

***WHY WE THINK THE WAY WE DO:
A HISTORY OF WESTERN WORLDVIEW***

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I. Western worldview to Christian faith

A. Beginnings of Greek philosophy (origin and development):

1. *Environment*

The Greek worldview developed amid the mountainous terrain of the Greek peninsula, developing a strong and very active race. Numerous harbors created an outlet for emigration to other lands. Economic progress stimulated Greek development and created natural channels for influence. The physical environment of the Greek peninsula and islands was ideal for constructing a culture of global interaction and significance.

2. *Politics*

Greek government evolved from the system of patriarchal monarch during the era of Homer, through aristocracy, finally to democracy. The Greek political ideal embraced the first functional democracy known to Western history. Hellenic city-states governed themselves, both on the mainland and in their islands and colonies.

3. *Religious origins*

Two aspects were most significant. First was the *anthropomorphic* religion of the gods of Olympus, as made popular by the myths of Homer. These gods were subject to the Fates, and exhibited character notable for the absence of laws or morals.

Hesiod, an eighth-century farmer, composed epic poems which sought to emphasize a more global moral order. His *Theogony* accounts for the phenomena of the world in terms of divine beings. His literary work was the first *cosmogony*, accounting for the origin of the world.

The second religious tradition behind the Greek worldview was comprised of the *mystery cults*. In these secretive societies, local gods were thought to represent elemental forces crucial to people engaged in a struggle with the soil. Mystery cult deities included Dionysus, the barbaric god of the vine, and Demeter, goddess of the native countryside. Cultic rituals known as "mystery rites" were used to achieve unity between the initiated and their god.

This movement led to the Orphic religion, a development of extreme importance. This cult appeared in Greece in the 6th century B.C. Its purification rituals and ascetic life and literature were advanced under the name of Orpheus, a legendary singer taken by the movement as its prophet. Orpheus believed the soul to be an immortal god imprisoned in the body, doomed to reincarnation. The soul is released from the body by rituals, ascetic lifestyle, and knowledge of

the correct magical formula after death. This tradition became very important to the Pythagoreans (to be discussed shortly).

B. Milesians/Ionians: the nature of the world

1. Beginnings

Philosophy in the ancient world sought the truth about the nature of the universe. This search was undertaken for several reasons, leading to a two-fold beginning. First was the movement of the Ionians, around 600 B.C. Curiosity was their driving impulse, and they sought a natural explanation for the existence and nature of the world. Second was the desire for deification common to the Greek cities of southern Italy in the second half of the 6th century. These philosophers sought to escape mortal life for return to divine existence. Each movement made crucial contributions to the movement which would evolve into the "Western" worldview.

2. The Ionians

The city-states of Ionia, on the western coast of Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey), were the richest of the Greek communities. They were characterized by religious indifference and natural curiosity. Three men, all from the city of Miletus, became famous for the remarkable intellectual contributions they would make to Western culture.

3. Thales

Thales, one of the "Seven Wise Men" of Greece, was the first of the three to suggest a cosmogony. He suggested that water is the element common to all reality, as it "existed before all exiting things came to be, out of which all things came and into which all things return." He saw the earth as a flat disc swimming on the surface of water. Thales was also aware of electrical attraction, and attributed "souls" to magnets.

Thales was among the first to gain some understanding of weather patterns and predictability. He learned to forecast eclipses and weather changes; he predicted a bumper olive crop for a certain year, bought all the olive presses, and made a fortune.

4. Anaximander

His disciple was Anaximander, the man responsible for the first sundial and the first map. He made several important astronomical discoveries, and offered his own cosmogony. He believed that reality is caused by *apeiron*, the "uncertain" or "unbounded." He argued that the world is created by opposites separated from the unbounded: hot and cold produce humidity; humidity produces earth, air, and fire; these elements create the sun, moon, stars, and so on.

5. Anaximines

Anaximines was the disciple of Anaximander. Only this fragment remains from his writings: "Just as the air which is our soul surrounds us, so do the wind and air encompass the world."

According to him, the universe resembles a man, with air as the breath of life. The universe can be seen as weather, with hot/cold opposites and extremes, governed by the law of balance. He did not accept the existence of omnipotence or a Creator.

6. *Significance*

These cosmogonies were revolutionary in that they explained the world naturally. Homer had articulated a world governed by fate, and Hesiod a world in moral order. Thales and his followers were the first to understand the world on the basis of nature alone.

Ionia began to decline after its conquest by the Persians in 546 B.C., culminating in the destruction of Miletus in 494 B.C. And so intellectual life moved to South Italy and Sicily, colonies of mainland Greece.

C. Italians: emphasis on order in the universe

1. *Religious background*

The southern Italians were motivated strongly by their desire to experience spiritual liberation from the world. The Orphic cult influenced their worldview, engendering little interest in worldly events but great fascination with the spiritual. The Italians saw their souls as imprisoned in their bodies, and wanted to release them through right actions and thoughts.

2. *Pythagoras*

Pythagoras emigrated from Samos to South Italy, and founded the Pythagorean Brotherhood at Croton around 530 B.C. His philosophical construction was detailed. He believed that the intellect makes the soul divine, and that truth is discovered in harmony, order, and proportion. Order is best understood mathematically (leading to modern mathematical physics).

In his cosmogony, form (the male principle) is good, while matter (the female principle) is evil. All things evolve from this process.

D. The question of change

1. *Heraclitus: change as the principle of the universe*

Heraclitus was from Ephesus. He held nothing but contempt for any ideas but his own, claiming that Homer "deserved to be whipped." His contemporaries called him "Skoteinos" (the Dark One), for his writing style was difficult to follow.

He considered "change" to be the law of being in the universe. This crucial construction viewed the universe in perpetual conflict, in sharp contrast to the unchanging form of Pythagoras. The world is governed by *logos*, the law of principle or measure. This concept, first used by Heraclitus, is the living intelligence or "god" which holds the universe together. All people have the choice of opening to the *logos* or living in private ignorance. All of life finds unity in reason.

The world can be seen as fire, for it is changing yet the same. Earth, water, and fire are the three basic substances which comprise reality. The world exists as opposites, according to his "bent bow" theory: the world seems at rest, but only because the string and the bow pull equally against each other.

His cosmogony taught that the sun is the size of a plate, and is extinguished and relit daily. He saw the heavens as mighty vaults rotating around the earth.

2. Parmenides: permanence as the principle of the universe

Xenophanes of Colophon represented the opposite conviction: the world is one, and the world process is to be worshiped. He protested against popular religious beliefs: "If oxen, horses or lions were able to draw pictures as men do, oxen would draw gods that were oxenlike, horses gods that were horselike, and lions lionlike gods. . . . The Ethiopians say the gods are black and flat-nosed, while the Thracians declare they are blue-eyed and red-headed."

Xenophanes influenced Parmenides, a younger contemporary of Heraclitus. He was the first Greek philosopher to utilize rational arguments. His starting point: "That which is *is*, and it is impossible for it not to be." This is the "Way of Truth." $A = A$, and cannot be anything else. Change is impossible—what is, is uncreated, indestructible, eternal, and unchangeable.

This is the *One*—unchanging, immovable, a geometric solid. Thus Parmenides' dilemma: how do the Many come from the One? He never solved this problem. His significance was that he emphasized the rational over the experiential.

Zeno of Elea, a disciple of Parmenides, attempted to prove that motion is impossible. His "paradoxes" showed either the bankruptcy of reason or the unreliability of the senses.

3. The Pluralists: the world composed of parts, not a single whole

Empedocles of Agrigentum helped resolve Parmenides' dilemma with the argument that the world is composed of several elements, themselves unchanging, which together make up reality as we experience it. He added air to Heraclitus' earth, fire, and water. He saw unification/love as working against division/strife; individual entities exist only when these are not in harmony.

He also believed that blood boiling about the heart gives us the power of thought; the hair of the head is of the substance of the feathers of birds and the leaves of trees. Girls are born when the male and female seed fall upon the cold ground; otherwise, boys are born (thus it follows that men are darker, more courageous and fiery-tempered than women).

Anaxagoras of Clazomena furthered Empedocles' doctrine, teaching that matter is composed of indestructible and invisible bodies. He called these the "seeds" of matter, and believed that elements are separated out of them. He posited the *nous* (mind, intelligence) as the moving and directing force of the universe.

4. *The Atomists: mechanistic philosophy of nature*

Leucippus of Miletus, the first "atomist," divided all of nature into innumerable little particles. Democritus, the "laughing philosopher" (and the father of ethics), identified *atamoi* ("that which cannot be cut") as the elementary bodies of the universe. His ethical thought centered on peace of mind.

E. Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle

1. *The period*

The Persian Wars ended with the battle of Plataea in 479 B.C. For the "Great Fifty Years," Athens was the greatest power in Greece. Religion and morality, based on older traditions, came under increasing criticism. The Peloponnesian War (Sparta vs. Athens) lasted for 27 years, though Athens knew she would lose for the last ten years of the conflict. The war ended in humiliation for the Athenians.

The role of philosophy during this period was to disrupt the traditions. As the ancient religions proved bankrupt, many turned to the philosophers for answers. The more cultured concentrated on success in public life. Handbooks for various skilled occupations and arts came into circulation. And schools sprang up with teachers called "sophists" (learned sages).

2. *The Sophists*

These were traveling professors and international figures. They charged large fees for coming to cities, and gravitated eventually to Athens. Their central subject was rhetoric (the art of persuasion by eloquent speech). And so they concentrated on the verbal arts, with persuasion as their chief goal. The Sophists were hated by others, for they could argue in public and win nearly any debate.

Their life philosophy argued for humanity's natural rights, and thus opposed slavery (a very uncommon position for the day). They also supported subjective ethics. Their importance: they awakened other philosophers to the significance of justifying their positions through argument and reason. They emphasized the importance of linguistic analysis, and led to the responses of Socrates and Plato.

3. *Socrates*

Socrates (470-399 B.C.) was determined to find a better solution to the problem of what is "good" in opposition to the subjective ethics of the Sophists. He believed there is a Good, and that we can know it. This central tenet was the basis of his entire philosophy.

a. *Life*

The most famous figure in Western philosophical history was a squat, little man with ugly, strangely staring eyes. The son of the stonecutter Sophroniscus and midwife Phainarete, he was

by trade a stonecutter himself. However, he did not follow this vocation, a fact which brought him a great deal of abuse from his faithful wife, Xanthippe.

Plato speaks of Socrates' amazing physical toughness, and claims that he could drink any man under the table "when necessary." He maintained great moral courage, refusing to compromise his beliefs even at the point of death. He demonstrated great intellectual concentration as well. For instance, while serving in the Athenian army at Potidaea, he stood for a day and a night thinking out a problem, indifferent to his surroundings or the needs of his body.

Xenophon, one of his followers, says of him:

Socrates was so pious that he undertook nothing without the will of the gods; so just that he did not do one injustice—more than that, he was kind to everyone who came into contact with him. He was so much the master of himself that he never preferred what was merely pleasurable to what was good; and so virtuous that he never made a mistake in the choice between the good, the better and the worse—in a word, he was the best and happiest of mankind.

His significance: no one else in the entire history of Western thought has changed the direction of philosophy so completely simply by what he was. Yet we know of him only through his followers, primarily the *Dialogues* of Plato and the *Memoirs of Socrates* by Xenophon. He wrote nothing himself.

He began philosophy as a divine mission, as he came to the conclusion that he really was the wisest of all men. At least he knew that he knew nothing, while others were ignorant of their ignorance. His basic statement came from the oracle at Delphi: "Know thyself."

b. *Worldview*

Socrates' method was to ask questions of what was commonly believed, in an attempt to know the truth. His method possessed five characteristics: (1) skeptical, beginning with Socrates' real or professed ignorance of the truth; (2) conversational, using dialogue to discover the truth; (3) conceptual or definitional, seeking the acquisition of a correct definition of the truth; (4) empirical, testing definitions by common experience, and (5) deductive, deducing life consequences and applications.

His basic thought can be summarized in five statements. First, the definition of the soul: the personality of life. The soul is "life-breath," as vapor needing body. He was the first to achieve this understanding. Second, care of the soul is our religious duty. The soul makes us good or bad. It is our life purpose to maintain the health of our souls.

Third, soul-care is done through our knowledge of goodness. The soul will always do good when it knows the good. Virtue is thus the knowledge of the good, as right action follows inevitably from right knowledge. Fourth, knowledge of the good comes from within us. Socrates' method thus seeks to help us discover the truth for ourselves. And last, knowledge is based on the "Good," the objective, unchanging, universal Good in the universe. His emphasis on an objective, knowable Good is extremely significant for the Western worldview.

c. *Followers*

The Cyrenaic school, founded by Aristippus, led to pure hedonism and the movement of Epicurus. The Cynics, established by Antisthenes, argued for freedom from all wants and led to the Stoics.

4. *Plato*

a. *Life*

Socrates' most important disciple was born as Aristocles, later called Plato ("the Broad"). Plato (427-348 B.C.) was born to an aristocratic family which traced itself to Poseidon, god of the sea, and Solon, the lawgiver. He was a poet in earlier years; but when he was 20, Plato met Socrates and changed his life's ambition to philosophy.

After the Spartan defeat of Athens in 404 B.C., Plato left his home city in disillusionment and wandered for years through Greece, Italy, Sicily, and Egypt, meditating constantly on the thought of Socrates. He finally returned to Athens to take up the work of his former teacher. Here he founded the first great philosophical school of Athens, known as the Academy. He spent the rest of his life at his Academy, and stayed active in teaching and writing to his death.

b. *Writings*

All of Plato's writings have been preserved, but little of his oral teaching is extant. His writings take the form of dialogues rather than systematic treatments. He was a great writer of Greek prose as well. His early writings seem to record Socrates' thought, and later to develop more of his own ideas through Socrates as a literary character.

Plato's thought is not systematic. It typically begins with Socrates' definition of the Good. Plato's worldview came from two roots. First, the Pythagorean teaching that the soul is a fallen good; and second, the moral doctrine of Socrates.

c. *Ontology* (view of reality)

Plato believed that a world of eternal realities exists; he calls these the "Forms" or ideas. They are separate from the sensible world, and known only by the intellect. The "forms" are unchanging, and the only objects of true knowledge. When our minds arrive at a true universal definition, they perceive these "forms."

The "forms" comprise a perfect world, of which the sensible world is only a "shadow." The "forms" are the standard by which we must order our lives, and are based on the Good.

d. *Doctrine of the soul*

The soul is our intellectual and moral personality, and is the most important part of our lives. It is more real than the body, and immortal in nature. Plato did not explain the embodiment of the

soul in the body (and did not refer to an Orphic "fall" of the soul). The soul learns through *anamnesis* ("reminding"): it knew the "forms" in its divine existence before its physical incarnation, and is aroused by contemplation of beautiful ideas to remember these "forms." Here we find the first epistemology (theory of knowledge).

The soul is made of three parts. First is the head: reason, the rightful ruler of the whole. Second is the breast: higher emotions. Third is the belly: lower, carnal lusts and desires. These three parts are unified by *eros* (desire).

Plato made famous the charioteer image of the soul: the driver (reason), aided by his good and tractable horse (the higher emotions), fights a mighty battle to subdue the undisciplined fury of the bad horse (carnal lust) which is still necessary to the team. In later years, Plato envisioned the soul as the bridge between the world of the forms and the world of shadows;

e. *Theology*

Plato believed that the world is moved, ruled, and directed towards the good by a living and intelligent principle or principles. His *Timaeus* is the source for his theology. He posits a divine craftsman who forms body and soul in the material universe from pre-existing materials. These materials are the source of evil in the world, for they are the irrational element in the cosmos, chaos in perpetual motion.

