

# 1. Hermeneutics

What is truth? This was not only the question Pilate posed to Jesus in John 18:38, but it is the fundamental question of humanity.

Dictionaries generally define *truth* as that which accords with and conforms to reality. The biblical terms (Heb. *’ēmeth*, Gk. *alētheia*) express the same.<sup>1</sup> Truth conveys reality. Thus, the search for truth is humankind’s primal quest. Who am I? Why do I exist? What is the meaning of life? Truth is that which explains and gives meaning to our existence, because truth is that which corresponds to how things actually are.

Truth tells us what does and does not exist. It tells us whether something is important or irrelevant. It conveys value, which in turn instills morality. It explains to us the meaning of history: its origin and its destiny. It tells us how things ought to be, while simultaneously condemning our falsehood. It informs hope and dashes delusion. Though universally attainable, it is strangely elusive. It transcends intellect and knowledge—the simpleton often submits to it while the intelligent person “conceives mischief and brings forth falsehood” (Ps. 7:14, NASB). Though we long to walk in truth, we all sense a universal bondage to deception.

Pilate’s question about truth was in response to Jesus’ declaration, “For this purpose I have come into the world—to bear witness to the truth” (John 18:37). As Christians, we believe that the Scriptures, canonized in the Old and New Testaments, contain the truth.<sup>2</sup> Jesus witnessed to the truth contained in the Old Testament, and those Scriptures witnessed to him (John 5:39). The life, death, and

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<sup>1</sup> See G. W. Bromiley, “Truth,” *ISBE*, 4:926–28; cf. Roger Nicole, “The Biblical Concept of Truth,” in *Scripture and Truth*, ed. D. A. Carson and John D. Woodbridge (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992), 287–98.

<sup>2</sup> Concerning the OT apocryphal writings, T. W. Davies notes, “The Jews in the early Christian centuries had really two Bibles: (1) There was the Hebrew Bible which does not include the Apocrypha, and which circulated in Palestine and Babylon; (2) there was the Greek version (LXX [which did include the Apocrypha]) used by Greek-speaking Jews everywhere” (“Apocrypha,” *ISBE*, 1:163). Since the apostolic church relied on the latter, this work will reference apocryphal books in more of a deuterocanonical (“second canon”) sense, lying somewhere between protocanonical (OT and NT) and noncanonical (e.g., pseudepigrapha); see also David A. deSilva, *Introducing the Apocrypha: Message, Context, and Significance* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002).

resurrection of Jesus verified that those Scriptures tell us what reality actually is. They tell us who God is and who we are—where we came from and where we are going. They tell us the purpose and meaning of life. They tell us the truth.

In our pluralistic world, however, there are many sacred writings that claim to speak the truth—Buddhist, Hindu, Islamic, naturalistic (in a practical sense), etc.<sup>3</sup> Whose account is actually correct? Whose perspective is reliable? Which sacred books are trustworthy? As fallen human beings we really have no way of knowing. Adherents of every religion claim their texts are divinely inspired. However, Judeo-Christianity asserts that it has proof that its Scriptures tell us the truth.<sup>4</sup> Its proof does not rest on its superior arguments or the accurate transmission of its holy documents (though we heartily affirm these), but rather on the claim that a man has actually overcome the prime existential ill: death.

Such an a posteriori argument was the primary approach used by the early church in its proclamation. Only one presentation of truth has produced a resurrected human being, and thus the Jewish Scriptures are true and “made more certain” (2 Peter 1:19, NIV). Paul demonstrates this clearly as he summarizes redemptive history to the Athenians: “The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by hands. . . . From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live. . . . He has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. *He has given proof of this to all men by raising him from the dead*” (Acts 17:24–31, NIV).

Paul explained the nature of the relationship between God and humankind, recounting their history from beginning to end, and then he justified God’s right to judge with the assertion that Jesus was raised from the dead. The declaration of Jesus’ resurrection was the primary means of convincing people that God had indeed inspired the prophets and their Scriptures, which communicate the coming day of judgment. If we deny the historical and bodily resurrection of Jesus, then we have no proof of the Judeo-Christian Scriptures—and their

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<sup>3</sup> See an introduction to pluralism in Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989).

<sup>4</sup> Early Christianity never sought to part ways with Judaism, but was only regarded as a Jewish “sect” (Acts 24:5,14; 28:22). Thus, Judeo-Christianity was originally “a territory without border lines” (Daniel Boyarin, *Border Lines: The Partition of Judaeo-Christianity* [Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004], 1).

message of the day of the Lord, the new heavens and new earth, etc. —over and against any other holy texts (the reasons may be persuasive, but not certain).<sup>5</sup> As Paul said, “If Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain” (1 Cor. 15:14).

Those who affirm that the Judeo-Christian Scriptures proclaim the truth *exclusively* are generally known as “evangelicals.” This label roughly derives from Martin Luther’s identification of the “evangelical church,” which believed in *sola scriptura* (Latin for “by Scripture alone”), versus the Roman Catholic Church, which was viewed as tainted by its tradition.<sup>6</sup> Though historically difficult to define, evangelicalism is ultimately an approach to truth based upon the exclusivity of the Scriptures, for the evangelical “seeks to construct his theology on the teaching of the Bible, the whole Bible, and nothing but the Bible.”<sup>7</sup> From the Reformers to the Puritans to the Pietists to the revivalists to the

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<sup>5</sup> In modern times the liberal tradition has largely rejected the bodily resurrection of Jesus, as typified by the Jesus Seminar (e.g., J. D. Crossan, R. Funk, M. J. Borg, S. L. Harris, B. Mack, etc). By undermining the definitive event of Christianity, they “destroy the faith of some” (2 Tim. 2:18, NIV). See rebuttals by Michael J. Wilkins and J. P. Moreland, eds., *Jesus Under Fire: Modern Scholarship Reinvents the Historical Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995); Craig A. Evans, *Fabricating Jesus: How Modern Scholars Distort the Gospels* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2006); and N. T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003).

