouraging creativity in learners. While these educational ambitions are not necessarily exclusive to the postmodern movement, they have received increased attention in recent years due to the shift towards a more democratic, collaborative learning environment. It is therefore up to Christian scholars to seize these opportunities and shifts in educational practices as grounds for advancing the faith rather than submitting to the forces which call for us to be suspicious of truth and those persons who believe they know what that truth is (Litfin, 2004).

As a Christian scholar, Lewis focused on Truth, goodness, and beauty. He found each was strengthened by and accentuated through his Christian worldview (Baggett, et al., 2008). His overt pursuit of Truth at a time and setting not conducive to Christian scholarship and his highly developed skill for logical argument and earned him the right to be heard. He was neither a lunatic nor a liar. He was not easily dismissed and he was not going away. Lewis was able to speak into the lives of the most secular academicians, the common man and woman, and children. From *Miracles*, to *The Screwtape Letters*, to *The Chronicles of Narnia*, he varied his methods for each group, but he did not waver in his focus (Baggett, et al., 2008). With the need or the perceived need for ideological neutrality removed, Christian scholars must, like Lewis, be intentionally overt in focus while being willing and capable of employing postmodern methods for communicating their Biblically-principled message.

### **Implications for Higher Education**

Today the western university continues to waver between the modern and postmodern paradigms,

desperately attempting to cling to the authoritative, conventional means of instruction while simultaneously demanding innovation and academic freedom (Maranto, et al., 2009). It is because of this inability to reconcile the two that many universities are struggling in their identities as institutions. Many scholars feel that the traditional methods of educating citizens are outdated and no longer relevant to adult learners of today and that unless postmodern philosophy is more fully incorporated into America's educational system, minority institutions and people groups will continue to suffer inequities in terms of funding and access to resources (Williams, 2007). However, is postmodernism really the answer to solving the nation's problems? Or is it only serving to marginalize other people groups, such as Christians, that were once considered mainstream in American culture?

While the western university may be celebrated as being an arena for the cultivation and exchange of ideas, it is in these very same institutions that certain voices are being silenced, particularly those who openly espouse a Christian worldview (Horowitz & Laksin, 2009). So why, in a seemingly postmodern society, do we see many institutions of higher education restricting the expression of opposing viewpoints, particularly those that postulate ideas that fall outside the mainstream? Are scholars afraid of the consequences of a Christian worldview being shared in the academic arena? Do scholars recognize (perhaps at a subconscious level) the unexplainable power of Christianity and fear that it must be contained and suppressed?

If society has come to realize that plurality and skepticism are paramount to our progress as human beings, then we must be open to the exchange of ideas from all perspectives, even those that differ significantly from our own. Yet, we find that Christian universities (which are often portrayed in the media as being close-minded) are in fact more open to debate and the discussion of controversial subject matters than their public counterparts (Litfin, 2004). In many instances faculty members experience overt oppression for their Christian worldviews despite the fact that they work in public institutions that pride themselves on academic freedom and diversity. As one faculty member, who had taught in both public and Christian higher education institutions, stated: "...public universities

do not have pure, unbounded freedom for academic thought – this is a myth” (Hiebert, 2010, p. 434). This is not to say that public universities should be shunned because of their guidelines regarding academic freedom, but that these universities should not be heralded as being free of ideology. For it is clear that faculty members working in public universities face ideological pressures that hold serious consequences when it comes to one’s career (Maranto, et al., 2009). Because of this, Christian universities have a unique opportunity to set the example for the open, honest exchange of ideas in an environment that promotes respect and scholarly inquiry. By providing such an atmosphere, Christian universities will enhance their reputation in terms of sound academic scholarship and give credence to the fact that Christian scholars do not fear debate in the academic arena, but in fact welcome the opportunity and challenge to share their ideas. If the ideas propagated by Christian scholars are based on sound research and scientific inquiry, then this opportunity to debate and exchange information will only serve to advance the Christian worldview as being a formidable perspective that deserves the same respect afforded other perspectives (Litfin, 2004). Is that in fact what drives people to suppress the Christian in the classroom? Or is the modernist philosophy still exuding its influence over the university to the exclusion of those facets of our being that make us uniquely human, namely our spirituality and emotional qualities (Hiebert, 2010)?

If Christian universities (and subsequently Christian scholars) are going to take advantage of this opportunity to establish themselves as credible establishments of higher learning and academic inquiry, they must be willing to engage in self-reflection and analysis of their philosophy regarding Christian academics and scholarship (Litfin, 2004). As the Apostle Paul declares in his letter to the Church at Thessalonica, we are to “test all things; hold fast what is good. Abstain from every form of evil” (1 Thessalonians 5:21-22, NKJV). Therefore, the Christian scholar must critically analyze the components of both the modern and postmodern positions so as to determine that which is good and necessary to the instruction of future generations, for each of these positions holds the opportunity for good and evil (Martini, 2008). It is not enough for the Christian university to simply serve as a safe place for Christian scholars to find ways to integrate their faith in with the secular works and discoveries

of their discipline. Rather, the Christian university must provide the resources and support for the Christian scholar to engage in work that promotes the creative and redemptive work of the triune God and tests all things as we are commissioned by Scripture (Glanzer, 2008).