The result: the universe is a complete copy of the Form archetype. Despite its imperfections, it is the best possible universe, since it is ordered. This craftsman image is more a symbol than a basis for Platonic monotheism. He is not the ultimate creator, for he uses existing materials. Neither is he omnipotent.

Plato's theology is characterized as "natural theology," for it is concerned with a god as understood from nature. His theology is not based on supernatural revelation, but that which the soul is able to remember from the "forms."

f. *Other contributions*

Plato's *ethics* posit objective values, in opposition to the subjective ethics of the Sophists. He began with Socrates' definition of the care of the soul as our most important business. Virtue is found in our obedience to our reason.

His *politics* are an extension of his moral teaching and concern for virtue. Justice is the virtue of order. Three classes of society preserve and promote justice (cf. *The Republic*). First is the "guardian" class, made of philosophers (corresponding to reason in the soul). Next is the "warrior" class, made of soldiers (the nobler emotions). They are to work in close cooperation with guardians to dominate and order the great mass of the people. Last is the working class (the lower emotions). Agricultural, manufacturing, and trade are carnal desires, since their motive is love of gain.

To produce these classes, the guardians are to be deprived of all natural marriage, private property and family life. Their children never know their parents, but grow up in a general nursery and thus are protected from all concerns but the rational. Plato advocated a city-state on an island, strongly discouraging foreign contact.

Plato's *aesthetics* see art as a distraction, for it draws our attention from the Forms to objects. Beauty is critiqued in terms of order. However, art plays an important role in molding character, and thus must be strictly censored. While Plato opposed creative arts, he used myths to communicate difficult concepts and communicate direct experience.

Plato's *scientific* contributions were significant. He believed, unlike most of his contemporaries, that the earth is not stationary but revolves around an axis. He urged the standardization of weights and measures, and the length of a year at 365 days.

g. Significance

The central tradition of Western thought owes its very existence to Plato. He was the philosopher of beginnings, as he started the serious discussion of almost every great philosophical question. He argued for an unchanging standard of morality in both public and private life. And he maintained that the soul is the most important part of humanity.

Plato's Academy continued for hundreds of years. But Plato never solved his central problem: the relation of the Forms to the world of objects. This contribution, Aristotle would give the West.

5. Aristotle

a. Life

Aristotle (384-322 B.C.) was the greatest of Plato's pupils. A native of Stagira in Chalcidice (on the northern coast of the Aegean Sea), he was of pure Greek blood, from the edge of the Greek world, and within the sphere of influence of the power of Macedonia. Aristotle's father was a doctor with a long family medical tradition, leading to his own passionate interest in biology. Biology would become the key science of his philosophy.

At the age of 18, Aristotle entered Plato's Academy. He remained 20 years, until Plato's death in 384 B.C. He sometimes maintained an excellent relationship with Plato. At other times, he would linger after lectures with incisive questions and challenges. Plato once referred to him as the "mind" of the Academy. When Aristotle once conducted a sharp, hardly justified polemic against the master, Plato compared him with a filly that kicks the dam whose milk it drinks. When Plato's favorite pupils were once absent, Aristotle argued so ruthlessly with the 80-year-old master that Plato was obliged to remain away from the Academy for three months.

At Plato's death, Aristotle was disappointed not to be put in charge of the Academy; Plato's nephew was given this position instead. And so he moved to the principality of an old student named Hermias. He married his niece, and wrote a noble poem when Hermias was later

betrayed and crucified. Aristotle spent time on the coast of Asia Minor studying marine biology. From 343-340 B.C., he served as tutor to the young heir to the throne of Macedon, Alexander.

He returned to Athens in 335 B.C. and founded his school, named the Lyceum. Here he established the first important library in Greece, with a large collection of maps and a natural history museum. His curriculum was broader than that of the Academy, as it included natural sciences, biology, literature, psychology, and the new science of logic. Aristotle's writings mainly represent lectures delivered there.

The Lyceum was also known as the *Peripatetic* ("to walk about"), due to his practice of walking through his spacious gardens with his students while discussing the subjects they were discussing. In 323, with the death of Alexander, an anti-Macedonian sentiment caused him to give up the Lyceum and flee the country. Aristotle died in 322 B.C.

b. *Character of his thought*

Aristotle's major work was a tremendous project: gathering all the learning of the past and present, in all the diverse fields of science, philosophy, rhetoric, law, and even literature, and organizing this knowledge into meaningful patterns which would be available to posterity. He thus developed a philosophy on the largest possible scale, establishing the great divisions of philosophy which are still generally accepted. In every one of them, he did work of the greatest permanent value.

Aristotle developed logic as the method of investigation for this monumental work. Here he was concerned with a study of the structure of rational thought as an instrument for the attainment of truth. He created several crucial concepts:

- *The law of identity: $A = A$, and must remain itself*
- *The law of contradiction: $A = B$ or $A = \neg B$; both cannot be true*
- *The law of excluded middle: $A = B$ must either be true or false within a given logical context*

He developed deductive reasoning, beginning with generally accepted truths and deducing principles which result from them. And he insisted on definitions, seeking to classify all matter by groups and classes. The result was the new science of biology.

c. *Rejection of the Forms*

As against Plato's immutable world of Forms, Aristotle argued for concrete, individual things. Rational beings must know objective truths, but the world of Forms cannot be known by rational beings through experience. As a result, the individual things which we perceive are the primary realities. His conclusion: the Forms are contained within the objects.

Here is Aristotle's chief point of difference with Plato; this position will have enormous consequences for later theology, especially with the Scholastics.

Individual, concrete entities are real and scientifically knowable. The "substance" is the thing which actually exists. The "form" makes a substance what it is; matter incarnates the form and is the possibility of change. The "form" is Act (actuality), while the matter is Potency (what the form can potentially be). Things thus change in quantity, quality, position, etc., but they cannot change in themselves because of their form.

d. *Other contributions*

Aristotle's *scientific* positions: the universe is eternal and all-embracing, with nothing outside it. It is spherical in shape, without void. We live in a hierarchically ordered universe in which every change and movement has its cause and purpose. The universe is a sphere in which heavenly bodies rotate around the earth; this picture would persist until well after the time of Copernicus.

His *theology* is called First Philosophy or Metaphysics (because it came *meta*, "after" the section on Physics in his edited works). If substances are in constant motion, where does the motion begin? Something must start the motion—a First Cause or Unmoved Mover. This Cause must be purely immaterial, since matter is potency; it must be capable of causing motion, unlike Plato's Forms; and it must ceaselessly exercise this power. There must be a Mind, self-sufficient and containing all knowledge in itself.

In his *psychology*, the soul is the highest principle of life and being. There is no disembodied immortality, no life for the soul after the death of the body (except for the "separate reason," the highest part of the human soul). Thought is the highest activity of the soul. The soul operates in the body through the *pneuma*—life-giving heat, described as "hot air." This is the active material principle which, under the movement of the soul, produces bodily movement. We are distinguished from all other living things by the possession of reasons.

Aristotle's *Ethics* are the first comprehensive study of morality. He was concerned with finding the purpose for our existence. We all aim at *eudaemonia*, well-being or exalted happiness. The life of reason leads to this happiness, manifested in a complete life.

Virtue is a settled disposition of character and right behavior. The life of reason flourishes when we follow a balanced course, the "golden mean." The highest activity of reason is contemplation. Here we find perfection in the direct knowledge of the realities revealed to us by metaphysics, mathematics, and the philosophy of nature.

In Aristotle's *aesthetics*, art is cognitive. But because reality is in the sense world, not the Forms, art is more valuable for him than for Plato. Art imitates life, and appeals to the emotions as well as the intellect. Catharsis is an important artistic function, as the spirit is purged. Tragic drama especially operates psychologically to relieve us of the oppressive emotions of pity and fear.

e. *Legacy*

Aristotle is said to have written more than a thousand manuscripts. Unfortunately, only a few of his writings, in the form of notes used in lectures, survive. These were assembled by his pupil, Theophrastus, and sent to Asia Minor for safekeeping. Here they remained 150 years until they were translated into Latin, Syrian, and Arabic. Somehow they were again lost; not until the fifth century A.D. were his works rediscovered and translated from the Arabic manuscripts in which they were found.

From the fifth to the fifteenth century, Aristotle was regarded as the fountainhead of all knowledge. Thomas Aquinas called him "the Philosopher"; Dante described him as "the Master of those who know." Education and culture were based on this thought, and his works were studied and memorized as dogma.

Reaction against his worldview came with the Renaissance and Francis Bacon. The flaws in his methods, conclusions, and theories were pointed out. Some scientists of the modern period have maintained that blind acceptance of the errors of Aristotle stunted the growth of science for hundreds of years.

The history of Greek philosophy after Aristotle is a story of continuous decline. No great, original systems appear; thinkers for the most part are content to repeat the opinions of Plato and Aristotle. From his time to ours, no other person has made such a serious addition to so many branches of knowledge by his or her own effort.

F. The ethical period

The age of Alexander led to marked change in Greek society. Expansion increased interaction, enlarging old systems of thought and belief. The old systems were questioned, and people looked for a rule of life to restore a sense of security and stability. They were not as concerned with speculative systems which might explain all reality as with a means of living in the present.

1. The Cynics

Antisthenes was a companion of Socrates. "Cynic" comes from his followers' willingness to go to any extreme to make their point in public (the word means "dog" in Greek).

This school advocated a way of life more than a philosophy. Its chief doctrine: virtue, life according to nature, is all that matters. We should cut all necessities to the barest minimum. Cynics advocated the life of a wandering beggar, going barefoot and wearing a single, rough garment. The staff and beggar's wallet became their symbol; their food was lentils and their drink was cold water. Their goal was utter tranquility against all the changes of fortune.

The Cynics attacked all forms of convention and moral standards. They felt themselves to be on a divine mission, and sharply criticized the establishment (thus "cynic" today).

2. The Stoics

Zeno founded this school, one of the most famous in ancient history. His master was Crates, the most attractive of the Cynics, a cheerful hunchback who was enormously popular in Athens. Crates went from house to house, reconciling family quarrels and giving good advice. Zeno was more a professional philosopher.

Stoicism was first and foremost a rule of life. Its goal: to find a rational basis for ethics. The school was founded on a rational and complete doctrine about the universe and our place in it. Stoic philosophy is divided into three parts: Logic, Physics, and Ethics.

Logic was a real part of the philosophy, not just a tool (as with Aristotle). The Stoics were concerned with grammar and learning only through the bodily senses. Sense impressions are to be tested by reason; if they are stable and ordered, only then are they valuable.

In Stoic *physics*, the universe is perfectly rational. The active principle is fire; God, or Divine Providence, is a universal, cosmic principle who forms, orders, and rules the universe. God's highest manifestation is Reason, the ruling principle in humanity. The Stoics saw the universe as eternally cycling from destruction to rebirth in an ordered fashion.

Their *ethics* were firmly rooted in their physics. Our whole end is to live in absolute conformity with reason, the Ruling Principle of life. We will ultimately be forced to obey the decrees of the Divine Reason (Fate), though we can choose how we will obey. We are like a dog tied to a cart—we can cooperate or be dragged along. Our duty is joyful assent to the decrees of Fate.

This assent leads to Apathy, freedom from all passion, emotions, and affection. Thus the grim figure of the Stoic Sage, a person utterly indifferent to all external things. For instance, Epictetus (A.D. 50) counseled, "If you caress your wife or child, say to yourself that it is not different than if you were caressing any person. Then, if he dies, you will be unaffected."

The Stoics strongly influenced later politics and thought, especially the doctrine of natural law from the universal decrees of Divine Reason: law is the same for all persons. This construction led to the classical Roman Law under the Empire.

3. *The Epicureans*

Epicurus (341-270 B.C.) has been more misunderstood than any other ancient philosopher. The common understanding of his philosophy is a comfortable sensual hedonism combined with a crude atheism. This picture arose largely because many prostitutes came to join the movement. The actual situation: a small, exclusive group of refined quietists, of the highest moral character, with an extraordinary devotion to their founder and a most attractive theory and practice, committed to strong and loyal friendship.

Epicurus himself was an amiable and cheerful man, of extreme modesty; "Send me a cheese," he wrote to a friend, "that I may fare sumptuously." Epicureanism was extremely unpopular in the ancient world, as its teachings countered those of the Stoics, Plato, and Aristotle.

The aim of life: happiness as the absence of pain and presence of tranquility. Thus the Epicureans denied the Stoic doctrine of Fate as it disturbs our mind and prevents our happiness.

Their *epistemology* was the doctrine of the "images." The physical world is made of "atoms" (with the Atomists). Atoms on the outer layer of things are given off as "images" of their material subjects. These images float through the air until they contact a perceiving subject. They then make actual physical impression on the sense organ, penetrating through the pore directly to the mind and producing mind-pictures.

Images are sometimes mixed (a centaur is the combination of images from a man and a horse). Concepts come from images thus formed. In their theology the gods must exist, or we could not possess their image in our minds. Yet they form no part of the physical universe, living in perfect tranquility and representing the ideal of the human life. Epicurean religion was the contemplation of the divine life.

In their psychology, the soul is composed of atoms. It is material, like all other things. Soul-atoms are diffused all over the body, causing sensations. The directing, rational part of the soul is located in the breast. The soul is mortal; when the body is dissolved, the soul is dissolved into its elements and loses its powers. Thus death ends all consciousness. There should be no fear of death, leaving us free for present happiness.

4. *The Sceptics*

Reacting to the extreme dogmatism of both the Stoics and the Epicureans, the Sceptics developed in two schools. The first came from Pyrrho of Elea, a contemporary of Zeno and Epicurus (365-275 B.C.). He sought imperturbable tranquility, but not in the theories of the day. Rather, he based his happiness on absolute agnosticism and suspension of judgment.

We cannot know whether sense perceptions agree with reality, since we can never get beyond the sense impression. When thoughts and senses conflict, we have no criteria for distinguishing true from false. And so we should suspend all judgment, and tranquility will follow. We cannot grasp God or the eternal, and so should give up seeking to know them.

The second Sceptic school descended from Plato's Academy. Following Socrates' maxim, "I know only that I do not know," it claimed that we do not even know that we do not know.

Scepticism led to Eclecticism, a philosophy which combined truths from various sources without seeking a unified system of certain knowledge.

G. The religious period

Some found the Stoic determinism, Epicurean atomism, and skeptical abandonment of absolutes to be unsatisfactory. Thus a philosophy developed which was strongly influenced by religious mysticism.

This movement attempted to formulate a *theosophy*—a religious worldview. This attempt led to the most important development in Greek thought from the first century B.C. to the second century A.D.: a revival of Platonism in a synthesis of Platonism, Aristotelianism, and Stoicism. This revival was called Neo-Platonism.

1. *Later Stoicism*

In the last two centuries before Christ, Stoicism underwent a moderating process. It dropped the "conflagration" doctrine, accepting the eternity of the cosmos. And it used the Divine Providence doctrine to supply order in this cosmos. These adjustments made Stoicism attractive to the Romans.

Posidonius of Apamea (130-46 B.C.) wielded an important influence on Roman Stoicism. He posited the unity of all the world, humanity as a "bridge-being" intermediate between higher and lower life, and a view of the eternal cosmos as a single organism ruled by a divine power.

Epictetus was one of the most important later Stoics. The son of a female slave, he was born between 50 and 60 A.D. at Hieropolis in Phrygia. He came to Rome as a slave of one of Nero's men, and became a secretary. He then studied with Musonius Rufus, the fashionable Stoic philosopher.