<sup>6</sup> John H. Gerstner observes,

Despite the dominant usage of *euangelismos* in the New Testament, its derivative, evangelical, was not widely or controversially employed until the Reformation period. Then it came into prominence with Martin Luther precisely because he reasserted Paul’s teaching on the *euangelismos* as the indispensable message of salvation. Its light, he argued, was hidden under a bushel of ecclesiastical authority, tradition, and liturgy. The essence of the saving message for Luther was justification by faith alone, the article by which not only the church stands or falls but each individual as well. Erasmus, Thomas More, and Johannes Eck denigrated those who accepted this view and referred to them as “evangelicals.” (“The Theological Boundaries of Evangelical Faith,” in *The Evangelicals: What They Believe, Who They Are, Where They Are Changing*, ed. David F. Wells and John D. Woodbridge [Nashville: Abingdon, 1975], 23)

<sup>7</sup> Kenneth S. Kantzer writes,

Theology, therefore, must not be drawn from reason (though for the most part the evangelical acknowledges his dependence on consistent reason and logical processes), not from experience (though he recognizes that without experience by which it is personally appropriated, good theology is not only unattainable but is utterly worthless), and not from tradition (though he treasures it with gratitude and freely acknowledges that without tradition his spiritual understanding would be impoverished and he might never come to faith). The evangelical, rather, seeks to construct his theology on the teaching of the Bible, the whole Bible, and nothing but the Bible; and this formative principle represents a basic unifying factor throughout the whole of contemporary evangelicalism. (“Unity and Diversity in Evangelical Faith,” in Wells and Woodbridge, eds., *The Evangelicals*, 52)

fundamentalists to the neo-evangelicals, common theological themes follow this “high view” of the Scriptures.<sup>8</sup>

Unlike Luther’s singular struggle with Catholic tradition, modern evangelicals struggle with many challenges to their source of truth. Whether those challenges are represented by various forms of higher biblical criticism, naturalistic empiricism, pluralistic relativism, or neo-charismatic prophecy, the evangelical spirit seeks truth from the Scriptures alone. Based upon the resurrection of Jesus, we have assurance that this approach will prove true in the end.

## HERMENEUTICS AND WORLDVIEW

Though evangelicals agree that the Bible is the sole source of truth, there is much disagreement about the content and meaning of that truth. What happens when two (or twenty or two hundred) people equally committed to the authority of the Scriptures read the same words and come away with different meanings? Whose interpretation is correct? Who actually understands the truth of the Bible?

These are the questions of hermeneutics — “the discipline that deals with principles of interpretation.”<sup>9</sup> How we interpret the Bible dictates the outcome of our inheritance of truth. We may desire truth, and we may come to the Bible alone to find it, but our actual receiving of the truth is dependent upon our hermeneutics.

Unfortunately, hermeneutics and biblical interpretation have become exceedingly complicated in modern times. Those who venture into this boggy marsh seldom come back unscathed.<sup>10</sup> However, the ancient biblical writers (e.g., David, Amos, Peter), though often “uneducated, common men” (Acts 4:13), showed no signs of confusion or hesitancy in their proclamation of the truth. How do we approach the Scriptures so that we come out with the same

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<sup>8</sup> For a well-articulated history of Protestant evangelicalism, see Stanley J. Grenz, “Nurturing the Soul, Informing the Mind: The Genesis of the Evangelical Scripture Principle,” in *Evangelicals and Scripture: Tradition, Authority, and Hermeneutics*, ed. V. Bacote, L. C. Miguélez, and D. L. Okholm (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004), 19–41.

<sup>9</sup> Moisés Silva, “Who Needs Hermeneutics Anyway?” in *Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics: The Search for Meaning*, ed. Walter C. Kaiser Jr. and Moisés Silva (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 17.

<sup>10</sup> See the helpful introductory handbook by W. Randolph Tate, *Handbook for Biblical Interpretation: An Essential Guide to Methods, Terms, and Concepts*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012).

interpretation and proclamation as those within them? How do we know, for example, what Paul meant by “my gospel” (Rom. 2:16; 16:25; 2 Tim. 2:8)? What did *he* intend for his hearers to understand? Likewise, what did David or Daniel or John desire their hearers to hear?

This issue of “authorial intent” is further complicated by the presence of the Holy Spirit.<sup>11</sup> As evangelicals, we believe the Scriptures are inspired by the Spirit of God, as Peter clearly declared: “No prophecy of Scripture comes from someone’s own interpretation. For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit” (2 Peter 1:20–21). Here lies the great chasm between conservatives and liberals.<sup>12</sup> Generally, liberals view the authorial intent of the Scriptures primarily from the human side, while conservatives view it more from the divine perspective.

When we ask, *What does the book of Isaiah mean?* we must first ask, *What did the Spirit of God intend to say through Isaiah?* Then we can move on to how Isaiah might have understood the words uttered through him. Though the writers are fallen, the message spoken through them by the Holy Spirit remains infallible.<sup>13</sup> Thus we are left with something of a hermeneutical Great Commandment: seek

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<sup>11</sup> Paul Feinberg describes the hermeneutical difficulties:

Scripture is the product of dual authorship. Which author’s intention, man’s or God’s, is determinative? If it is the human author’s intention, then the interpreter is dealing with a finite mind in a historical and cultural context. Here the author’s intention can be determined. On the other hand, if it is the divine author’s intention, then, since God is infinite and omniscient, it would appear that the meaning could go beyond the concrete, historical understanding of the text. He could mean things that human interpreters would miss. It would seem that almost any statement, no matter how simple, might have nuances that we would miss. In sum, if you limit meaning to the human author’s intention, then you are faced with his ignorance and possible error. While, on the other hand, if meaning is expanded to the divine author’s intention, you are up against our ignorance and the superiority of God’s ways to ours. (“Hermeneutics of Discontinuity,” in *Continuity and Discontinuity: Perspectives on the Relationship Between the Old and New Testaments*, ed. J. S. Feinberg [Westchester, IL: Crossway, 1988], 112–13)

<sup>12</sup> See J. I. Packer, “Infallible Scripture and the Role of Hermeneutics,” in *Scripture and Truth*, 325–56.