While the Christian university may provide an environment where Christian academics feel more free to conduct their research and operate under the assumptions of a Biblical worldview, many Christian scholars agree that having the opportunity to teach and research in a public or secular university can also be a positive experience as it allows them to confront ideas that are different from their own and challenges them to really think through their own ideology. Yet, this can only be the case when those same scholars are able to do so without the fear of repercussion (Hiebert, 2010). Could this be why we see few Christian intellectuals speaking out regarding the world’s tough issues? Are Christians being silenced through implicit means associated with the pressure to achieve tenure and promotion? Or is it because of our own lack of understanding what Christian scholarship entails that we fail to be a formidable force in the academic arena? We believe it is a combination of forces working to stifle the voice of Christian intellectualism in the 21st century, and that if we are ever to regain the respect and status once afforded great Christian intellectualists, then we must be willing to invest ourselves in the creative and redemptive work of a triune God who demands nothing less than our very best. We believe that over time we have compromised our standing in the intellectual arena by seeking to assimilate our faith into our academic disciplines instead of seeing our every activity as being part of the ongoing work of the triune God. For God did not call us to engage in a limited sense of what constitutes the “spiritual” but rather Christ reconciled to himself ALL things, whether here on earth or in heaven (Colossians 1:20).

### **Conclusion**

The Christian scholar faces an interesting paradox concerning postmodernism’s influence in higher education. On one hand, postmodernism has driven our country into a cultural crisis marked by moral relativism and social constructivism. When a society has been taught to question everything and that there are no absolute truths, it is understandable



when that society reaches a point when it yearns for stability. Thus, postmodernism has reignited mankind's quest to understand the spiritual components of the universe. Christian scholars in the 21st century have a unique opportunity to engage in dialogue that at one time had no place in the academic arena. The conversation of great ideas and life's mysteries, thought to have been resolved, has been rekindled. Ultimately, Christian scholars must ground themselves in an understanding of Biblical principles and open themselves to the empowerment of the Holy Spirit if they are to carry forth the great task of protecting the Truth with which they have been entrusted (2 Timothy 1:14).

Postmodern thought, while attempting to diminish and exclude Christian scholarship, has in fact created an environment that does allow for Christian scholars to have an answer to life's big questions. Today's Christian scholars have an opportunity to recapture some of the influence that was once held. They have the opportunity to show that *Newsweek's* 2009 obituary was premature. Perhaps we are not quite in as post-Christian an era as *Newsweek* proclaimed. Christian scholars must not shy away from the great conversations. These Christian scholars must not be afraid to step out of their Christian universities and into the mainstream of culture. They must first earn the right to be heard and then they must speak to be heard. And as society moves from one crisis to the next, perhaps our culture will choose to listen just as the sophisticates did from the bomb shelters under London.

In these talks, I've had to say a good deal about prayer. And before going on to my main subject tonight, I'd like to deal with a difficulty some people find about the whole idea of prayer. Somebody put it to me by saying: "I can believe in God alright, but what I can't swallow is this idea of Him listening to several hundred million human beings who are all addressing Him at the same moment."

And I find quite a lot of people feel that difficulty.

Well, the first thing to notice is that the whole sting of it comes in the words "at the same moment." Most of us can imagine a God attending to any number of claimants if

only they come one by one and He has an endless time to do it in. So what's really at the back of the difficulty is this idea of God having to fit too many things into one moment of time.

Well that, of course, is what happens to us. Our life comes to us moment by moment. One moment disappears before the next comes along, and there's room for precious little in each. That's what Time is like. And, of course, you and I tend to take it for granted that this Time series — this arrangement of past, present and future — isn't simply the way life comes to us but is the way all things really exist. We tend to assume that the whole universe and God Himself are always moving on from a past to a future just as we are. But many learned men don't agree with that. I think it was the Theologians who first started the idea that some things are not in Time at all. Later, the Philosophers took it over. And now some of the scientists are doing the same.

Almost certainly God is not in Time. His life doesn't consist of moments following one another. If a million people are praying to Him at ten-thirty tonight, He hasn't got to listen to them all in that one little snippet which we call "ten-thirty." Ten-thirty, and every other moment from the beginning to the end of the world, is always the Present for Him. If you like to put it that way, He has infinity in which to listen to the split second of prayer put up by a pilot as his plane crashes in flames.

That's difficult, I know. Can I try to give something, not the same, but a bit like it. Suppose I'm writing a novel. I write "Mary laid down her book; next moment came a knock at the door." For Mary, who's got to live in the imaginary time of the story, there's no interval between putting down the book and hearing the knock. But I, her creator, between writing the first part of that sentence and the second, may have gone out for an hour's walk and spent the whole hour thinking about Mary. I know that's not a perfect example, but it may just give a glimpse of what I mean. The point I want to drive home is that God has infinite attention,

infinite leisure to spare for each one of us.  
He doesn't have to take us in the line.  
You're as much alone with Him as if you  
were the only thing He'd ever created.

When Christ died, He died for you  
individually just as much as if you'd been  
the only man in the world.

This is a partial transcript of a C.S. Lewis radio  
broadcast entitled "Mere Men." It is extracted from  
a BBC Series radio broadcast entitled "Beyond  
Personality"; originally aired on March 21, 1944.

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