After becoming a freeman, he taught philosophy on street corners. He was exiled under Domitian, then established a school at Nicopolis. Epictetus was mainly a moral and religious teacher. His philosophy could be summarized in two words: "bear" and "forebear." He advocated joyful resignation to the Divine Will.

Marcus Aurelius (121-180 A.D.) was a member of a distinguished Roman family. He succeeded Antonius Pius to the throne in 161 A.D. His thought was based largely on the work of Epictetus, but also derived much from Plato. His *Meditations* are a masterpiece of Stoic thought.

Following his great success in Rome, his son Commodus' incompetence and violence marked the beginning of the Empire's decline. Thus with Aurelius the end of an epoch was reached—he was not only the last Stoic, but also in a way the last great product of classical culture.

2. *Neo-Platonism*

Philo of Parissa moved the Academy back to positive and dogmatic teaching, abandoning the skepticism of the Platonic Academy. Middle Platonism, or Neo-Platonism, grew up in this learned environment.

The school was most of all a theology and religious way of life. Its primary object was knowledge of the truth about the divine world and "the greatest possible likeness to God." Its most important theological doctrine placed a supreme Mind or God at the head of the hierarchy of being; this Being is the first principle of reality.

Platonic forms are now seen as thoughts. Plato had spoken of the Good as God; he and Aristotle had elevated reason and Mind to the head of the soul and knowledge. Neo-Platonism expanded on this doctrine of a Supreme Mind above the universe.

However, the Supreme Mind is exalted to such a height that it cannot contact the material world directly, or be accessible to the human soul in this life (except in occasional flashes of illumination). Thus intermediary beings are necessary: the Second Mind, lesser gods, stars, and daemons. These rule and order, and some inhabit, the visible universe. The universe itself is a living being animated by a World Soul, and is of eternal origin.

The source of evil: an evil Soul immanent in matter and having the whole material universe under its dominion. Matter is not passive but recalcitrant, thwarting the intentions of the Good. Knowledge of God is through the *via negativa*—the way of negation. We can know better what God is not than what he is. God is so separated from us that no mystical experience with him is possible.

And so religion is our remote intellectual devotion to the remote Supreme, whose vision we can hope to attain in the next life and perhaps for a few rare moments in the present. This devotion is combined with a vigorous practice of the normal pagan piety towards the inferior gods, the star-gods and the other deities of mythology and the public cult. These gods administer the affairs of the visible universe; with them our lives are most closely concerned.

The Neo-Platonists were the first to harmonize Plato's Good with Aristotle's Divine Mind. They developed intermediary powers, placing God at the head of a hierarchy.

3. *The Greek synthesis*

Alexandria, founded by Alexander the Great in 333 B.C., had become the leading commercial and intellectual city of the world, and the chief meeting place of Hellenic and Oriental civilization. Its library numbered 700,000 volumes, attracted scholars from all over the world, and was the place where the Septuagint (the Greek version of the Hebrew Scriptures) was translated.

Now "Christian wisdom" attempted to apply these resources within Greek philosophy to the interpretation of Scripture. It used reason, but denied the possibility of salvation by reason. The motives of these Christian philosophers were two. First, to make the gospel attractive to the Greek mind (apologetics). And second, to use Greek wisdom to coordinate and better understand traditional biblical truth.

Aristobulus was the first to unite Greek and Jewish thought, with his commentary on the Pentateuch (150 B.C.); he attempted to show harmony between the Old Testament and Greek writings. But the great Jewish synthesizer with the Greek worldview was Philo of Alexandria (30 B.C. to 50 A.D.). He was of priestly origins, and wrote historical, philosophical, political, and ethical works. Many are extant today.

Philo was the first to connect the Jewish doctrine of God with Plato's First Divinity, seeing God as creator but also transcendent. God is the absolute being, the ineffable one, the greatest good, the one who is above both knowledge and virtue, the ground of all existence. He is too exalted for matter, and so he utilizes intermediaries. But he is the one God active in creating and ruling the cosmos through these beings.

The *logos* is the instrument by which God works in the world. The *logos* is the container or place of all ideas; it is called the highest of the angels, the first-born of God, the image of God, the heavenly Adam, the God-man. From chaotic mass, using the *logos* as his organ, God fashioned the world of visible beings. These are the images of his ideas. Evil is from matter, not God or the *logos*.

The *pneuma* is the Divine communication, a free creative inbreathing by God of part of the Divine Substance into humanity; it becomes our intelligence, and is the image of God in us. Our salvation comes as we deliver ourselves from our bodies, the evil principle in us, eradicating our passions by asceticism. We require divine help in our salvation, so that asceticism and mysticism are combined in our experience.

Philo's method involved allegorical interpretation of the Scriptures. The literal meaning disappears completely. Genesis, for instance, is not a record of historical facts but a kind of Platonic myth. Adam is spirit or mind; Eve is sensuality; Jacob is asceticism; Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are the learned, natural, and exercised virtues. When the three wanderers ask about Sarah's whereabouts and Abraham answers, "She is in the hut," he is saying that virtue is in the soul.

II. The Patristic era (A.D. 100-500)¹

The Scriptures call us to understand and express our faith rationally. The Lord invites us: "Come now, let us reason together" (Is. 1.18). The Hebrew word translated "reason" (*yakach*) means to argue or dispute rationally. Jesus gave us the first "great commandment": "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind" (Mt. 22.37, adding "mind" to Deut. 6.5).

And so Matthew utilized a rational promise-fulfillment method to demonstrate the messiahship of Christ to his Jewish audience (cf. Mt. 1.22). Mark's event-centered gospel was designed with the Roman worldview in mind. Luke attempted an ordered presentation of the life of Christ and the early church (Lk. 1.1-4; Ac. 1.1). And Paul presented a reasoned argument for the gospel at

¹Good introductions to historical theology and philosophy include William C. Platcher, *A History of Christian Theology: An Introduction* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1983); Bernhard Lohse, *A Short History of Christian Doctrine: From the First Century to the Present*, trans. F. Ernest Stoeffler (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966); and Hubert Cunliffe-Jones, ed., *A History of Christian Doctrine* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978). Good articles on various thinkers are found in J. D. Douglas, Walter A. Elwell, and Peter Toon, *The Concise Dictionary of the Christian Tradition: Doctrine, Liturgy, History* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Regency Reference Library, 1989); and *New 20th-Century Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*, ed. J. D. Douglas, 2d ed. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker, 1991).

For each of the thinkers surveyed below, only distinctive or especially important theological /philosophical ideas are mentioned.

Mars Hill (Ac. 17.16-34), persuading philosophers among others to become Christians. He also offered a rational argument for the resurrection, attempting to strengthen the faith of believers (1 Cor. 15).

In the biblical era, however, the formal discipline of theology was not necessary. But in the post-biblical era, when the church began interacting with the larger Greek world, theological activity soon became essential.

A. Justin Martyr (ca. 100-165):²

Justin, the most important early apologist (defender of the faith), believed fully that God has revealed himself in Scripture and the Church. But he has also planted "seeds of knowledge" of himself in all "men of good will." This is known as the "seminal logos" theory.

As a result, all knowledge, even that of pagans, comes from God. The minister can begin with the truth found in pagan philosophies and build a bridge to the final truth found in Christ. Christians have not merely seeds or fragmentary portions of truth implanted by the logos, but the Logos Himself, the Logos Incarnate. Thus Christianity transcends pagan philosophies of truth.

B. Irenaeus (120-203):³

Irenaeus accepted a three-fold authority structure: (1) the Scriptures; (2) the continuity of the succession of bishops in sees founded by apostles; and (3) the unbroken tradition of teaching guaranteed by the apostolic succession of bishops in the teaching chair of the local church.

Logos theology was used by Justin to reconcile the doctrines of creation and divine transcendence, building a bridge to the pagan world. Irenaeus uses "Son" as equivalent to "Logos." He links the Spirit with the Logos in his creative role. And he sees the Logos as the medium of God's self-revelation, especially in his Old Testament theophanies.

In his Christology, Jesus is both Son of God and Son of Man. Christ's humanity is identical with our own. The purpose of the Incarnation was to repair the consequences of Adam's disobedience and mankind's resulting fall.

In his theodicy (explanation for evil and suffering), God created humankind as innocent but untested. He created the world as a place for spiritual testing and development. The "fall" was therefore to be expected; God continues to permit evil and suffering as a means of our "soul building."

C. Tertullian (c. 155-c. 235):⁴

²Justin's most important works, *First Apology* and the *Dialogue with Trypho the Jew*, are brilliant defenses of Christians against various charges and statements of early Christian theology.

For more on Justin and the early apologists see L. Russ Bush, ed., *Classical Readings in Christian Apologetics, A.D. 100-1800* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1983) and Robert M. Grant, *Christian Apologists of the Second Century* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1988).

³Irenaeus' most important work, *Against Heresies*, is directed against Gnosticism in its various forms.

Tertullians' chief opponents were the Gnostics and Marcion. His relation with philosophy was problematic. He was heavily influenced by Stoicism, especially regarding his view of the soul (as being of material substance). Nevertheless, he was extremely negative in his assessment of the truth of philosophy and its contribution to Christian faith. Tertullian considered all truth to reside within Scripture and Church teachings; thus, philosophy is a main source of heresy. Thus his famous question: "What has Athens to do with Jerusalem? What has the Academy in common with the Church, or what have the heretics with Christians?"⁵

Tertullian defended the Christian idea of creation against dualism. Regarding the Trinity, he apparently introduced the actual Latin word, *trinitas*, into Christian literature. He made important contributions in helping distinguish the three persons of the Trinity; before, the trend had been toward monism or modalism. However, he was subordinationist in his view of the three members of the Godhead. His Christology argues for the divinity and humanity of Christ as a true unity, with both parts of equal status.

Tertullian was later influenced by the Montanists, a group which maintained a harsh stance regarding accepting lapsed Christians back into the Church; this position attracted Tertullian to them. However, they also claimed new revelation in addition to the received doctrines of Scripture and the Church. Tertullian may have turned from Montanism at the end of his life, but he remained a dissenter regarding lapsed Christians until his death.

D. Clement of Alexandria (150-225):⁶

Clement combines Christian orthodoxy with profound respect for Greek philosophy. He insists on the transcendent unity of God, the divinity of Christ, the unity of the Church and the superiority of revealed doctrine.

But he also sees Greek philosophy as a most valuable preparation and assistance in attaining the final truth of the Christian revelation. He is most concerned with ethics--moral life, purification, and ascent to God. His allegorical interpretive methods would unfortunately be normative for Christian theology for centuries to come.

E. Origen (185/6-254/5):⁷

His importance: of all the Christian theologians before Augustine, Origen possessed the greatest intellectual power and, with the possible exception of Irenaeus, exercised the widest influence. Origen was Egyptian, born of Christian parents. He succeeded Clement as head of the

⁴Tertullian's most important works are *Against Marcion*, exposing the errors of this early heretic; and *Prescription Against Heretics* and *The Apology*, defending Christianity against charges of atheism and other crimes.

⁵*Prescription Against Heretics* 7.

⁶Clement's most important works form a progressive series which give a complete instruction in Christian life and doctrine: *Protrepticus*, *Paedagogus*, and the unfinished *Stromateis* (*Patchwork*).

⁷Origen's major works are *De Principiis* (*On First Principles*), his systematic theology; *Against Celsus*, a refutation of an anti-Christian treatise; and the *Hexapla*, a scholarly six-column Bible comparing the Hebrew Old Testament to several Greek Versions.

Catechetical School at Alexandria at age 18; after a dispute with his bishop, traveled to Caesarea in Palestine, where he taught for the rest of his life. He suffered imprisonment and torture for the faith in the Decian persecution, and died as a result of his sufferings. His was a passionate commitment to the Christian faith.

His system of philosophical theology is a most original and interesting attempt to adapt Platonism to the requirements of Christian theology, with some traces of Gnostic and perhaps even Indian influence. His doctrine of God begins with the data of revelation, which far transcends all philosophy, and is thus a traditional presentation of the One God in Three Persons.

Origen insists on a spiritual God (vs. Tertullian); however, he is an extreme subordinationist (God's power extends to all created things; the Son's only to rational beings; the Spirit's only to a limited number of rational beings he sanctifies).

His theosophy (religious world view): the first creation was of a community of rationally disembodied spirits, all equal and possessed of free will; these spirits sinned and fell in various degrees; according to the degree of their sin, they became angels of the various hierarchies, men, or devils; thus the inequalities of life are the fault of sin, not of God.

The material universe was created after this fall to provide penitential dwellings for these fallen spirits, who are assigned to bodies of more or less dignity according to their sins. Even the sun and other heavenly bodies are purgatorial vehicles in which are embodied spirits which have sinned; the whole material creation is thus a result of sin.

His soteriology: Origen believed in reincarnation, as fallen spirits will pass through a long series of lives moving up and down the scale according to their merits in the preceding stage. An angel might become a man, or even a devil, and a devil might become an angel. At last will come the *apokatastasis* (the restoration of all things)--all spirits will return to their first purity and equality. None are excepted, not even Satan.

His hermeneutics: Origen was an important popularizer of Philo's allegorical method. He utilizes allegory to cite scriptural support for his theology.

His major importance: Origen's theology illustrates a synthesis of Christian theology with Platonic thought, attempting to preserve the distinctions of each.

F. Athanasius (ca. 298-373):⁸

His basic contribution was a defense of orthodox Christology against Arius, who denied the Trinity and claimed that Christ was created by God in time. Athanasius contended that Christ was eternally divine.

⁸Athanasius' major works are *Against the Heathen*, a defense of basic Christian doctrines, especially the cross; and *On the Incarnation*, an explanation and defense of orthodox Christology.

He argues against subordinationism (using the classic illustration of the sun and its rays—one causes the other, but both exist equally in time). Athanasius defends the full, eternal deity of both the Son and the Spirit.

G. Augustine (354-430):⁹

His importance: Augustine was the greatest constructive thinker and most influential teacher of the early Christian church; a dominant thinker in the history of theology and philosophy; the greatest of the Western fathers, dominating until Thomas Aquinas; a formative influence on Descartes and thus the whole development of modern philosophy. The Protestant reformers, especially Calvin, were guided theologically to a great extent by Augustine's published works.

He was born at Thagaste, in north Africa, to a Christian mother (Monica) and pagan father (Patricius). Augustine was given a thorough rhetorical education, and practiced rhetoric at Rome and Milan. He was converted at Milan in 386, soon ordained, and became Bishop of Hippo in north Africa in 396 and remained there to his death.

Augustine possessed a strong knowledge of Christian thought all his life, even before his conversion, because of his mother's influence; thus Christianity precedes philosophy in his intellectual development. The problem of evil drove him to Manichaeism (a kind of dualism); he next adopted the philosophy of Plotinus two years before his Christian conversion.

His *doctrine of God*: he is absolute and majestic; his creatures are insignificant apart from him. He is an eternal, transcendent being, absolutely free; he is holy and cannot will evil. What God wills, he does without intermediaries. All ideas and forms of things are grounded in God's intelligence; he proceeded rationally in creating the world and everything owes its form to him; he created the world *ex nihilo*; all that is, is good, being created by God.

Augustine lays great stress on the *Trinity*. All true thinking begins and ends with the Trinity; only as Trinity does God approach man and only as Trinity can he be approached.

Epistemology: the only knowledge worth having is knowledge of God and ourselves; all other knowledge, such as logic, metaphysics, and ethics, has value only in so far as it contributes to our knowledge of God. It is our duty to understand what we firmly believe, to see the rational basis of our faith; "Understand in order that you may believe; believe in order that you may understand."