<sup>13</sup> Thus I agree with the Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy (published in C. F. H. Henry, *God, Revelation and Authority*, vol. 4 [Waco: Word, 1979], 211–219) that the Scriptures are both inerrant and infallible: “*Infallible* signifies the quality of neither misleading nor being misled and so safeguards in categorical terms the truth that Holy Scripture is a sure, safe, and reliable rule and guide in all matters. Similarly, *inerrant* signifies the quality of being free from all falsehood or mistake and so safeguards the truth that Holy Scripture is entirely true and trustworthy in all its assertions” (217).

first God and his intent for the text, and secondly seek the intent of the human author, a person like yourself.<sup>14</sup>

In the quest to understand divine and human authorial intent, scholarship since the time of Luther has developed the “grammatico-historical method,” which asks the question, What do the *words themselves* mean in their *historical context*?<sup>15</sup> To understand what the Bible is actually saying, we must understand basic linguistic issues (English word meanings and syntax often do not correspond to the original Greek and Hebrew), and we must understand basic differences in literary genre (e.g., narrative, poetic, wisdom, prophetic, epistolary, and apocalyptic literature). Simply put, people say things in different ways.<sup>16</sup> Moreover, people say things in specific historical contexts, which involve cultural, geographical, and political issues. All of this helps us understand the occasion and purpose of the biblical writings. Though the Holy Spirit transcends the human condition, he has chosen to dwell within that condition, and thus these issues must be taken into account.

While engaging in grammatico-historical interpretation, a modern Westerner quickly realizes there are many assumptions and presuppositions held by the biblical writers that are totally foreign to us today. Furthermore, we often recognize that ancient peoples held fundamentally different pretheoretical intuitions—that is, what intuitively seemed normal, real, and right to them might seem the opposite to us.<sup>17</sup> Such differences of intuitions and presuppositions in turn lead to different methodologies of interpretation (i.e., hermeneutics) that likewise often seem strange and awkward to the modern reader.<sup>18</sup> Similarly,

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<sup>14</sup> Here we are forced into some form of *sensus plenior* (literally, “the fuller sense”), as clearly evidenced in passages such as Dan. 12:6–9, John 11:49–52, Eph. 5:29–33, and 1 Peter 1:10–12; see an introduction in R. E. Brown, “The History and Development of the Theory of a *Sensus Plenior*,” *CBQ* 15 (1953): 141–62; and W. S. LaSor, “Prophecy, Inspiration, and *Sensus Plenior*,” *TynBul* 29, no. 1 (1978): 48–60.

<sup>15</sup> See a concise history of development by F. F. Bruce and J. J. Scott Jr., “Interpretation of the Bible,” in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 2nd ed., ed. Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), 611–15.

<sup>16</sup> See an introduction by Gordon D. Fee and Douglas K. Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), 17–31.

<sup>17</sup> Concerning pretheoretical and presuppositional aspects of worldview, see James W. Sire, *Naming the Elephant: Worldview as a Concept* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004), 75–86.

<sup>18</sup> As is evident by a cursory study of the use of the Old Testament in the New; see Gregory K. Beale, ed., *The Right Doctrine from the Wrong Texts? Essays on the Use of the Old Testament in the New* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1994).

when we read someone from within a particular historical tradition — e.g., Francis of Assisi, Martin Luther, or John Wesley — we encounter yet another layer of intuitions and presuppositions, which in turn dictates other methodologies of interpretation. Weeding through the endless list of conflicting ideas, linguistics, and cultural phenomena can quickly become overwhelming.

What then lies behind and dictates the presuppositions of the biblical writers? The answer to this question unlocks many of the confusing aspects of biblical hermeneutics. That answer is *worldview*, which is generally defined as “an interpretive framework through which or by which one makes sense out of the data of life and the world.”<sup>19</sup> The difference between our framework and that of the biblical writers creates much of the tension we encounter while reading the Scriptures.

One’s worldview, as N. T. Wright aptly describes, “embraces all deep-level human perceptions of reality,”<sup>20</sup> and as such it *creates* our intuitions and presuppositions about life, which in turn *dictate* our broad methodologies of interpretation. The issues of worldview are further compounded when we read someone else with another worldview (e.g., the medieval worldview of Thomas Aquinas or Anselm of Canterbury) commenting on the already foreign worldview of the biblical writers. Again, overwhelming.

In addition, we must ask the greater question: *What is the worldview of the Holy Spirit?* Since God is a person, how does he view life? What intuitively seems true to him? What are his assumptions? How does he interpret existence? Surely, as it really is. And this is the purpose of the Scriptures he has given us: to tell us the truth concerning how life really is.<sup>21</sup> Thus, we ultimately seek to know 1) the mind of God, while taking into consideration 2) the mind and worldview of the

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<sup>19</sup> Norman L. Geisler and William D. Watkins, *Worlds Apart: A Handbook on World Views*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1989), 11.

<sup>20</sup> N. T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God* (London: SPCK, 1992), 123.

<sup>21</sup> As Francis Schaeffer concluded, “There is one worldview which can explain the existence of the universe, its form, and the uniqueness of people — the worldview given to us in the Bible” (Francis A. Schaeffer, *The Complete Works of Francis A. Schaeffer: A Christian Worldview* [Westchester, IL: Crossway, 1982], 5:357).

Moreover, “The Christian system (what is taught in the whole Bible) is a unity of thought. Christianity is not just a lot of bits and pieces — there is a beginning and an end, a whole system of truth, and this system is the only system that will stand up to all the questions that are presented to us as we face the reality of existence” (Ibid., 1:178).

biblical writers and 3) the mind and worldview of those within the various traditions of interpretation (see figure 1.1).



Figure 1.1 – The Historical Interaction between Worldview and Hermeneutics

The individual worldviews of the biblical authors may have indeed been flawed. Men such as Moses, David, and Paul were obviously fallen and broken—their sins are plain to see (e.g., Ex. 2:12; 2 Sam. 11; Acts 9:1). As believers, however, we fundamentally hold that *the oracles transcend the stewards*, even at a worldview level, and as such the Scriptures deliver to us the divine worldview itself.<sup>22</sup>

Isaiah, for example, may not have understood the ultimate nature of reality, yet the words he spoke, in and of themselves, convey it. This tension is clearly referenced in Peter's words that "the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully" (1 Peter 1:10).<sup>23</sup> Though

<sup>22</sup> Though we affirm a *general confluence* between the human authors and divine author, especially concerning historical/gospel narratives and pastoral/poetical writings, the transcendence of the divine author must be maintained, especially in the prophetic/apocalyptic writings. See a summary of evangelical approaches in W. Edward Glenny, "The Divine Meaning of Scripture: Explanations and Limitations," *JETS* 38, no. 4 (December 1995): 481–500.