Truth is objective. I know that I exist--my thinking and existence are certainties—and I know that there is eternal truth. My very doubts prove that I am conscious of truth. The source of this and all truth is God. The center of all thought is God, and after God the human soul.

Concentration on inner spiritual reality leads to all truth.

⁹Augustine's works fill sixteen volumes of Migne's *Patrologia Latina*. Most are very detailed explanations of the Scriptures, either as sermons preached to his people at Hippo or commentaries on various books of the Bible; his homilies on St. John, the Explanations of the Psalms, and the commentaries on Genesis are of special importance. His *De Trinitate* is an invaluable exposition of Trinitarian theology; *Confessions* and *City of God* are among the most important theological works of all time.

Anthropology: humans are the highest creation in nature, the union of body and soul; this union is not the result of sin--the body is not the prison house of the soul, and not inherently evil. The soul is a simple immaterial or spiritual substance, distinct in essence from the body, but at the same time its life principle, directing and forming the body.

The soul had a beginning in time, but it does not die. Thus vs. creationism (God creates a new soul for every child born) and traducianism (souls are generated from the souls of their parents). Humans before the Fall were simply what we should have been, designed by God. But after the Fall our whole being was corrupted; we were plunged into ignorance and sin, and are utterly incapable of knowing what we should without revelation and still more incapable of doing what we should without the grace of redemption.

We were free not to sin before the Fall; after the Fall it is impossible for us not to sin (*non posse non peccare*). Adam's sin created hereditary sin; only God can reform corrupted humanity.

Augustine stresses predestination regarding salvation, which is the eternal resolve of God to confer eternal life on this person or that by the infallible means of grace. Nevertheless, if a person truly loves God and has good will, he or she will be redeemed.

His *ethics*: the main goal of human conduct is a religious, mystical ideal--the mind's union with God in the vision of God. By love we are united with God; hence love is the supreme virtue and the source of all other virtues; all virtues are grounded in the love of God.

The love of God in the work of divine grace acting within a person's soul; this mystical process takes place through the sacraments under the influence of God's power. Augustine advocates the monastic life as the closest approximation to the Christian ideal.

His *philosophy of history*: love is the driving force of the individual and of social life. The greatest division of mankind is between those who desire their proper end—God—and those whose desire is perverted so that they choose earthly goods as ends instead of means.

These two groups form two societies or "cities"--the City of God and the Earthly City (City of the Devil). This conflict is perpetual through history, leading to dialectical history. This philosophy of history influenced Rousseau, Hegel, Comte, Nietzsche, Marx, and Spengler.

His *theodicy*: *Omnia natura bonum est* (all creation is wholly good). Augustine argues against Manichaeism, dualism, and Platonic and Gnostic prejudice against physical matter. Being is identified with goodness--all that exists at present is good; evil thus does not "exist."

Evil is a privation or lack of the good: "[Evil is] nothing else than corruption, either of the measure, or the form, or the order, that belong to nature. Nature therefore which has been corrupted, is called evil."¹⁰ Free will is the occasion of evil; God has given humans freedom of choice, and we have chosen against God and the good, creating evil and suffering. Thus God is absolved of the problem of creating a good universe in which evil exists.

¹⁰Augustine, *Nature of the Good*, 4.

Conclusion: Augustine, more than any other man, forms the link between ancient philosophy/theology and the later thought of Western Christendom. Christianity builds from his foundational synthesis of philosophy and faith for a thousand years, and his is still a formative influence today.

H. Heresies of the period:

Gnosticism: the view that knowledge (*gnosis*) rather than faith is the means of salvation. Our knowledge of Gnosticism increased greatly with the 1945 discovery of the Nag-Hammadi Library in upper Egypt. This large jar contains a Gnostic fifth-century library, with thirteen leather books and 48 Gnostic writings in 700 pages.

Characteristic elements: matter is essentially evil, but the realm of spirit is good. Gnostics were anti-Semitic, believed in an absolute supreme being, worshiped the mother goddess of wisdom "Sophia," and believed in "eons" which separate good from evil.

The Valentinian system:

Depth/Silence	--nothing
Mind/Truth	--30 "eons" Christ the last eon
Word/Life	
Humanity/Church	
Demiurgos	
Universe	

Arianism (from Arius, a presbyter in the church in Alexandria): Christ is the "logos" of God. However, divinity was not present in the body of Jesus of Nazareth, and the Christian does not share in God's nature. Thus Arius attempts to preserve monotheism; his theology was rejected by the Council of Nicaea in 325 (see Athanasius).

Pelagianism (from Pelagius, a monk of British birth who lived in Rome during the early years of the fifth century): insists on humanity's freedom of choice, rejecting the doctrine of total depravity. He became Augustine's major opponent regarding sovereignty/free will.

Manichaeism (from the sect of Mani): affirms a metaphysical dualism with a finite good limited by the power of Satan. Satan created the material world, captured humanity's free spirit and imprisoned it in the body, there to suffer for sins committed in a previous existence. Humanity can be redeemed only by severe asceticism.

III. The Medieval era (500-1500):

A. *Continuing controversy:*

1. *The "monothelete" controversy*

The Nestorians argued for two natures without a single personality. The Monophysites maintained that Christ's human nature had been entirely absorbed in the divine. The church finally determined (at the Sixth Ecumenical council) that in Christ two natures were united in one personality; his human nature was completely united with the divine will.

2. *The iconoclast controversy*

From very early times visual representations of Christ and biblical images were used in the churches. In the West, images were rarely used with extravagance, but in eastern churches and monasteries the reverence shown to these icons was often excessive and superstitious.

In 726 emperor Leo III prohibited the cult of images and decreed their total destruction (iconoclasm). The Seventh Ecumenical council (787) in the East pronounced the lawfulness and value of Christian images. The West continued to minimize their usage, so that images came to represent one of the most visible demarcations between eastern and western Christianity.

3. *The "filioque" controversy*

The Nicene Creed (325) asserted that the Holy Spirit proceeded from the Father. During the sixth century Christians in Spain added to the creed the words "and from the Son" (*filioque*). The eastern church adopted this addition; the western churches never fully accepted or practiced it.

4. *Indulgences*

The monastic movement led to increasing spiritual directorship by the abbot or master; this soon extended to priests in relation to the laity. In time documents known as penitential appeared, listing types of sin and prescribing appropriate penances.

However, concern remained that the penance imposed or performed might not have fully satisfied more serious sins. In the tenth century bishops of southern France and northern Spain began assigning a remissive value to pilgrimages; these grew to "plenary" (total) remission offered to crusaders by Urban II in 1095. The practice of indulgences came to be seen by the uninstructed as providing "passports to heaven"; its excesses led to Luther's protest and larger reforming movements.

B. Anselm (1033-1109):¹¹

Anselm was born in the village of Aosta in what is now Italy; after his father's death he entered the monastery at Bec and later became its abbot. During these thirty years he wrote many of his most famous works. In 1093 he was made archbishop of Canterbury, the position he held until his death.

His ontological argument for God's existence:

- I can conceive of a perfect being.
- To be perfect, this being must exist.
- Therefore God exists.

His relation of faith and reason: *fides quaerens intellectum* (faith seeking understanding).

Anselm believed that we must have a personal relationship with God before we can understand him intellectually.

His "satisfaction" view of the atonement: Christ satisfied God at the cross, enabling our reconciliation with God. This feudal concept has been a dominant atonement theology since Anselm's formulation.

C. Abelard (1079-1142):¹²

Abelard experienced a tragic life. Seeking to follow the art of disputation, he went to William of Champeaux in Paris around 1100, but soon argued against William and was asked to leave; he soon started his own school. He met Heloise, a niece of a high official at Notre Dame; they had a child and wanted to be married secretly. Heloise's father had Abelard beaten and emasculated; Abelard went to a monastery and Heloise to a nunnery. Abelard was accused of heresy and expelled from the monastery; he entered another monastery but was again condemned of heresy, and died soon after.

The problem of universals: Abelard argued that general concepts only describe particular realities. This led to "conceptualism," the belief that concepts only make understanding of particulars possible, but the concept has no status independent of the particular.

His moral influence atonement theory: Christ's death was an expression of love designed to invoke a response of devotion, love, and obedience.

In opposition to Anselm, Abelard argued for thorough rationalism: "I understand, that I might believe."

¹¹Anselm's major writings include the *Monologion*, a systematic demonstration of the existence of God; the *Proslogion*, which contains Anselm's famous ontological argument; and *Cur Deus Homo (Why the God Man?)*, which sets out his satisfaction view of the atonement.

¹²Abelard's major works are his *Christian Theology*, the first to use "theology" to describe the whole of faith and morals; and *Sic et Non*, his treatment of the problem of universals.

D. Thomas Aquinas (1225?-1274):¹³

Known as the "dumb ox," Thomas graduated last in his class but later proved himself one of the greatest minds in Christian history. He wanted to establish the Christian faith in a world where Aristotle was highly influential (Averroes, an Islamic philosopher, had made Aristotle's materialistic philosophy popular).

Thomas applied Aristotle's idea of purpose and materialism to Christian thought. He used Aristotle's method of causality to demonstrate the nature of God from the world's existence (the "cosmological" argument) and purpose (the "teleological" argument). And so he built a "natural theology" in the *Summa Theologica* which became normative and orthodox for all Roman Catholicism. His view of reason and faith: "I will observe, that I might know, and when my observation reaches its limits, then I will believe."

In his language philosophy, "univocal" words which mean the same in every context; "equivocal" words have nothing in common in different contexts; and "analogical" terms have some relationship in different contexts. Analogical language makes speech about God possible.

His importance: Thomas' work culminates Scholasticism--the exposition, systematization, and demonstration of Christian dogmas and construction of a "Christian world view."

IV. The Reformation (16th century):

A. The relation of medieval, renaissance, Reformation, and rationalistic philosophy:

1. *Medieval*: philosophy based on authority structures. Revelation comes through the church; authority structures are crucial; concern is for the God-man relation.
2. *Renaissance*: reason important, through nature and classic literature; deemphasis of authority structures; concern is for man-man relation.
3. *Reformation*: revelation through the Bible; authority only of Scriptures; man above the institution; God-man relation crucial.
4. *Rationalism*: reason is normative; no authority structure outside man's reason; concern is for man-man relation.

¹³Thomas' major works are his *Summa Theologica*, one of the most important systematic theologies of all time; and his *Summa Contra Gentiles*, a formative work in apologetics.

B. Desiderius Erasmus (1469-1536):¹⁴

Erasmus was a Dutch humanist who anticipated the Reformation in many ways, but remained himself a Catholic and Augustinian priest. As a student in Paris (1495) he was dismayed by the dogmatic theologians whom he found intolerant, violent, and hostile to new ideas. Soon he began to write against the ignorance and corruption of his age, particularly in *The Praise of Folly*. His writings were banned by Pope Paul IV in 1559 and by Sixtus V in 1590, and he remains controversial in Reformation studies to this day.

Scholarly achievements: Erasmus was considered the foremost scholar in northern Europe. He was the editor of the first printed edition of the Greek New Testament (1516). He published scholarly editions of the writings of Irenaeus, Augustine, Ambrose, Epiphanius, Chrysostom, and Origin, and became the first best-selling author in history.

Theological contributions: Erasmus pointed to the early church and her Fathers for his ideal of reform and the only real sources of spiritual life. He believed the test of theology to be its effects in Christian living; his *Enchiridion* sets out a very practical Christian ethic, in contrast to the superstitious, corrupt spirituality of the papacy and monks of his day.

His *philosophia Christi* was a non-dogmatic, Christocentric spirituality which Erasmus wanted to teach so as to infuse new life into all of Christendom. Erasmus stressed the imitation of Christ and use of Scripture as opposed to veneration of the saints and sacraments. The result would be a genuine Christendom realized by personal transformation, not political reform.

Role in the Reformation: three essentially different historiographical positions are held today regarding Erasmus's importance in the reformatory movements of his day. One: Erasmus was a weak character whose timidity prevented him from accepting the consequences of his own premises; an intellectual Protestant lacking the strength to break from Catholicism. Two: Erasmus was a modernist, a forerunner of the Enlightenment. Erasmian humanism was a progressive philosophy temporarily submerged by the Protestant and Catholic reformulations but emerging again in the Enlightenment. And three: Erasmus was a forerunner of Luther's Reformation. In the eyes of many of Erasmus's own opponents, Luther merely took the second step of Erasmus's reforming program.

My belief: Erasmus was a reformer with his own serious program for the renewal of the church and the improvement of society. However, he did not understand the depths of our sinfulness as embodied in institutions and customs. Piety and education could not change humanity's sinful nature. Luther's realization of our need for forgiveness rather than education made possible his leadership of the Protestant Reformation.

¹⁴Erasmus's most important works are the *Enchiridion Militis Christiani (Handbook of the Christian Soldier)*, published in 1504 as a practical introduction to Christian living; his edition of the Greek New Testament (1516); *The Praise of Folly* (1509), his satire of the church leaders of his day; and *Freedom of the Will* (1524), his critique of Luther's reforms.

C. Martin Luther (1483-1546):¹⁵

Luther was the son of a Saxon miner and graduate in arts at Arfurt. In 1505 he forsook further studies in law to become an Augustinian. He was ordained in 1507 and from 1508 taught theology at Wittenburg. There his lectures began to reflect his growing belief that justification by faith rather than by works expresses the church's true faith. His protests against the sale of indulgences and other corruptions in the church led to his excommunication. Powerful protectors and supporters rallied around him, and the Reformation soon became irreversible. Luther argued for reformation which broke with the old church (against Erasmus) while preserving as much of its theology as he considered acceptable (against the radical Reformers).

Theological foundations: *sola scriptura*—the Bible alone is our guide for faith and practice; *sola fidei*—faith alone is our means of salvation.

Hermeneutical principles: the Bible should be interpreted literally wherever possible; the Bible is a clear book, without need for creeds in its interpretation; the Bible is the property of all Christians, and can be interpreted and lived by any (the priesthood of all believers); the function of all Bible study is to find Christ.

Ongoing importance: Luther's reform movements have never been completed. The Church still struggles with the balance between tradition and personal interpretation. Luther's own seminal contributions are such that more books have been written about him than about anyone else in history except Jesus Christ.

D. Ulrich Zwingli (1484-1531):¹⁶

An admirer of Erasmus, Zwingli became the chief preacher at Zurich's Great Munster (1518), where his New Testament lectures marked the beginning of the Swiss Reformation. His teachings and reform leadership led Switzerland into the Protestant camp, though not without civil war. In this war Zwingli was killed while serving as chaplain and standard-bearer with the Protestant forces.

Theological contributions: Zwingli attacked basic Catholic positions regarding clerical celibacy, the sacraments, intercession of saints, and purgatorial sufferings. He argued for salvation by faith alone and the supreme authority of Scripture.

¹⁵Luther was a voluminous writer. *Table Talk* (notes made by his students from his lectures and dinner conversations with them) provides excellent insight to his mind and theology; his sermons, collected in various multi-volume editions, express his practical theology. Luther's most important reformatory writings include the *95 Theses*, his attack on indulgences which "sparked" the Reformation (October 31, 1517); *Address to the German Nobility* (1520), a tract urging a reform of the Church by the Christian magistrate; *On the Babylonian Captivity of the Church* (1520), in which Luther denied the efficacy of indulgences and attacked Rome's sacramental system; and *The Freedom of the Christian Man* (1520), where Luther argued for the freedom and priesthood of every believer.

¹⁶Zwingli's most important writings are his sixty-seven articles of faith, which moved beyond Luther toward the evangelical position.

His defense of infant baptism alienated him from the radical Reformers; his view of the Eucharist as purely symbolic estranged him from Luther and made a unified Protestantism impossible. In less than a century after his death the Zwinglian movement was swallowed up by the larger and more influential movement of John Calvin.