<sup>23</sup> Thus, our goal is not to replicate the worldview of the early church or of ancient Israel, but to understand reality as it really is—the assumption being that the worldview of the biblical writers,



many find such an idea rather archaic and naïve, we must approach the oracle and the prophet on their own terms and in right relation. In this way, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit who leads us into all truth (John 16:13; 1 John 2:20), we seek to know God and life as they really are.

## COMPONENTS OF WORLDVIEW

Since differing worldviews produce differing intuitions and presuppositions, which in turn create differing methods of interpretation, the task of biblical hermeneutics must begin by addressing the nature and function of worldview. Though the study of worldview is a relatively recent one, David Naugle points out that “conceiving of Christianity as a worldview has been one of the most significant developments in the recent history of the church.”<sup>24</sup> Derived from the German *Weltanschauung*,<sup>25</sup> the term “worldview” has a complex history plagued by vague definitions.<sup>26</sup> Most simply default to a common dictionary definition, such as “a particular philosophy of life or conception of the world.”<sup>27</sup>

In recent times, however, evangelicals have produced a wealth of literature studying various aspects of worldview and its wide usage.<sup>28</sup> The Christian faith has been brilliantly articulated within a worldview framework, especially within

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though not perfect, is closer, in an ultimate sense, to correspondence with reality than our own post-Enlightenment worldview. This is contrary to common naturalistic sentiment, which regards ancient Near Eastern thought as fundamentally “primitive.”

<sup>24</sup> David K. Naugle, *Worldview: The History of a Concept* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 4.

<sup>25</sup> A term coined by Immanuel Kant in *Critique of Judgment* (1790) and expounded upon by the nineteenth-century German philosophers G. W. F. Hegel (1770–1831), Wilhelm Dilthey (1833–1911), and Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900); see Naugle, *Worldview*, 68–107.

<sup>26</sup> “The word is used in a great many areas, ranging from the natural sciences to philosophy to theology. Authors who use it often do so without concern for proper definition, and even when definitions are given they tend to be far from precise” (Sander Griffioen, “The Worldview Approach to Social Theory: Hazards and Benefits,” in *Stained Glass: Worldviews and Social Science*, ed. Paul A. Marshall, Sander Griffioen, and Richard J. Mouw [Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1989], 83; quoted in Sire, *Naming the Elephant*, 23).

<sup>27</sup> *Concise Oxford English Dictionary*, 11th ed., s.v. “world view.”

<sup>28</sup> See the definitive study of the term’s history and usage in Naugle’s *Worldview*, which covers Protestant evangelicalism (chap. 1), Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy (chap. 2), philological history (chap. 3), philosophical history (chaps. 4–6), and the various scientific disciplinary histories (chaps. 7–8). Naugle concludes that “in the entire history of ‘worldview,’ no single philosophic school or religious community has given more sustained attention to or taken more advantage of this concept than Protestant evangelicals” (p. 31).

the Reformed tradition of the twentieth century.<sup>29</sup> Though having been analyzed from a multitude of angles, it seems most helpful for the purposes of this study to break down the concept of worldview into its most basic components: ultimate reality (all that exists), protology (study of origins), eschatology (study of final things), and soteriology (study of salvation). Each of these will be explained and contrasted within the major worldviews modernly held (i.e., Hinduism, Buddhism, naturalism, Islam, and Judeo-Christianity). These basic components of worldview then provide human beings, within their various traditions, a conceptual framework for existence that answers the most basic questions of life concerning identity, purpose, origin, destiny, etc.<sup>30</sup>

Consider life as a game. Most games have rules, goals, players, and fields upon which to play. In the game of life, one's worldview assumes an ultimate reality, which is much like the *field of play*. It is often taken for granted, and in the larger scheme of the game it is usually considered of less import. Yet, playing soccer on a basketball court raises significant challenges. Often the field of play inherently shapes the understanding of the rules and purpose of the game itself. Our worldview is our playing field for life. Defining one's playing field can be difficult, however, since most people rarely think about it. They are simply on it.

Our playing field is our ultimate reality—that is, the sum total of that which we understand to exist.<sup>31</sup> It is our “macro-model,” which includes “the *whole* of

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<sup>29</sup> The two primary Reformed headwaters of worldview thinking (with much overlap, even from the beginning) are James Orr, *The Christian View of God and the World* (Edinburgh: Andrew Elliot, 1893); and Abraham Kuiper, *Calvinism* (New York: Revell, 1899). From Orr have generally flowed the major works of Carl F. H. Henry, Arthur Holmes, and Ronald Nash. From the Kuiperian tradition we have the works of Herman Dooyeweerd, Cornelius Van Til, Francis Schaeffer, James Olthius, and Albert Wolters. All modern discussion of worldview owes greatly to the Reformed tradition (see esp. Naugle, *Worldview*, 4–32).

<sup>30</sup> Note also the contributions of Protestant missiologists: Paul G. Hiebert, *Transforming Worldviews: An Anthropological Understanding of How People Change* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008); Charles H. Kraft, *Christianity in Culture: A Study in Dynamic Biblical Theologizing in Cross-Cultural Perspective* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1979); and David J. Hesselgrave, *Communicating Christ Cross-Culturally* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978), esp. 190–285.

<sup>31</sup> Sire hits this in his first two worldview questions: “1. What is prime reality—the really real? . . . 2. What is the nature of external reality, that is, the world around us?” (James W. Sire, *The Universe Next Door: A Basic Worldview Catalog*, 5th ed. [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2009], 22).

reality.”<sup>32</sup> Whatever we know to comprise “everything” defines the parameters of our worldview,<sup>33</sup> the study of which is technically termed “metaphysics.”<sup>34</sup>

For example, Hindus understand ultimate reality to be *Brahman*, an all-encompassing divine matrix of existence from which all things emerge and into which all things are reabsorbed, only to be reincarnated once more. *Brahman* is then structurally divided into various levels of heavens (*svargam*) above the earth and hells (*narakam*) beneath.<sup>35</sup> Buddhists generally assume the Brahmanic makeup of reality but divide it into “three realms” (*tri-dhatu*)<sup>36</sup>: the highest realm of “formlessness” (*arupa-dhatu*), the middle realm of “pure form” (*rupa-dhatu*),

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<sup>32</sup> “A world view is a *macro*-model; it is a model that attempts to explain *all* of reality, not just some aspect of it. . . . [It] is designed to explain *all* relationships of all things and/or events in the *whole* of reality” (Geisler and Watkins, *Worlds Apart*, 14).