E. John Calvin (1509-1564):¹⁷

Calvin studied theology in Paris and law at Orleans and Bourges, during which time he came under Protestant influence. He broke with Roman Catholicism in 1533 after a conversion experience in which he felt called to restore the church to her original purity. Forced to leave Paris because of a rising movement against the Protestants, he settled in Basel and published his famous *Institutes of the Christian Religion* in 1536.

On a visit to Geneva he unwillingly agreed to become William Farel's colleague in organizing the Reformation there. Expelled from the city in 1538 for the severity of his reforms, he was welcomed back in 1541 and established a government close to theocracy. Calvin's reforming influence was felt far beyond Geneva, as he championed the Huguenot cause, welcomed Protestant refugees from Mary Tudor's England, trained John Knox for his leadership of the Scottish Reformation, and counseled Protestants in other countries as well.

The "five points of Calvinism" (five points of doctrine expounded by the Synod of Dort [1618-19]):

- Total depravity
- Unconditional divine election
- Limited atonement (to the elect)
- Irresistible grace
- Perseverance of the saints.

Continuing theological importance: Calvin was the first truly systematic theologian of the Reformation, and is considered the first scientific interpreter of Scripture in Christian history. He was first a biblical exegete and only second a theologian. His biblical commentaries contain superior exegesis, so that they remain very popular today.

Calvin's greatest theological influence centers in his belief in predestined election by God. This doctrine has affected missions, evangelism, and preaching since he first developed it. He accepted infant baptism and the "spiritual presence" of Christ with the elements of the Lord's Supper, rejecting the radical Reformers at these points. "Presbyterian" and "Reform" churches trace their historic and theological lineage to him, as do many Baptists.

¹⁷Calvin's greatest theological writings are the *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (first published in 1536), which remain foundational to Reform theology today; and his commentaries on the Bible..

F. The Radical Reformers:¹⁸

Many within the Reformation felt that Luther, Calvin, and Zwingli did not go far enough in their break with Catholicism. These believers rejected a national church and sought to return the church to her original purity. For this they were considered "radical" by other Reformers, and often found themselves the subjects of persecution by both Protestants and Catholics.

Types of radical reformers:

- Anabaptists, who insisted on believer's baptism by immersion.
- Mennonites (from Menno Simons, 1496-1561), who disclaimed historic connection with the Anabaptists, tracing themselves back to apostolic days.
- Radical chiliastics, who sought to bring heaven to earth by means of sword and coercion (cf. the siege at Munster).
- Radical mystics, who emphasized personal spiritual piety and illumination.

Basic theological contribution: the belief that the church should practice only what the Bible expressly teaches. By contrast, the "magisterial" reformers had conserved everything within the Catholic church and tradition which the Bible does not expressly forbid (such as infant baptism).

G. The Council of Trent (1545-63):

Called by Pope Paul III, this council in northern Italy was faced with the task of reforming the church in response to Protestantism.

Its contributions:

- Fixed the canon of the Old and New Testaments to include the Apocrypha; pronounced the Latin Vulgate inspired in all its parts.
- Reaffirmed that the Church alone can interpret doctrine, and ratified the place of tradition in the church's teaching.
- Determined the number of sacraments (seven).
- Ordered stronger episcopal control in the parishes.
- Judged good works to be aids in justification.
- Specifically anathematized the doctrines of Lutherans, Zwinglians, Calvinists, Anabaptists, and other dissenters.

V. The Modern era (to 1960):

A. Rationalism

1. Rene Descartes: the father of rationalism

¹⁸For more on the radical Reformation consult William R. Estep, *The Anabaptist Story*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1975).

Descartes (1596-1650) was educated in medieval Scholasticism, in a Jesuit context. He developed a strong interest in mathematics; as a result, his philosophical method would begin with an unquestionable position, then reason to conclusions to prove the theorem.

He applied mathematical method to achieve his famous 1619 dictum, *Cogito, ergo sum* ("I think, therefore I am"). His basic presupposition was that reason can grasp reality. His method was rationalistic doubt; he could doubt all but that he was doubting, thus thinking. His syllogism: a thinking being is existing (major premise); I am thinking (minor premise); therefore I exist (conclusion).

His problem: the mind-body dichotomy (psychophysical dualism). Descartes believed that God is the only absolute "substance" (something which so exists that it needs nothing else to exist). The mind and body are relative substances; the body is an extension of the mind. But he could not determine how the mind and body relate.

His epistemology: our minds are ordered and structured, born with innate ideas which give structure to human nature.

His importance: Descartes attempted to synthesize medieval religion and modern science.

2. Benedict Spinoza

Spinoza (1632-77) was born in the Jewish faith, but found Descartes' work and renounced Judaism. He was expelled from his synagogue, and worked as a lensmaker; for centuries he was despised as an atheist.

He was an absolute "monist," believing there to be only one substance in reality. He thus attempted a solution for Descartes' mind/body problem. He argued that things which seem to be different are only illusions, for all is one (cf. Parmenides). His *Ethics* claimed that true value is achieved by coming to awareness of substance—there are no individual values, and nothing can change the way things really are.

3. Godfrey Wilhelm Leibniz

Leibniz (1646-1716) was born in Leipzig, Germany, and obtained a doctorate in law. He was concerned with the problem of particulars and universals in personal experience. His solution: "monads" are units of force which enable us to experience particularity.

Monads contain life in themselves, and are all the same shape and size. They cause the purpose and order in the universe, and arranged by God—the Prime Monad. He is the highest order of perception of monads, for he perceives everything but reflects nothing. Humans are next in order, for we perceive more than we reflect. Lower-order monads (such as inanimate objects) reflect more than they perceive.

Leibniz could not find a way to apply this deduced system to life, illustrating the rationalist fallacy.

B. Empiricism

Empiricism is the belief that ideas are derived from experience through the senses; the movement stands in reaction to and opposition with rationalism.

1. John Locke

Locke (1632-1702) studied philosophy, natural science, and medicine at Oxford, and held a number of important positions in England. Epistemology was his central concern.

He believed that the mind is a *tabula rasa* ("blank slate") at birth. Experience "writes" on this slate, so that all knowledge is founded on and derived from sense impressions. Our ideas come from two sources: sensations (from experience) and reflection (rational understanding of our sensations). We must be content with probability, for we cannot be certain about the external world.

Locke's ideas about democracy were foundational for the American worldview. He believed that we learn moral law only from experience, and that the moral law conforms to the innate tendency in all people to pursue pleasure and avoid pain. We have an "inalienable right" to the pursuit of happiness; this right should be preserved in ethical law.

His theology sets up reason as the ultimate test of revelation. With his *Reasonableness of Christianity* (1695), "deism" begins as a viable movement (God is removed from the world).

2. George Berkeley

Berkeley (1685-1753) was born in Ireland, and became Bishop of Cloyne in 1732. In 1734 he was sent to Rhode Island to establish missions. His most important work was *Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge* (1710).

His epistemology accepted Locke's representative view of knowledge. He developed "solipsism," the belief that the world consists only in the perception of the perceiving substance ("to be is to be perceived"). All we can know is that which we can perceive in the mind.

All things, however, are perceived by God. Otherwise, nothing would exist unless I am perceiving it. Berkeley pushes Locke to immaterialism and idealism—ideas are all that exist.

3. David Hume

Hume (1711-76) was born in Edinburgh, studied law, and achieved fame primarily as a historian. His chief work is *Treatise on Human Nature*, published when he was 28 years old. *Inquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (1747) was his most important work.

His epistemology argues that where there is no impression, there is no knowledge (radical empiricism). His basic assumption is complete skepticism. He adopts a strictly rational view of

knowledge, denying causality (cause and effect cannot be demonstrated rationally). He therefore denies the cosmological arguments for God's existence (from creation to Creator).

4. *Responses to rationalistic skepticism*

Bishop Joseph Butler (1692-1752), in *An Analogy of Religion*, argues against deists and for traditional Christian faith.

William Paley (1743-1805) in *Natural Theology* (1802) defends the teleological argument for God's existence (from design to Designer).

Scottish "Common-Sense" Realism, founded by Thomas Reid (1710-96) argues that we are able to make self-evident moral judgments. Because we possess rational freedom, we are a genuine cause, not just a reactor to stimulus. We experience the world without the mediation of ideas, and can thus know the world directly. This became the official philosophy of Princeton Seminary, and conservative Christianity in the colonies. It influences present theology through B. B. Warfield and others.

C. The critical philosophy of Immanuel Kant

Kant (1724-1804) was born in Königsberg, Germany, reared in religious surroundings. He received a broad education, and served as professor of logic and metaphysics until 1797. He is the most important philosopher of the modern period.

His chief concern is to limit Hume's skepticism and the old dogmatism, and secure the just claims of reason.

1. *"Critical" philosophy*

Kant believes that philosophy has hitherto been dogmatic, proceeding without previous criticism of its own powers. It must become "critical," entering upon an impartial examination of the faculty of reason in general. Thus his three Critiques: *Critique of Pure Reason*, an examination of theoretical reason or science; *Critique of Practical Reason*, an examination of morality; and *Critique of Judgment*, an examination of aesthetic and theological judgments, or purposiveness in art and in nature.

2. *Epistemology*

Kant's fundamental problem is with knowledge: what is it, and how is it possible? (*Critique of Pure Reason*). He believes that the mind brings rational structures to reality. Rather than being impressed by reality through sense impressions, the mind first contains necessary judgments or knowledge, by which it *interprets* its sense impressions. The mind exists and judges sense impressions, but it relies on those sense impressions as the "data" for its judgments. Thus, according to Kant, "although all our knowledge begins with experience it does not follow that it arises out of experience."

This method "sidesteps" Hume's denial of causality, for it maintains that the mind affirms such categories as causality independent of the sense data, and interprets the sense data in these categories. Even though Hume is correct in maintaining that one cannot demonstrate causality from experience, Kant believes that one can affirm causality because of the mind's prior affirmation of its validity.

The mind utilizes four categories of understanding in interpreting its sense data: Quantity (amount), Quality (kind of material), Relation (of substance to other substance), and Modality (patterns in substance). These categories each subsume three "judgments," as the chart illustrates:

- Quantity:
 - unity
 - plurality
 - totality
- Quality
 - relation
 - negation
 - limitation
- Relation
 - inherence and subsistence
 - causality and dependence
 - community
- Modality
 - possibility / impossibility
 - existence / non-existence
 - necessity / contingency

The mind judges all sense data by these twelve judgments in four categories. These judgments exist independent of sense data. But they cannot be objectively, experientially demonstrated, and thus are of the *noumena* (not knowable by the senses). They judge the *phenomena* (knowable by the senses).

One conclusion of Kant's epistemology is that we cannot know "the thing in itself." We cannot know the thing apart from the sense impression it makes on our minds. The mind interprets the sense impression, thereby achieving its understanding of the thing, but it must work with the sense impression, not with the thing itself.

3. *Morality (Critique of Practical Reason)*

The "moral imperative," duty for duty's sake, is the very principle of our existence. The highest happiness results from our obedience to our duty—not for its rewards, but for duty's sake alone.

This position leads to Kant's proof for God's existence, based on the moral argument: we all have a concept of perfect morality (duty for duty's sake); this law is reasonable, and therefore must be achievable. But we never reach this achievement in our lifetime, so that we must be able to

reach it after our death. The soul is thus immortal. It can be immortal only if there is a being, himself immortal, who makes our immortality possible. This being is God.

4. *Aesthetics (Critique of Judgment)*

Kant was the first modern philosopher to make his aesthetics theory an integral part of a philosophical system. By utilizing his 12 categories of judgment, he asserts that the mind organizes sense impressions into patterns of beauty. Such judgments may be seen as objective, because minds all use the same 12 categories. Thus he argues for an objective aesthetic theory. Things are beautiful or not beautiful because they possess characteristics which the mind does or does not affirm.

5. *Importance*

By affirming the capacity and agency of the mind to interpret all sense data, Kant reestablished the place of reason in philosophy. This construction enabled him to respond to the empiricist's critique of reason, by affirming the value of experience, but as the "data" for the mind's interpretation.

He also answered Hume's skepticism with his affirmation of causality as a category of the mind, rather than a provable experiential doctrine. Kant's construction reaffirmed the validity of philosophy, allowing his successors to build from his system. Whether they agree or disagree with Kant, all philosophers who follow must first work through his worldview.

D. The nineteenth century

1. *Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834):*¹⁹

Schleiermacher is considered the father of modern philosophy and modern theology. He was the first to approach systematically the Christian faith from the stance of experience. From Kant he adapts the idea that we cannot know the "thing in itself" but only our impressions of it. Therefore, we cannot know God in himself, but only our experience or impression of him.

Theology is the analysis of this "God-consciousness," or experience of God. We experience God in our sinfulness, our dependence on him, and our finitude. Religion is thus a "feeling of absolute dependence." This emphasis on individual, subjective experience of God has earned Schleiermacher the title, "The father of modern liberalism."

2. *Georg Wilhelm Hegel (1770-1831)*

Hegel was born the son of a minor official in Stuttgart, in southern Germany. His family was poor, but he managed to obtain an university education. He became a private tutor, later a newspaper editor and school principle. He was slow to attain a professorship, chiefly because he published little until he was 37 years of age. He grew conservative in thought in later life, and

¹⁹Schleiermacher's most important works are *The Christian Faith*, his systematic theology; and *On Religion: Speeches to Its Cultured Despisers*, an apologetic work.

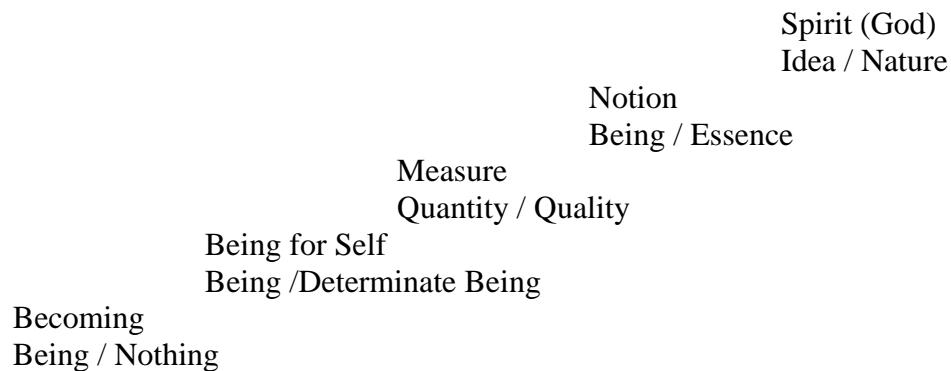
became suspicious of reform and the congenial atmosphere of Prussia. He was supported by the state, so that his fame spread throughout Germany by his death.

Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* (or *Mind*) contained over 750 pages, though he considered it but a preface to his system. *Encyclopedia of Philosophical Sciences* contains the outline of his entire system. *Logic* compiled numerous lecture notes on the subject. His collected works in German comprise some 20 volumes. His is one of the most difficult systems in all of philosophy, owing to the intricate difficulty of his theories, his obfuscating writing style, and the fact that he completed only parts of the vast system he had envisioned.

Hegel believed the universe to be rational. Experience merges minds and objects, so that substance is replaced with thought and consciousness. Self experiences the object itself (vs. Kant), as the mind creates forms and shapes and participates in them.

His dialectic; *thesis* reacts with *antithesis*, producing a *synthesis* (the best of both). (For example, hydrogen and water produce oxygen.) This dialectic occurs all through history, as one group works against another, producing a synthesis which combines the best of both prior groups.

The triadic pattern:



This system influenced Marx's political theory, and the Tubingen school and Moltmann in theology. Kierkegaard reacted against it as one of the chief issues in his theology.

3. *Karl Marx* (1818-83)

Marx's life and work can be viewed in three stages, marked by exiles.

The *German* period: he was influenced by Hegel's dialectic, and also by Ludwig Feuerbach's belief that any projection of spirit or mind is our own wishful thinking, growing out of our dissatisfaction with life. The world is material only. (Note that Freud borrowed from Feuerbach with his assertion that God is a projection of our father-figure.) Marx published *Rhineland Journal*, challenging some of Hegel's assertions, and was exiled from Germany.

In *France*, he studied with Saint-Simon, the economist/socialist. Here he published the *Communist Manifesto* with Engels. The French thought his work would provoke further revolutions in their country, so he was exiled again.

In *England*, Marx studied Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations* (the basis for capitalism), and published *Capital*, his most significant economic work.

His ontology: dialectical materialism. Ultimate reality is material, moving through various stages of history; it will finally arrive at a Communist (classless) stage. History develops according to fixed laws (with Hegel). Mankind has experienced several syntheses: Asiatic / Primitive resulted in Feudal; then led to Capitalism; will ultimately lead to Communism. Lenin and the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution are the outworking of this philosophy.

In Marx's anthropology, we are alienated from our work and thus from ourselves. This disquiet leads to a deep sense of dissatisfaction, which explains social revolutions. The solution to this alienation is to abolish capitalism, by armed revolution if necessary. Note that Marx attempted to help the European workers; it was Lenin who so misused Marx's theories for evil.

The problem with his worldview: why hasn't this inevitable revolution to Communism occurred? Capitalism is supposed to lead to alienation, but has decreased alienation for many.

4. *Soren Kierkegaard* (1813-1855)²⁰

Kierkegaard was born in Denmark during one of its depressions. His father was an unhappy, stern man, weighted with enormous guilt. Soren was a very unhappy, only child (all his brothers and sisters died). He went to college to become a minister, but there learned of an illegitimate relation between his parents (he calls this knowledge his "earthquake"). In 1840 he became engaged to Regine Olson but soon was convinced that God had lodged a "veto" to the relationship. He broke off the engagement by pretending to be unfaithful to her, to avoid her personal embarrassment. Then he began to publish.

The major controversy of Kierkegaard's life was his attack on the Lutheran Church of Denmark. He felt it to be cold, dead orthodoxy; wrote viciously against it; and was castigated by Danish society for this attack. His home life, engagement, and controversy with the church led to deep alienation in his life.

His central tenet: truth as subjectivity. Theological speculation and scientific and historical inquiry move no one closer to faith. Faith is not intellectual assent but the total commitment of our lives to something or someone. This commitment is subjective, for its results are not known but chosen and done. Truth is not known but chosen and acted upon.

We experience three stages of life:

²⁰Among Kierkegaard's most influential works are his *Journals*, which reveal powerfully his personal struggles and beliefs; *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, which reacts to Hegel by affirming the importance of individual decision in experiencing authentic existence; *Either/Or*; *Fear and Trembling*; and *Purity of Heart is to Will One Thing*.

- Aesthetic: empty seeking after pleasure and beauty; appealing to the senses; no joy here.
- Ethical: higher stage; we recognize that we must do our duty (with Kant); no idea of community; the ethical leads to despair, for no person can relate properly to everyone.
- Religious: the highest stage; we make the decision to trust completely in God. This stage is *existential*, in that it concerns our individual existence and choice.

Kierkegaard's Christology is paradoxical. Christ is God's son, but hides himself; he is our example for suffering; the cross is crucial for his theology. We cannot know God himself; his sovereignty and majesty are overwhelmingly stressed. We are not only finite and infinitely distant from God, but also sinners; the limitless number of choices facing us lead us to dread or anxiety (a keynote in existentialist thought); we have the ability, however, to choose for good (i.e., God).

There is no place for the community of faith in his thought. The church contributes to his sense of alienation, and is a severe lack in his theology; Christianity is seen as a lonely affair of faith through suffering. He does not deal with eschatology, as he is too concerned with the present.

5. *Friedrich Nietzsche* (1844-1900)

Nietzsche was born in Prussian Saxony, the son and grandson of Lutheran pastors. His father died when he was a child. Nietzsche was educated at the universities of Bonn and Leipzig; at the age of 25 (an unprecedentedly early age), even before he had taken his degree, he was appointed to a professorship of classical philosophy at the University of Basel.

He served as a medical orderly in the Prussian Army during the Franco-Prussian War (1870). Ill health forced him to withdraw from active duty and, in 1879, from active teaching. Despite terrible migraine headaches, severe stomach upsets, insomnia, and very bad eyesight, he continued to write and publish.

Nietzsche lived a solitary life in near poverty, spending his winters in boarding houses in Italy and summers in Switzerland. Early in 1889 he became hopelessly insane, probably as a result of a syphilitic infection (which must have been contracted early, for he lived a very ascetic life). He died in 1900.

The central feature of Nietzsche's interpretive ontology was the "will to power." This is a cosmological principle—a single, unified worldview. At the level of psychology, Nietzsche believed that all the multiform drives which seemingly motivate our actions are but variants of the one basic drive—the will to power. All goods, values, and virtues are expressions of the power positions of various individuals and groups.

Nietzsche saw humanity as creatures capable of transcending themselves and becoming "overmen." And yet we are also a mere evolutionary quirk, an oddity. We must choose to be a "superman," taking power for ourselves from the world. The Christian faith, with its stress on humility, must therefore be rejected.

His aesthetic theory investigated the nature of artistic creativity. The Greeks were not a people of balance and moderation, but were unusually passionate and violent "overmen." The balance of a great work is therefore not static but dynamic. Artistic creativity, like all creativity, is an expression of power, the overcoming of passion. Without passion and frenzy, there would be no creativity.

Nietzsche's significance lies in his stress on the individuals' happiness in the acquisition and expression of power. Such atheistic existentialism would become pervasive in future generations.

6. *August Comte (1798-1857)*

Comte was the son of an orthodox Catholic family. He became a teacher of mathematics, and developed a concern for social sciences under the influence of Claude Henri Saint-Simon.

His central passion was to reform society and the sciences. He argued for the scientific method and acquisition of "positive" knowledge—that which can be verified by science. He believed that knowledge has evolved through three stages:

- Theological stage—the age of childhood; we regard things as the expression of supernatural beings.
- Metaphysical stage—the age of youth; abstract powers are substituted for personal beings, but we continue to believe in the possibility of absolute knowledge
- Positive stage—the age of adulthood; we abandon concern for ultimate knowledge and center only upon phenomena, as understood scientifically.

The most important science is sociology (the name given by Comte). Scientific certainty is necessary for all knowledge.

7. *John Stuart Mill (1806-73)*

Mill was introduced to philosophy by his father, a writer on philosophical subjects and English secretary in the East India Company. J. S. Mill became an important influence on the political philosophy of his country.

He sought to reform English society by elevating the importance of the scientific method and making happiness and development of humanity the ethical ideal. His theories were based on psychology and logic, with the basic tenet that all knowledge comes through sense impressions and experience. We learn by the laws of association, relating sense impressions to other sense impressions. By utilizing the scientific method, we can organize our impressions into associations and so elevate education that society is improved and reformed.

8. *Pragmatism*

Three writers were especially significant in developing this school, the uniquely American contribution to Western philosophical history. The first was Charles Sanders Peirce (1839-1914). His theory of meaning: differences in meaning are only significant if they lead to

differences of practice out of language. Truth is "opinion which is fated to be ultimately agreed to by all who investigate . . . and the object represented by this opinion is the real." He believed that truth is that which is ultimately agreed upon by all.

William James (1842-1910) first used the term "pragmatism," in an 1898 lecture at Harvard. His test for truth: that which works in experience. Against Kant's structures for understanding reality, James believed that what we experience *is* reality. As applied to religion, faith is valid only if it works for the individual in experience.

John Dewey (1859-1921) built upon James's theories, identifying truth as social righteousness. Morality is that which works so that people function well together.

The influence of pragmatism has been widespread in American thought and education. Public school philosophy is largely built upon this perspective, with its emphasis on experience and the scientific investigation of all reality (to the exclusion of the nonrational).

E. *The twentieth century*

1. *Karl Barth* (1886-1968)²¹

Barth was born in Basel, and studied theology at Bern, Berlin, Tübingen, and Marburg universities; he served the church at Safenwil, Switzerland; and later became professor of theology at Göttingen (1921-25), Münster (1925-30), and Bonn (1930-35) universities. With the rise of Hitler, Barth became a leader in the Confessing Church and was the principal author of the Barmen Declaration (1934). He was dismissed by Hitler (1935) and returned to Basel, where he remained professor of theology until his retirement in 1962.

Theological development: Barth was influenced early by J. G. W. Herrmann toward a liberal position; he later developed a dialectical theology in which he proclaimed God as the "Wholly Other." Impressed by the Religious Socialist movement, Blumhardt, and Kierkegaard, he stressed the "Godness of God" as the starting point of his theology.

Later, responding to Feuerbach, he adopted a dogmatic stance to show that God was not made in man's image. Here he moved from the liberal tradition of Schleiermacher and Bultmann. Barth concluded his life's work emphasizing the "humanity of God"—God with and for us.

His Christological center: Christ is the sole key to understanding God, the universe, and mankind. Theology is christologically determined—it works from Christ outward.

The "Word of God" comes in three forms:

- Christ
- The Scriptures
- The proclamation of the church.

²¹Barth's most important theological writing is of course his massive *Church Dogmatics* (13 vols. plus an index volume). Other volumes of special note are *Romans* (1919), *Word of God and Word of Man* (1928), and *Ethics* (1928-9).

The parousia likewise comes in three stages: Christ's resurrection, the Spirit's coming at Pentecost, and the *telos* of history. We thus live in the "time between the times."

Ethics: Barth, more than any other theologian, attempted methodologically to bring ethics into theology. "Theology is ethics" was his premise, since knowing God entails doing his will. Ethics is the doctrine of God's commands as Creator, Reconciler, and Redeemer. We are responsible to God as a being in encounter, free only when we conform our decision to the divine decision.

His influence: Barth is seen as the catalyst for the movement known as "neo-Orthodoxy," an attempt to moderate between liberalism and fundamentalism. While his positions on the word/Word of God continue to elicit debate, his attempt to reformulate Christian theology "from God," with a Christological center, changed the entire course of theological studies.

2. *Emil Brunner (1889-1966):*²²

A Swiss Reformed theologian, Brunner was born in Zurich. He studied at the universities of Zurich and Berlin, and at Union Theological Seminary in New York. He was professor of theology at Zurich (1924-53) and at Christian University, Mitaka, Tokyo, Japan (1953-55).

Brunner was a collaborator with Karl Barth until their famous split over natural theology. Brunner continued to maintain that theology can be done "from below," from God's revelation through his creation; Barth gave his resounding "Nein!" Brunner has come to represent the alternative to Barth's "ontological" theological method.

3. *Rudolf Bultmann (1884-1976):*²³

Bultmann born in Wiefelstede, Oldenburg, Germany, Bultmann studied theology at the universities of Tübingen, Berlin, and Marburg. He lectured at Marburg, Breslau, and Giessen, returning to Marburg as professor of New Testament from 1921 to his retirement in 1951.

Bultmann adopted the liberal traditions of his education, accepting the priority of experience over doctrine. He was especially influenced by Martin Heidegger and the belief that human nature is created in moments of decision. He thus rooted his theology in existential problems and needs.

²²Among Brunner's most important books are *The Mediator* (1926), *The Divine Imperative* (1932), *Man in Revolt* (1936), *The Divine-Human Encounter* (1937), *Revelation and Reason* (1942), *Justice and the Social Order* (1944), *Christianity and Civilization* (1948, 1949), and especially *Dogmatics* (3 vols., 1946-60).

²³Bultmann's program of demythologization is found in *Jesus Christ and Mythology* (1946); his *Theology of the New Testament* (2 vols., 1951, 1955), *The History of the Synoptic Gospels* (1963) and *Faith and Understanding* (1969) are especially important theological works; his biblical commentaries include *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* (1971), *A Commentary on the Johannine Epistles* (1973), and *The Second Letter to the Corinthians* (1985).

He was one of the pioneers in developing form-criticism. He developed "demythologization" as a theological program: believing the biblical worldview to be prescientific and untenable for modern use, Bultmann sought to reinterpret the mythology of the New Testament in existential terms. He was also one of the foremost New Testament exegetes of his day.

4. *Paul Tillich (1886-1965)*:²⁴

Tillich was born in rural Prussia and studied at various universities; he received his Ph.D. for a dissertation on Shelling. He was ordained to the Protestant ministry in 1912, and served as an army chaplain during World War I. He began teaching at Marburg in 1924, moved to Dresden in 1925, and to Frankfurt in 1929. Forced by the Nazis to leave Germany, he was appointed professor of philosophical theology at Union Theological Seminary, New York, in 1933. He spent the remainder of his life in America, teaching at Columbia, Harvard, and Chicago universities.

Tillich was highly influenced by Platonism, German idealism, and especially existentialism. He therefore sought theological answers to philosophical/existential questions, and considered this the theological method best suited to demonstrate the relevance of Christian faith.

God is the "essence" of all that is, the ground of all being, and thus stands above all "existence." Our "ultimate concern" is our true faith object, and should be centered in God alone. All else is "idolatry" and "demonic." Theology uses the language of creative symbols which flow from the human unconscious and point beyond themselves to the God who is the ground of all being.

5. *Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889-1951)*

Born to a wealthy family in Austria, Wittgenstein was trained in engineering from an early age. In 1911 he traveled to England, where he gained an interest in philosophy and logic; he studied there under G. W. Moore and Bertrand Russell at Cambridge. In 1913 he inherited a huge fortune, which he gave to his sisters. He later became a philosophy professor in England, and died in 1951 of cancer.

His chief concern was the clarification of philosophical problems by explaining how previous problems have been complicated by language difficulties. The "early Wittgenstein," represented by his *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (1921), became the basis for Logical Positivism. It emphasized scientific language and univocal expression (words mean the same in every context). Wittgenstein felt all philosophical problems could be understood by clarifying language.

The "late Wittgenstein" of *Philosophical Investigations* (published posthumously) challenged every major thesis of the *Tractatus*. Now he sees the meaning of a word in its use. As different actions in games are governed by the rules of the different games, so one word in different contexts is governed by those different contexts, with a resulting difference in meaning. Here he opposes a positivistic philosophy of language.

²⁴Tillich's most important works include *Interpretation of History* (1936), *The Protestant Era* (1936), *The Courage to Be* (1952), *Theology of Culture* (1959), and especially *Systematic Theology* (3 vols., 1951-63).

Logical Positivism grew out of Comte's view of scientific thinking as the highest form of epistemology. Developed by a group called the "Vienna Circle" in the early 20th century, it was popularized primarily by A. J. Ayer and Antony Flew.

Its main thesis is the "verifiability principle"—unless a statement can be established as true either analytically or empirically, it is meaningless. (Note that the statement cannot be verified by its own criteria.)

This approach precludes the unique, the nonrational, the supernatural, or mythical or symbolic utilization of language. It thus counters the Christian claim for divine revelation in Scripture and the supernatural nature of the accounts recorded therein.

6. *Existentialism*

Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) argued that we simply *are*, but we are also "being-there-with" in that we are not alone. And we are in fallenness, for we do not realize our full potential. The primary characteristic of being is that it ends.

And so we develop *angst* (dread) at our finiteness and failing. We must develop courage to face our "thrownness" (our existence in the world), our being in the face of its end.