<sup>33</sup> Within naturalism, the “theory of everything” has become the holy grail of modern physicists, a concept first introduced by John Ellis, “The Superstring: Theory of Everything, or of Nothing?” *Nature* 323 (1986): 595–98.

<sup>34</sup> Thus, Corliss Lamont (1902–1995), the leading humanist spokesman of the twentieth century, entitled chap. 4 of *The Philosophy of Humanism* “Humanism’s Theory of the Universe,” explaining,

Any complete philosophy of existence requires a carefully worked out theory of the universe, in technical terms a *metaphysics*, an ontology, or a world-view. As we have already seen, Humanism believes that Nature itself constitutes the sum total of reality, that matter-energy and not mind is the foundation stuff of the universe, and that supernatural entities simply do not exist. This nonreality of the supernatural means, on the human level, that human beings do not possess supernatural and immortal souls; and, on the level of the universe as a whole, that our cosmos does not possess a supernatural and eternal God. (Corliss Lamont, *The Philosophy of Humanism*, 8th ed. [Amherst, NY: Humanist Press, 1997], 126)

<sup>35</sup> Acknowledging that all worldviews have a great internal diversity of thought and practice — especially Hinduism — we will proceed with broad generalizations that roughly represent the majority. For an introduction to Hinduism’s *Brahman*, see R. C. Zaehner, *Hinduism*, 2nd ed., OPUS Series (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966), 36–56. For an overview of the origin and construction of the cosmos, as defined by the later Puranic tradition, see Cornelia Dimmitt and J. A. B. van Buitenen, eds., *Classical Hindu Mythology: A Reader in the Sanskrit Purāṇas* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1978), 32–54.

<sup>36</sup> Edward Conze observes, “In their views on the structure and evolution of the universe, the Buddhists were, however, content to borrow from the traditions of contemporary Hinduism” (*Buddhism: Its Essence and Development* [Oxford: Bruno Cassirer, 1951], 34).

According to Akira Sadakata, these “three worlds” are drawn from Brahmanistic sources and are mirrored in the early Vedic tripartite universe of *bhur* (earth), *bhuva* (moon), and *sva* (sun), which composed the lower, middle, and upper regions of the Brahmanic universe respectively. By their sacrifices, the gods had attained to the upper regions of *sva*, which humans too could reach through their sacrifices. This in turn defined the practice of early Brahminic tradition. Later Vedic and Puranic tradition developed this construct into many heavens and hells, but retained the same vertical universe. See Akira Sadakata, *Buddhist Cosmology: Philosophy and Origins*, trans. Gaynor Sekimori (Tokyo: Kōsei Publishing, 1997), 25–47.

and the lower realm of “sense” or “desire” (*kama-dhatu*).<sup>37</sup> Taoists see a basic progression from the *tao* (the flow of the universe), which differentiates into the *yin* and *yang* (cosmic principles of opposite), which in turn produce the *wanwu* (the “ten thousand things” of the manifest cosmos).<sup>38</sup> Naturalism simply believes that “nature is all there is, and all basic truths are truths of nature.”<sup>39</sup> Islam and Christoplatonism<sup>40</sup> (the Christian derivative of Neo-Platonism, which will be discussed later at length) view reality dualistically: material versus immaterial, “natural” versus “supernatural.” Conversely, Judeo-Christianity views the universe as an integrated and dynamic whole: “the heavens and the earth” (Gen. 1:1).<sup>41</sup> All of these are different articulations of what makes up the sum total of reality. They are different frameworks, or “metaphysical constructs,” for understanding our existence (see figure 1.2).

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<sup>37</sup> Buddhist cosmology is exceedingly complex; see an excellent overview by Rupert Gethin, *The Foundations of Buddhism*, OPUS series (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 112–32.

<sup>38</sup> The full progression is outlined in chap. 42 of the classical text *Tao Te Ching*: “The Tao gives birth to One [*chi*, the primordial manifestation of cosmic energy]. One gives birth to Two [*yin/yang*]. Two gives birth to Three [*sanqing*, the “Three Pure Ones,” the three highest deities in the Taoist pantheon]. Three gives birth to all things [*wanwu*]” (Lao Tzu, *Tao Te Ching: A New English Version*, trans. Stephen Mitchell [New York: Harper & Row, 1988], 42; information in brackets added).

“This passage describes the cosmogonic process as moving from Nonbeing or the Dao to Oneness; the One then spontaneously divides into the two complementary principles (yin/yang) which in turn generate the ‘ten thousand things’ (*wanwu*) or the manifest cosmos” (Fabrizio Pregadio and Lowell Skar, “Inner Alchemy (*Neidan*),” in *Daoism Handbook*, ed. Livia Kohn [Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2000], 483).

<sup>39</sup> “Naturalism,” *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy: Supplement*, ed. Donald M. Borchert (New York: MacMillan, 1996), 372. However, the definition of “nature,” or the oft-referred to “physical realm,” is something of a philosophical quandary, since its parameters are assumedly defined by human sensibility—that is, what we can observe, measure, test, etc.

<sup>40</sup> Though “Christian Platonist” has long been used to describe a Platonist who wears a Christian mask, “Christoplatonism” is a term recently popularized by Randy Alcorn (see *Heaven* [Wheaton: Tyndale, 2004], 52, 110, 459–466).

<sup>41</sup> Of course it is “God” (Gen. 1:1a) who is truly the ultimate reality, from which the heavens and earth are then created (see Sire’s discussion in chap. 3 of *Naming the Elephant*). For the purposes of understanding the nature and function of worldview, we will limit our metaphysical discussion to creation.

## ***Metaphysical Construct***

(Sum Total of Reality)

### **ALL THAT EXISTS**

(e.g., *Brahman, Tri-dhatu, Wanwu*, Nature,  
Material vs. Immaterial, Heavens and Earth, etc.)

Figure 1.2 – The Metaphysical Construct of Worldview

There are also various “players” on the playing field of worldview: for example, God, gods, avatars, spirits, ghosts, humans, animals, etc. Where the players are situated on their respective fields greatly determines their identity, their purpose, and how they interact with each other. Some fields are highly integrated and interactive, while others are sharply divided, creating distance and detachment—the Athenians’ “unknown god” (Acts 17:23) comes to mind.

Though the field and the players on it are important, they do not constitute the substance of a game, the bulk of which is found in its *movement* played out in *time*. Because time dictates so many aspects of our existence, worldviews broadly facilitate an explanation of history. These histories generally involve three things: 1) when things began (protology); 2) where things are ultimately going (eschatology); and 3) how things became wrong and, conversely, how they will ultimately be made right (soteriology).<sup>42</sup> In other words, within the sum total of

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<sup>42</sup> Sigmund Mowinckel explains the working of these elements in a biblical context:

Eschatology is a doctrine or a complex of ideas about ‘the last things’, which is more or less organically coherent and developed. Every eschatology includes in some form or another a dualistic conception of the course of history, and implies that the present state of things and the present world order will suddenly come to an end and be superseded by another of an essentially different kind. As a rule this new order has the character of a fresh beginning, a *restitutio in integrum*, a return to the origins, without the corruption which subsequently overtook and deformed the original creation. Eschatology also includes the thought that this drama has a universal, cosmic character. The universe itself, heaven and earth, is thrown into the melting pot. It follows that this is not brought about by human or historical forces, or by any immanent, evolutionary process. The transformation is definitely catastrophic in character, and is brought about by

reality, worldviews attempt to explain the origin, remediation, and conclusion of existence (see figure 1.3).<sup>43</sup>

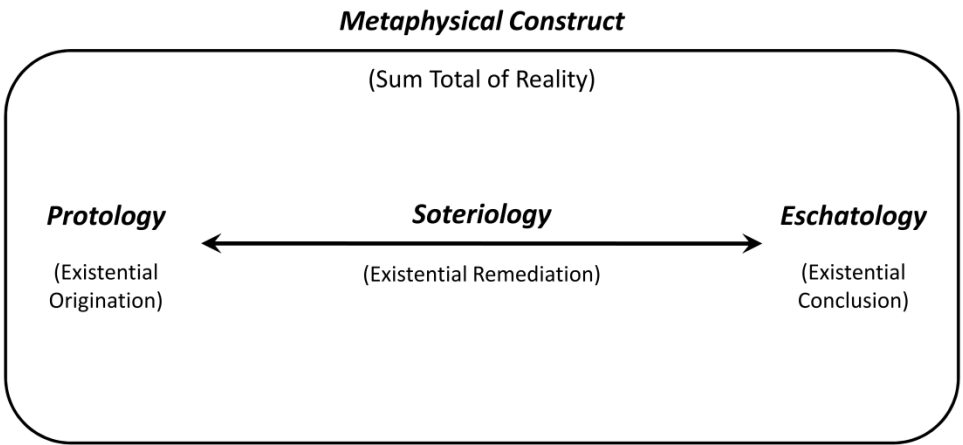


Figure 1.3 – Primary Universal Components of Worldview

In this way, worldviews are generally characterized by *stories*. These stories explain how things were, which gives context to how things are, which in turn tells us how things are going to play out.<sup>44</sup> By giving us an explanation of the past, present, and future, worldviews seek to answer the “basic questions” of life: “*Who are we, where are we, what is wrong, and what is the solution?*”<sup>45</sup> Our worldview provides answers for the multitude of existential questions concerning our identity, purpose, ethics, and so on (see figure 1.4).<sup>46</sup> As such,

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supernatural, divine, or demonic powers. (*He That Cometh: The Messiah Concept in the Old Testament and Later Judaism*, trans. G. W. Anderson [Nashville: Abingdon, 1956], 125–26)

<sup>43</sup> Thus the common tradition cataloged by Mircea Eliade, *The Myth of the Eternal Return: Or, Cosmos and History*, trans. W. R. Trask (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971).

<sup>44</sup> So N. T. Wright observes that “all worldviews contain an irreducible narrative element, which stands alongside the other worldview elements” (*New Testament and the People of God*, 38). Moreover, “Worldviews provide the *stories* through which human beings view reality. Narrative is the most characteristic expression of worldview, going deeper than the isolated observation or fragmented remark” (*Ibid.*, 123).

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.* Wright slightly modified these questions from Brian J. Walsh and J. Richard Middleton in *The Transforming Vision: Shaping a Christian World View* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1984), 35. See also the updated edition of *Transforming Vision*, which addresses postmodernity and contains an extended discussion of “metanarrative” (*Truth Is Stranger Than It Used to Be: Biblical Faith in a Postmodern Age* [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1995], esp. 63–107).

<sup>46</sup> See also Sire’s list of existential questions in *The Universe Next Door*, 22–23.

they become the “controlling stories” to which we unconsciously conform our own story.<sup>47</sup> David Naugle summarizes:

Such stories are considered sacred, and they provide the adhesive that unites those who believe in them into a society characterized by shared perspectives and a common way of life. They also provide a tenacious grid by which competing narratives and alternate claims to truth are judged. Controlling stories, therefore, function in a regulatory fashion both positively and negatively, and are able to bind those who accept them into an intellectual or spiritual commonwealth. Thus the bulk of human praxis does seem to be under the jurisdiction of a worldview, including the significant activities of reasoning, interpreting, and knowing.<sup>48</sup>