His stage metaphor makes our situation clear: we find ourselves thrown on a stage with no script, no audience, and no director. We are simply there with others. We are to play out the drama for its own sake—not to please an audience or the director. There is nothing before and there is nothing after the drama of life. Courage is to face life as it is.

Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-80) built on Heidegger's philosophy, affirming atheism as a viable philosophical position. We are simply what we make of ourselves. Ethics are based strictly upon personal accountability and individual responsibility. *Being and Nothingness* (1943) is the major statement of his existentialistic philosophy.

7. *Process theology*:²⁵

This movement was built largely on the thought of Alfred North Whitehead and his emphasis on evolution, process theology posits a more dynamic and organic view of God and his creation. It possesses three characteristics:

- Organic development: reality flows in a continuum of development (example: life as a motion picture, with experience comprising the individual frames).
- Reality as totally interdependent: every bit of reality is completely dependent on every other bit of reality (as motion picture frames are dependent on each other).
- One must emphasize the individual unit of reality in its evolving context.

²⁵Alfred North Whitehead's most important work is *Process and Reality*. For sources in process theology consult John B. Cobb, Jr. and David Ray Griffin, *Process Theology: An Introductory Exposition* and *Process and Divinity: The Hartshorne Festschrift*, ed. William L. Reese and Eugene Freeman.

Charles Hartshorne (who applied this theology to a doctrine of God, affirming a God in evolution with his world); John Cobb (the pluralist) and Schubert Ogden (the Christological relativist) have continued its influence.

VI. The postmodern era: The Shift in Scriptural Authority in the Postmodern World²⁶

A. Founding the "modern" world

For nearly twenty centuries the Christian church has built its theology and ministry upon the foundational belief that the Scriptures possess inherent authority for faith and practice. Before we can understand how this foundation has crumbled in this generation, we must first know how it was built. Then we can see the cracks and respond to them.²⁷

1. The patristic and medieval authority structures

The first Christians held a clear and positive view of biblical authority. Peter's Pentecost sermon presumed the binding authority of Old Testament prophetic literature; Stephen's defense was largely a retelling of the biblical history of Israel; James built the Jerusalem's council acceptance of the Gentile mission on Old Testament prophetic texts; and Paul could say that "All scripture is inspired by God" (2 Timothy 3:16).

Soon, however, the authority structures of the Christian movement shifted from the Bible itself to the Scriptures as they are interpreted by the Church. Ignatius, bishop of Antioch argued for the authority of the bishop over the church²⁸ and a "college" of bishops as the ruling authority of the

²⁶ This section is adapted from my article, "Shaking the Foundations: the shift in scriptural authority in the postmodern world," in *Review and Expositor* (August 4, 1998).

²⁷ Will and Ariel Durant, the famous historians, once made a telling confession about the recording of history: "The historian always oversimplifies, and hastily selects a manageable minority of facts and faces out of a crowd of souls and events whose multitudinous complexity he can never quite embrace or comprehend" (*The Lessons of History* [New York: Simon and Schuster, 1968] 12). Never was their comment more appropriately applied than to what follows here.

The literature dealing with the history and methods of biblical interpretation is, of course, voluminous. We smile today at H. Wheeler Robinson's statement in 1943 that hermeneutics is "a rather neglected branch of Biblical study at the present time" ("The Higher Exegesis, *Journal of Theological Studies* 44 [1943] 143). Among the many good historical treatments of biblical interpretation the following are recommended: John Rogerson, Christopher Rowland, and Barnabas Lindars, *The Study and Use of the Bible: The History of Christian Theology*, ed. Paul Avis, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988); Robert M. Grant with David Tracy, *A Short History of the Interpretation of the Bible*, 2d ed. rev. (n.p.: Fortress Press, 1984 [1963]); A. Berkeley Mickelsen, *Interpreting the Bible* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1963) 20-53; James C. Denison, *Seven Crucial Questions About the Bible* (Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman and Holman, 1994) 113-36; and the classic text, Frederic W. Farrar, *History of Interpretation* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker, 1961). Excellent articles include John P. Newport, "Representative Historical and Contemporary Approaches to Biblical Interpretation, *Faith and Mission* 3 (Spring 1986) 32-48; and Justo L. Gonzalez, "How the Bible Has Been Interpreted in Christian Tradition," *New Interpreter's Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1994) I:83-106.

²⁸ In the *Epistle of Ignatius to the Smyrnaeans* he wrote, "Let the laity be subject to the deacons; the deacons to the presbyters; the presbyters to the bishop; the bishop to Christ, even as He is to the Father" (ch. ix). Later in this chapter Ignatius claimed, "Nor is there any one in the Church greater than the bishop, who ministers as a priest to God for the salvation of the whole world."

universal Church.²⁹ Irenaeus further identified the Roman Church as the "preeminent authority" in Christendom, with her leaders emanating from Peter and Paul through the bishops who have succeeded them.³⁰

Soon (ca. 250) Cyprian of Carthage had separated the "clergy" from the "laity" and made his famous claim, "He can no longer have God for his Father, who has not the Church for his mother."³¹ When Constantine made his conversion to Christianity in 312 and subsequently legalized the church, the institutional authority of the Christian movement was clearly defined as the Roman Church and her leadership.

Of course, this concept of ecclesiastical authority molded greatly the patristic and medieval concepts of Scriptural authority. As God gave the Scriptures through the Church, so (it was argued) he guided the Church through her leaders to the proper interpretation and application of his word. Creeds, councils, and papal rulings became the means by which the biblical materials were understood and transmitted.³²

And so the Catholic foundation blocks of the modern world were set in place: objective truth and absolute authority structures, centered in the teachings of the Church.

2. *The Reformation project*³³

In shorthand, the Protestant reformers sought to relocate authority with the Scriptures as they are interpreted by the individual believer. William of Occam argued that the revelation of God in

²⁹ Williston Walker, professor of ecclesiastical history at Yale University, states that "By the sixth decade of the second century monarchical bishops had become well-nigh universal" (*A History of the Christian Church*, 3d ed. [New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1970] 42).

³⁰ Irenaeus spoke of "that tradition derived from the apostles, of the very great, the very ancient, and universally known Church founded and organized at Rome by the two most glorious apostles, Peter and Paul; as also the faith preached to men, which comes down to our time by means of the successions of the bishops." Then he added, "It is a matter of necessity that every Church should agree with this Church, on account of its preeminent authority" (*Against Heresies* 3:3:2).

³¹ *De unitate ecclesiasticum* ch. 6. For an excellent discussion of the "clergy" in the patristic era see A. Di Berardino, "Clergy, Clerics," *Encyclopedia of the Early Church*, trans. Adrian Walford (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992) 1:181-3.

³² Robert McNally, S.J., describes the early medieval view of Scripture thus: "a sacred authority which was transmitted through the activity of the monastic scriptorium and understood through the books of the monastic bibliotheca. The monastic library, built on patristic tradition, provided intelligence of the *sacra pagina*, while the monastic scriptorium transmitted the text of Scripture, and together with it certain *nova et vetera*, the new medieval commentaries and the old commentaries of the Fathers" (*The Bible in the Early Middle Ages* [Atlanta, Georgia: Scholars Press, 1986 (1959)] 29).

Mickelsen characterizes the medieval culture regarding Scripture thus: "Throughout the Middle Ages interpretation is bound by a dull conformity. Church tradition stands supreme. The Scriptures and the fathers--or collections of sayings gathered from both--were offered as supports for tradition. Philosophical theology and theological philosophy controlled the thinkers. Inferences from basic ideas were more important than examining whether these basic ideas had any biblical validity. Except for an oasis here and there, the Middle Ages were a vast desert so far as biblical interpretation is concerned" (p. 35).

Even Grant and Tracy, in their generally positive assessment of the period, admit that "there is little in medieval interpretation that is strikingly novel" (p. 83).

³³ An excellent introduction to this area is *The Cambridge History of the Bible*, Vol. 2, *The West from the Fathers to the Reformation*, ed. G. W. H. Lampe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969).

Scripture is the authoritative basis for Christian faith, not the authorities of the church. His position greatly influenced Martin Luther, who studied under professors committed to Occam's theology. In fact, Luther called Occam his "beloved master."

Luther in turn made the famous claim, "Only the Holy Scripture possesses canonical authority."³⁴ He discounted in turn the claims of magistrates, church councils, church fathers, bishops, and even the pope to authority over the Scriptures.³⁵ John Calvin agreed: "God bestows the actual knowledge of himself upon us only in the Scriptures";³⁶ "Scripture has its authority from God, not from the church."³⁷

With the reformers' achievement the Protestant foundation blocks of the modern world were laid: a Bible which possesses objective meaning, theological positions which are certain and true, and Scriptural authority which is final and absolute.

3. The "modern" mind

While the religious world was experiencing this monumental conflict between ecclesiastical and Scriptural authority structures, the philosophical world was undergoing a struggle equally foundational and far-reaching.

Rene Descartes, a Catholic mathematician with an intense personal need to find foundational truth, sought that truth which he could not doubt. He determined that the existence of the thinking self was the first truth which doubt could not deny. As a result, he defined the human condition as one centered in the autonomous rational process.³⁸ The "rationalist" worldview followed Descartes' location of authority within human reason.

The empiricist reaction focused upon personal experience as the true authority for knowledge. John Locke asserted that the mind is born not with innate ideas (the Cartesian system) but as a blank slate, a *tabula rasa*.³⁹ David Hume claimed that this empirical method cannot lead to true and certain knowledge. Every belief is derived from an object; our minds connect these objects into patterns on the basis of the appearance of unprovable causal relations. We cannot defend our reason by reason.⁴⁰

³⁴ *Luther's Works*, ed. Helmut T. Lehmann (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1967) 37:76.

³⁵ *Letters of Martin Luther*, trans. and ed. Margaret A. Currie (London: Macmillan & Co., Ltd., 1908) 93; *Table Talk*, trans. and ed. Theodore G. Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1967) 346-7.

³⁶ *Institutes* I.vi.1.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, I.vi.2. Calvin believed that God accommodates himself to our understanding through the Bible: "the gospel so far transcends the perspicacity of human intellect, that to whatever height those who are accounted men of superior intellect may raise their view, they never can reach its elevated height"; therefore "[God] accommodates himself to our capacity in addressing us" (*Commentary* on 1 Cor. 2:7). But this accommodation in no way lessened the authority of the Scriptures in Calvin's theology.

³⁸ See *Discourse on Method*, trans. Donald A. Cress (Indianapolis, Indiana: Hackett Publishing Company, 1980) part 4, pp. 17-21.

³⁹ Locke's central claim: "All ideas come from sensation or reflection," our senses or the operation of our minds on them (*Essay Concerning Human Understanding* II.1.2).

⁴⁰ See *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (La Salle, Illinois: Open Court, 1967) 49, 84.

Immanuel Kant forged that merger between the rational and the empirical worldviews which organized the foundational building blocks of modernity into their final form. In short, his truce between mind and senses combined both into a larger whole: the senses furnish "raw data" which the mind organizes according to categories within itself, and the result is "knowledge."⁴¹ However, according to this system we can have certain knowledge only of the "phenomena" (those objects which are present to the senses of the knower), not of the "noumena" (objects lying beyond sense experience).⁴² This distinction would prove to be crucial for the later shift from the "modern" to the "postmodern" world.

With the Kantian synthesis the philosophical foundation stones of the modern world were laid beside the Catholic and the Protestant. In all three, truth is certain and available, and epistemic authority is clear and absolute. Whether authority resides in the Church, the Scriptures, or empirical knowledge interpreted rationally, there is no question in the modern mind about its objective character.

B. Remaking a "postmodern" foundation

These "modern" foundation stones contained within themselves unseen fissures; soon the cracks would widen and the house would shift. The foundation would crumble, with another built in its place.

1. The Kantian fissure

The philosophical problem was this: there exists within the Kantian synthesis a subjective element undetected by most of its contemporary followers. In short, if knowledge is the result of our individual interpretation of our personal sense experience, then in what sense can this knowledge be objective? My sense impressions may be different from yours. My interpretation of this data is personal and subjective as well. Not only can I not know the "noumena" (the "thing-in-itself" which lies beyond my senses), I cannot claim objective authority for my interpretation of the "phenomena," either.

Soon two very different builders, one a strident anti-Christian and the other a very pious theologian, would exploit this fissure.

2. The first "postmoderns"

First we must consider Friedrich Nietzsche, the "patron saint of postmodern philosophy."⁴³ According to this critic of the Christian faith, the world is composed of fragments, each one individual. We construct concepts which rob reality of its diversity and individuality (such as forming the concept "leaf" for leaves, an idea which can never do justice to the diversity of

⁴¹ See *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics* (Indianapolis, Indiana: The Library of Liberal Arts, 1950 [1783] 5-12).

⁴² See *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, trans. H. J. Paton (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1964) 126-7.

⁴³ Stanley Grenz has written perhaps the best short introduction to postmodern thought and its implications for evangelical ministry, *A Primer on Postmodernism* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1986). This description of Nietzsche is his (p. 88).

leaves). These concepts or laws are actually illusions or convenient fictions.⁴⁴ "Truth" is solely a function of the language we employ and exists only within specific linguistic contexts. It is a function of the internal workings of language itself.⁴⁵ The authority structure of the Church, whether centered on the Bible or the Church's teachings, is therefore unfounded and irrelevant.

Nietzsche's hermeneutical insights parallel Friedrich Schleiermacher's earlier theological assertions. According to this "father of theological liberalism," biblical texts are not systematic theological treatises but reflections of the minds and contexts of their authors. The interpreter must move behind the text to its author's mind. The work of theology is therefore to "abstract entirely from the specific content of the particular Christian experiences."⁴⁶

And so an entirely different epistemological foundation began to be laid by Nietzsche and Schleiermacher, one which rejected the objective building blocks of the modern world for a knowledge base centered in subjectivity. In their view, truth is not absolute and objective but relative and individual. Recent philosophers of language would soon finish this foundation and build a new house on it.

3. *Finishing the new foundation*

According to Wilhelm Dilthey, hermeneutics functions in a circle. We comprehend language by understanding its words, yet these words derive their meaning only within their holistic context.⁴⁷ Objectivity in interpretation cannot be achieved, and should not be desired.

Hans-Georg Gadamer agreed that the interpreter must "fuse the horizons." Meaning emerges only as the text and interpreter engage in dialogue, a "hermeneutical conversation."⁴⁸ Because each reader will conduct his or her own conversation with the text, objective meaning is obviously impossible.

Ludwig Wittgenstein rejected his earlier language philosophy (built on a scientific, mathematical, positivistic hermeneutic) for a view of language as "game." Social rules determine the use of words and their meaning. Language is a social phenomenon which derives its meaning from social interaction.⁴⁹ Since each "player" works from personal and subjective rules, there can be no objective authority within any speech act.

The "structuralists" further developed the social nature of language. According to Ferdinand de Saussure, language is like a work of music in which we focus on the whole work, not the

⁴⁴ See Nietzsche, *The Genealogy of Morals*, trans. F. Golffing (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1956) 255; and *Beyond Good and Evil*, trans. M. Cowan (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1955) 100-1.

⁴⁵ *Genealogy of Morals* 209-10; *Beyond Good and Evil* 18-9; cf. Grenz's commentary, p. 97.

⁴⁶ Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, ed. H. R. Mackintosh and J. S. Stewart (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1976) 131. For more on Schleiermacher's seminal hermeneutical contributions see Anthony C. Thiselton, *New Horizons in Hermeneutics: The Theory and Practice of Transforming Biblical Reading* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1992) 204-36.