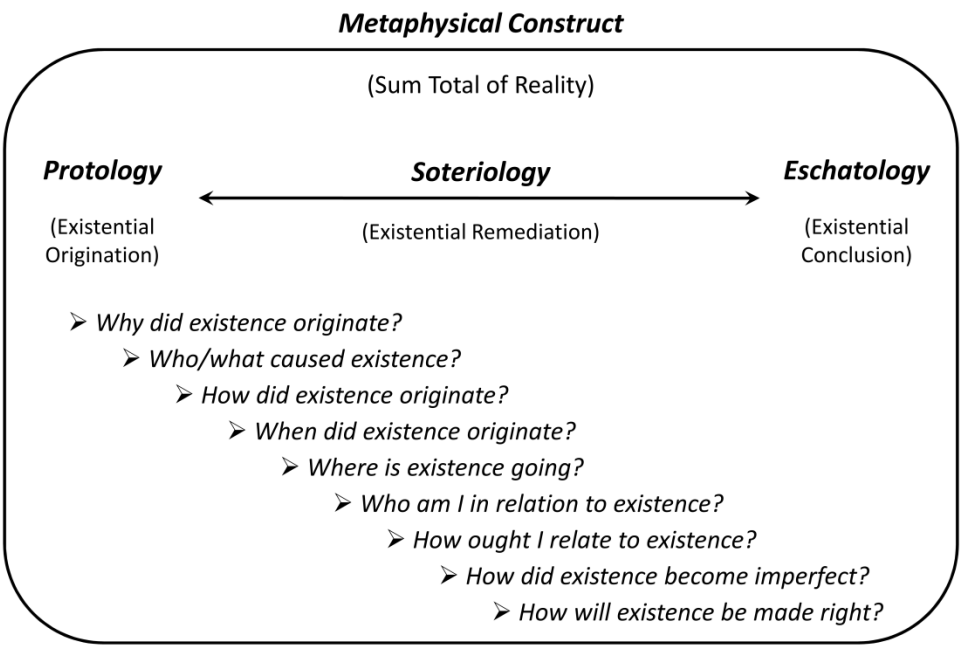


Figure 1.4 – Basic Existential Questions Answered by Worldview

Thus worldview provides a generally coherent “system” of belief that enables a person to function in life and cope with its often harsh realities.<sup>49</sup> And it

<sup>47</sup> Wright, *New Testament and the People of God*, 42.

<sup>48</sup> Naugle, *Worldview*, 303.

<sup>49</sup> “Implicit in all of this is the additional point that these beliefs must cohere in some way to form a system. A fancy term that can be useful here is *conceptual scheme*, by which I mean a pattern or arrangement of concepts (ideas). A worldview, then, is a conceptual scheme by which we consciously

is the realities of life that drive people to *utter dependence* upon their worldview. Commitment to one's worldview is not optional.<sup>50</sup> There are no "existential relativists." People believe what they believe about their existence—nothing more, nothing less. One cannot hold to multiple and conflicting theories of existence. Those who reject allegiance to their own worldview convert to another one or become mentally unstable. Simply put, we all have a worldview, and we all live by it.

Though space prohibits a detailed exposition of all the major worldviews, let us look briefly at the basic stories of a few to get a feel for what these universal components look like within different belief systems. Within Hinduism (a worldview notoriously difficult to generalize and/or harmonize), there are three primary players/gods created protologically out of the existential matrix of *Brahman*—Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva (the *Trimurti*)—who are responsible for creating, maintaining, and destroying the world, respectively. As these players and their functions are defined protologically, so a Hindu eschatology of perpetual cosmic birth, maintenance, destruction, and rebirth is easily deduced.<sup>51</sup> The fall of man destroyed the "Golden Age" (*Satya Yuga*) established by Brahma and ushered in the darkness of *samsara* (the cycle of birth and death within the cosmos) driven by *karma* (the deeds of the cosmos) based on *dharma* (the law of

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or unconsciously place or fit everything we believe and by which we interpret and judge reality" (Ronald H. Nash, *Worldviews in Conflict: Choosing Christianity in a World of Ideas* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992], 16).

<sup>50</sup> As Sire's definition begins, "A worldview is a *commitment*, a fundamental orientation of the heart, that can be expressed as a story or in a set of presuppositions (assumptions which may be true or entirely false) which we hold (consciously or subconsciously, consistently or inconsistently) about the basic constitution of reality, and that provides the foundation on which we live and move and have our being" (*Naming the Elephant*, 122; italics added).

<sup>51</sup> Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty articulates the perpetual cycle of perfection, sin, destruction, and recreation:

The myth of the Fall, or the loss of the Golden Age, entails three presuppositions: there was a beginning of human action, a first wicked act, and a previous period in which God had created everything in perfection. But how can this be used to qualify the cycle of rebirth, which has no beginning? . . .

The Indian answer to this paradox is simple, and brilliant: the Fall itself is cyclical; it happens again and again, over and over, within the cycle of rebirth. . . .

The world begins over and over again; each time, it is created out of water, and the Golden Age takes place. This Age degenerates until finally the fourth Age is reached, the present Kali Age, which is destroyed by fire and flood; all is once again water, out of which the world is created anew. (*The Origins of Evil in Hindu Mythology* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976], 17–18)



the cosmos). Vishnu (among other gods/*devas*) now maintains this cycle, and he has various *avatars* (“incarnations”): for example, Rama, Krishna, Narasimha, and Kalki. The goal is to escape the cycle of *samsara* and attain *moksha* (“freedom, liberation”) by detachment of self unto the realization of ultimate nonexistence through oneness with *Brahman*. This was the original design of humanity by Brahma, and Shiva will eschatologically cleanse the universe so that Brahma can recreate it in perfect union with *Brahman*, ushering in a new Golden Age (see figure 1.5).<sup>52</sup>

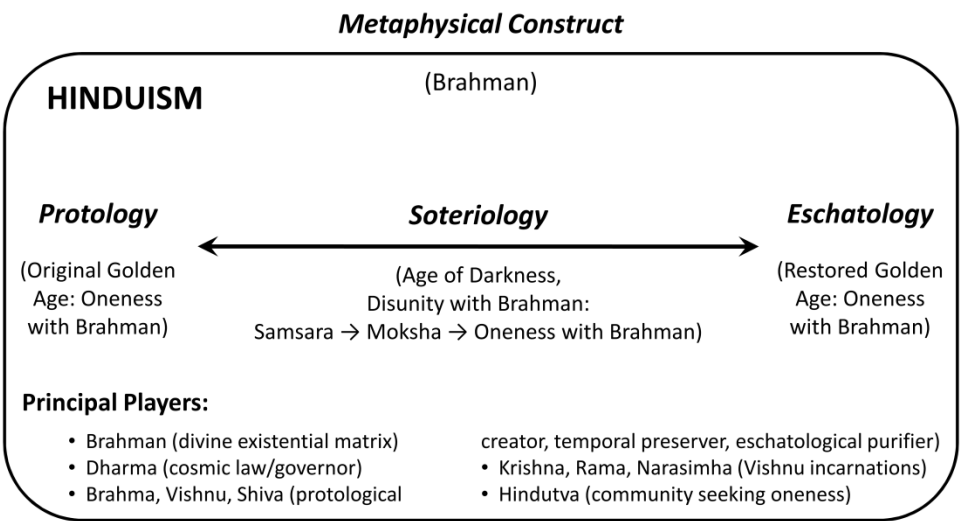


Figure 1.5 – Hindu Worldview with Its Primary Existential Components

<sup>52</sup> Gautama Buddha (c. 563–483 BC) assumedly accepted the Hindu framework for reality (though this is greatly debated in modern times). He clearly assumed the soteriological cycle of *samsara* and the goal of *moksha*, which attains *nirvana*—that is, the extinction of desire, suffering, and self-consciousness (see Gethin, *Foundations of Buddhism*, chaps. 3 and 5). The primary difference between the two worldviews lies in the Buddhist response and praxis. The emphasis is more upon *the practicing of holiness* that leads to enlightenment (i.e., the “Noble Eightfold Path”), rather than speculating about the nature of reality.