⁴⁷ See Grenz's description, 99-103.

⁴⁸ Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, trans. and ed. David E. Linge (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1976) xix.

⁴⁹ *Philosophical Investigations* 1.65.

individual performers of the musicians. As social constructs, texts are developed to provide structures of meaning in a meaningless existence. These structures form the foundation for hermeneutical theory and practice.⁵⁰

The movement known as "deconstructionism" moved even further toward subjectivity: meaning cannot be inherent in a text or speech act, but emerges *only* as the interpreter enters into dialogue with the author.⁵¹ One significant role of the contemporary interpreter is to deconstruct the modern epistemological structures with their mythical claims to objective authority.

In this century language philosophers have largely discarded the hermeneutical foundations which undergirded speech and faith since the time of Christ. Claims to objective truth and absolute authority have been dismissed, whether their source is the Church, the Scriptures, or interpreted experience. In their place we have seen the construction of a foundation and building called "postmodern." The implications of this project for Scriptural authority are historic and monumental.

C. Building a postmodern world

The "postmodern" movement which has resulted from such foundational shifts is still evolving and ill-defined.⁵² However, three names stand above the rest in stature and significance: Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, and Richard Rorty.⁵³

1. Michel Foucault: unmasking motives

Michel Foucault (1926-1984) was the most significant bridge figure from Nietzsche to the postmodern world.⁵⁴ His ideas relative to hermeneutics can be grouped in three categories.

⁵⁰ See Daniel and Aline Patte, *Structural Exegesis: From Theory to Practice* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1978).

⁵¹ See Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (New York: Crossroad, 1984) 261.

⁵² Sources for the following survey include (alphabetically): James Breech, *Jesus and Postmodernism* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989); *Christian Scholar's Review*, special issue: Christianity and Postmodernity (Winter 1996); Ronald W. Johnson, *How Will They Hear If We Don't Listen?* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1994); Grenz's *A Primer on Postmodernism*; J. Richard Middleton and Brian J. Walsh, *Truth Is Stranger Than It Used to Be: Biblical Faith in a Postmodern Age* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity, 1995); Dennis McCallum, ed., *The Death of Truth* (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 1996); Craig Kennet Miller, *Postmoderns: the beliefs, hopes and fears of young Americans (1965-1981)* (Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 1996); Ronald N. Nash, Jr., *An 8-Track Church in a CD World: the modern church in the postmodern world* (Macon, Georgia: Smyth & Helwys, 1997); Alan J. Roxburgh, *Reaching a New Generation: Strategies for Tomorrow's Church* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity, 1993); James W. Sire, *Why Should Anyone Believe Anything At All?* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity, 1994); Gene Edward Veith, Jr., *Postmodern Times: A Christian Guide to Contemporary Thought and Culture* (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Books, 1994); and William D. Watkins, *The New Absolutes* (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 1996).

⁵³ For extended discussions of these seminal leaders in postmodern philosophy consult Grenz, 123-60; and Lundin, 185-211.

⁵⁴ Foucault's most important writings include *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Random House-Pantheon, 1971); *The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language*, trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972); and *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977*, ed. Colin Gordon (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980).

First, his *epistemology* rejected the Enlightenment claim to objective knowledge. With Nietzsche, we must focus on the individual and the specific. Therefore, language cannot express universal truth but only the personal experience of its user and/or interpreter.

Second, his *anthropology*: humans use language to express and to gain power. With Nietzsche, the basic human drive is the 'will to power.' To name something is to exercise power over it. We seek knowledge for the power it gives us. The goal of hermeneutics should therefore be to unmask those power drives which created the text before us.

Third, his *historiography*: we create history to make or preserve those mythical worldviews which enhance our power and status. There is no objective "world" behind our historical recording of its events; we choose which events to report and the interpretation we give them based on our ambition for power. "Truth" is the fictional fabrication of those who claim it. The result for language should therefore be to introduce discontinuity into the reader's life, jarring him or her into admitting that life is chaotic and subjective.

2. Jacques Derrida: deconstructing "reality"

Jacques Derrida critiques the Enlightenment ontology with the approach known as "deconstructionism."⁵⁵ While Foucault's epistemology leads to his view of language, Derrida's ontology serves as the foundation for both his epistemology and his hermeneutics.

According to Derrida, there is no fixed or universal reality. Not only can we make no objective claims to knowledge, given the subjective nature of the interpretive process; there *is* no independent reality to describe. No "world" exists, only your world and my world. "Onto-theology," the attempt to articulate ontological descriptions of reality, must be abandoned.

We "create" our own world by speaking of it. Language possesses no fixed meaning and is not connected to a fixed reality. Our words do not *carry* meaning ("logocentrism"); rather, they *create* it.

For instance, the device on which I am typing these words is either a word-processor, a fancy typewriter, or a strange box which makes annoying clicks, depending entirely on whether I, my grandfather, or my preschool friend is describing it. We cannot get beyond the words to the "reality," for the words create that reality for us.

As a result, the work of interpretation has as its goal the deconstruction of logocentrism. We must admit the absence of transcendent reality and focus only upon the text itself as it speaks to us personally. We must deconstruct our view of language which posits an objective world beyond our words. As we live with the anxiety produced by the absence of transcendent truth we

⁵⁵ Derrida's major works include *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976); *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978); *Positions*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981); and *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982).

come to terms with life as it truly is. And as we deal with the text separate from its author's intention or any claims to represent objective truth, we reconstruct our own world.

Language is therefore the door to whatever meaning is possible for us.

3. *Richard Rorty: building pragmatic community*

Richard Rorty, one of America's most popular philosophers, completes the postmodern foundation by demonstrating its pragmatic usefulness for our daily lives.⁵⁶ While Foucault and Derrida develop their language theory on the basis of their epistemologies, Rorty bases both his epistemology and his pragmatic program on his view of language.

Rorty agrees with Foucault and Derrida that language is a matter of human convention, not the mirror of an objective reality. All language is derived from and dependent upon its context, and is thus subjective and relative. Rorty's contribution to postmodernism is his extension of this foundational conviction to its larger pragmatic consequences.

Because no foundational truths or "first principles" exist apart from our linguistic creation of them, we must develop our personal ways of coping with reality as we see it. "Truth" for us is what works for us. Language is therefore to be judged by its pragmatic value, not its supposed representation of objective reality. Language is a tool for interpreting and coping with life.

Four results for language follow. First, language is equally valuable and useful regardless of its field of use. Science is no more objective than ethics, for instance. No one genre of speech act possesses meaning of greater value than another.

Second, language and the life it creates and interprets is best viewed in narrative context. No speech act stands alone. Every context is temporal and contingent.

Third, language functions best as the creator of community. As we tolerate and affirm other speech acts and the realities they create, we foster a larger sense of acceptance. As we share common linguistic experience, we forge a common life. Given that no objective reality stands outside our linguistic interpretation of our own experience, such community is our best hope for belonging and meaning.

Fourth, this pragmatic language theory possesses the capacity to lead us to a kind of postmodern utopia. Once we have banished our power-driven, manipulative attempts to require and enforce one particular view of reality and truth, we will be free to live in a society built on tolerance and mutuality. Such a postmodern hope offers an enticing, accessible, and nonjudgmental alternative to the Christian eschatology built upon our acceptance or rejection of a single Way, Truth, and Life.

⁵⁶ Rorty's major work is *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979). His own summary of his pragmatic philosophy is "Pragmatism, Relativism, and Irrationalism" in *The Consequences of Pragmatism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982).

To sum up, the postmodern worldview is built upon three foundation stones. First, the ontological and epistemological belief that no reality exists independent of the linguistic interpretation of our personal experiences. Second, the linguistic belief that we literally create our own worlds by the speech we employ to describe and interpret these experiences. And third, the pragmatic belief that such language acts, when affirmed as mutually acceptable and equally valuable, forge a community of tolerance and shared, created purpose.

D. The Bible in postmodern hands

These foundation stones stand alongside and, for many, in place of the foundational convictions upon which Christendom was built. Belief in an objective world as created by God, described and interpreted through the authoritative Scriptures, is fast losing credibility in contemporary culture. But the postmodern interpreter does not stop with constructing an alternative worldview to that of the Bible; he or she then proceeds to reinterpret the Scriptures themselves in light of the postmodern project.⁵⁷

This postmodern approach to biblical authority centers in two agendas. First, we must examine previous uses of the Bible and critique their weaknesses. Postmoderns work hard to expose the "dark underside of Scripture"--ways the Bible has been used to engender obscurantism, racism, sexism, and authoritarianism. In their view, much of the oppression so common to our culture has its roots in "modern" uses of biblical authority. Men have cited the Scriptures in their continuing effort to subjugate women; the wealthy, to use the poor; the powerful, to oppress the weak; heterosexuals, to condemn homosexuals; and so on. We must unmask all such power motives for what they are, and disabuse the Bible of such manipulative uses.

This critical function extends beyond such historical misuse of biblical authority, however, to the assumptions within the Scriptures themselves. Wherever the biblical authors intended intolerance, their texts must be "deideologized." Much as Bultmann sought to expose the myths inherent in the text and free the overarching, relevant principles of Scripture from such first-century bindings, so the postmodern interpreter seeks to liberate the inclusive message of love from bondage to ignorant or oppressive intolerance. As a result, much of the work of postmodern exegesis lies in identifying and discarding noninclusive ideology, whether imbedded in the text or in Christian tradition.

The second agenda within postmodern biblical hermeneutics is to define the authority of religious literature properly. As we have seen, postmoderns do not locate such authority within the belief that the Bible reflects and reveals an objective reality. Rather, they center biblical authority in the ways it is used by the ecclesial community to foster a new kind of corporate existence. Whenever the text works to help the reader create and understand his or her own reality, it has functioned with authority. And when such revelatory experiences cohere with those of others, a larger community is built.

⁵⁷An excellent introduction to postmodern theology is Richard Lints, *The Fabric of Theology: A Prolegomenon to Evangelical Theology* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1993).

Biblical interpretation now helps us understand ourselves, but it does not lead to normative, objective truth. Our biblical traditions possess authority only insofar as they aid us in achieving insight for our situation and needs.

Four theological tasks result from this postmodern view of biblical authority. First, we seek central Christian symbols as they are appropriate for the contemporary situation and apply to the current plurality of needs. Second, we remove oppressive distortions and judgmental illusions, whether they are native to the text itself or imbedded in our traditional understanding of the biblical materials. Third, we use these symbols in a prophetic critique of secularizing and/or oppressive trends within the contemporary faith community and larger society.

Most of all, we seek a transcendent meaning and purpose for the human community without a transcendent source. We point to the diverse range of religious experiences and seek to further conversation and dialogue in hopes of discovering mutual, pragmatic meaning and purpose. This program clearly lacks the optimism and catalytic energy of Christendom's "Kingdom-building" mission. But for those who believe there is no objective Kingdom, it is the most popular alternative available today.

E. An apologetic for biblical authority

How shall evangelicals respond to this alternative worldview and its threat to objective biblical authority? Is it possible to defend today Paul's absolute claim that "all Scripture is inspired by God"? What follows is a brief sketch of such an apologetic, approaching an engagement with postmodernism along both philosophical and pragmatic lines.

First, a philosophical response. Unfortunately, one approach to postmodernism among evangelicals is to accept its foundational beliefs and attempt to build a Christian structure upon them. This results in an intensely subjective faith which possesses no intrinsic or objective merit for others. Fortunately, there are other ways.

I suggest that the postmodern rejection of objective truth contains within itself the fissures which may lead to its collapse. In brief, if no objective truth exists, how can I accept this assertion as objectively true? According to postmoderns, no statement possesses independent and objective truth. And yet the preceding statement is held to be independently and objectively true. This seems a bit like the ancient skeptics (ca. 500 BC) who claimed, "There is no such thing as certainty and we're sure of it."

A second philosophical critique of postmodernism centers in its rejection of objective ethics. Since all ethics are purely pragmatic and contextual, no ethical position can be judged or rejected by those outside its culture. If this be so, then how are we to view events such as the Holocaust? Within the interpretive culture of the Third Reich, Auschwitz and Dachau were pragmatically necessary and purposeful. And yet they stand as the quintessential rejection of the tolerance and inclusion so valued by postmoderns. The postmodern must choose between his insistence on inclusion and his rejection of intolerance. Logically, he cannot have both.

The postmodern rejection of objective biblical authority thus rests upon illogical and mutually contradictory foundational principles. This "apagogic" apologetic (defending one's position by exposing the weaknesses of its opponents) may prove effective with the postmodern who values logical consistency.

If, however, our postmodern friend simply shrugs her shoulders and says, "So what"? we can turn to a pragmatic response. Here the postmodern rejection of modernity is in our favor. The chief obstacle to faith posed by modernity was its insistence on empirical proof and scientific verification. The postmodern rejects such a materialist worldview, insisting that all truth claims are equally (though relatively) valid. The result is a renewed interest in spirituality unprecedented in our century. While this contemporary spirituality is unfortunately embracing of all alternatives, at least Christianity can function as one of these options.

How can we make an appeal for biblical authority in such a marketplace of spiritual competitors? By reversing the "modern" strategy. In modernity we told our culture, "Christianity is true; it is therefore relevant and attractive." We invited nonbelievers to accept the faith on the basis of its biblical, objective merits. "The Bible says" was all the authority our truth claims required.

In the postmodern culture we must use exactly the opposite strategy: our faith must be attractive; then it may be relevant; then it might be true (at least for its followers). If we can show the postmodern seeker for spiritual meaning that Christianity is attractive, interesting, and appealing, he will likely be willing to explore its relevance for his life. When he sees its relevance for us, he may decide to try it for himself. And when it "works," he will decide that it is true for him. He will then affirm the authority of the Scriptures, not in order to come to faith but because he has.

Conclusion: remembering our future

Can such an approach be effective? If we jettison our "truth first" approach to biblical authority and begin by appealing to our culture on the basis of attractive relevance, will we abandon our Scriptural heritage? No--we will return to it.

We live in a postmodern, post-denominational, post-Christian culture. The first Christians lived in a pre-modern, pre-denominational, pre-Christian world. They had no hope of taking the gospel to the "ends of the earth" by beginning their appeal to the Gentiles with biblical authority. The larger Greek world shared the postmodern skepticism of any absolute truth claim, let alone those made on the basis of Hebrew scriptures or a Jewish carpenter's teachings. And so the apostolic Christians build their evangelistic efforts on personal relevance and practical ministry.⁵⁸ The result was the beginning of the most powerful, popular, and far-reaching religious movement in history.

I am convinced that we are now living in a culture more like that of the apostolic Christians than any we have seen since their day. They had no buildings or institutions to which they could

⁵⁸ Cf. Acts 2.42-47; 3.1-12; 4.32-35; 5.12-16; 6.1-7; 8.4-8; 8.14-25; 9.32-35; 13.6-12; 14.3; 16.25-34; 19.11-20.

invite a skeptical world, and so they went *to* that world with the gospel. They had no objective authority base from which to work, so they demonstrated the authority of the Scriptures by their attractive, personal relevance. We now live in a day when nonbelievers will not come to our buildings to listen to our appeals on the basis of Scriptural authority. But when we show them the pragmatic value of biblical truth in our lives, ministries, and community, we will gain a hearing.

Postmodernity offers us a compelling opportunity to "remember our future." To remember the biblical strategies upon which the Christian movement was founded, and to rebuild our ministries on their foundation. To move into our postmodern future on the basis of our premodern heritage.

Every postmodern person I have met wants the same thing: a faith which is practical, loving, and hopeful. The tragedy is that our churches do not always offer them this biblical truth in a way which is attractive and relevant. The good news is that we can.