“Buddhism regards itself as presenting a system of training in conduct, meditation, and understanding that constitutes a path leading to the cessation of suffering. Everything is to be subordinated to this goal. And in this connection the Buddha’s teachings suggest that preoccupation with certain beliefs and ideas about the ultimate nature of the world and our destiny in fact hinders our progress along the path rather than helping it” (Gethin, *Foundations of Buddhism*, 65–66).

In this way, the role of the gods is greatly subordinated to Buddha’s example and “teachings” (the *Dharma*, distinguished from the lower-case cosmic law *dharma*). Along with the *Satigha* (“assembly, community”), these become the *tri-ratna* (“three jewels”) by which one is distinguished as a Buddhist, saying upon conversion, “To the Buddha I go for refuge; to the Dharma I go for refuge; to the Satigha I go for refuge” (Ibid., 34).

Akin to Hinduism, naturalism holds to a broadly monistic construction of the universe, with nature functioning as its existential matrix (often personified as “Mother”). Its protology is found in the “big bang,” and its players are strictly materialistic. Nature’s existence holds intrinsic energy and patterns of functioning, which are generally articulated as “laws.” As nature is materialistic and purely random, “survival” constitutes its highest purpose.<sup>53</sup> Though ultimately mediocre, the meaning of life boils down to fitness and reproduction, by any means. Naturalistic soteriology is simply “progress,” which is accomplished by death and the weeding out of the unfit (i.e., “natural selection”). Naturalistic eschatology is thus assumed to be perpetual fitness and progress (see figure 1.6).

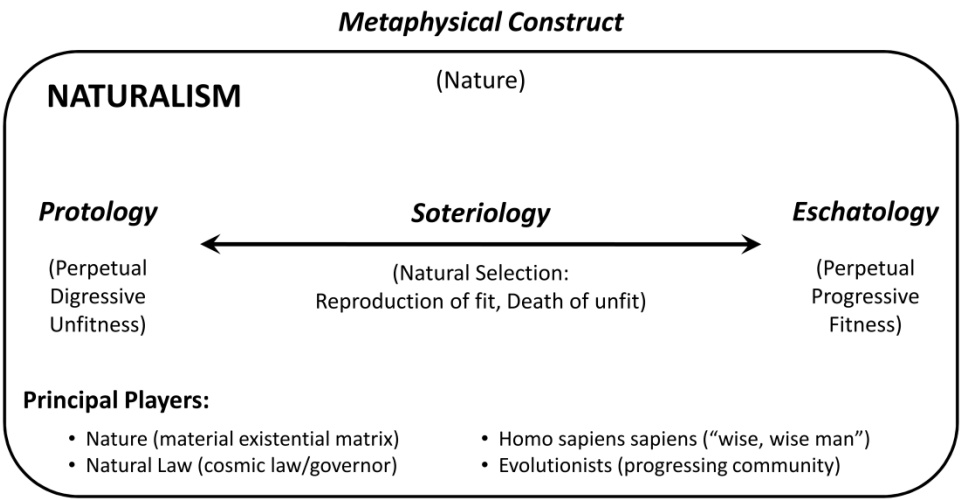


Figure 1.6 – Naturalistic Worldview with Its Primary Existential Components

The Judeo-Christian worldview frames reality within “the heavens and the earth” (Gen. 1:1), which are integrated, continuous, and dynamic (see chapter 2). The purpose of creation is to glorify its Creator, for “of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever” (Rom. 11:36, NKJV). The protology of this worldview involves a sinless creation without death and

<sup>53</sup> As Richard Dawkins is known for saying, “In a universe of electrons and selfish genes, blind physical forces and genetic replication, some people are going to get hurt, other people are going to get lucky, and you won’t find any rhyme or reason in it, nor any justice. The universe that we observe has precisely the properties we should expect if there is, at bottom, no design, no purpose, no evil, no good, nothing but pitiless indifference” (“God’s Utility Function,” *Scientific American* [November 1995]: 85).

suffering, and its eschatology seeks the “restoration of all things” (Acts 3:21, NASB).<sup>54</sup> There will be “new heavens and a new earth” (Isa. 65:17; cf. Rev. 21:1), “the home of righteousness” (2 Peter 3:13, NIV), which will be inaugurated by the “day of the Lord” (Isa. 13:6; Mal. 4:5; 1 Thess. 5:2; 2 Peter 3:10).<sup>55</sup> This salvation is carried out by Jesus Christ, “judge of the living and the dead” (Acts 10:42; cf. 2 Tim. 4:1; 1 Peter 4:5), who also suffered as a substitutionary “sacrifice” for the forgiveness of sins (Eph. 5:2; Heb. 10:12). This messianic suffering before eschatological glory (cf. Luke 24:26; Heb. 9:28; 1 Peter 1:11) defines the essential story line of the Judeo-Christian worldview (see figure 1.7).<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> On the direct relationship between biblical protology and eschatology, “the old and new creations,” see Warren A. Gage, *The Gospel of Genesis: Studies in Protology and Eschatology* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1984).

<sup>55</sup> The inherent conflict between naturalism and these “primitive” apocalyptic elements has led many in modern times to “demythologize” the Scriptures, following the lead of Martin Heidegger (1889–1976) and Rudolf Bultmann (1884–1976)—and to an extent Paul Tillich (1886–1965). The existentialist movement of the twentieth century, both within and without the church, was essentially an ideological movement that articulated various aspects of modern life within a naturalistic framework (though of course claiming to explore human existence without metaphysical presuppositions).

Bultmann’s work (see esp. “New Testament and Mythology,” in *New Testament and Mythology and Other Basic Writings*, ed. and trans. S. M. Ogden [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984], 1–43) is thus summarized:

The term dymythologization [more commonly rendered “demythologization”] means the decoding of myth or the reinterpretation of ancient mythical patterns of thought in the Bible into contemporary thought patterns. Bultmann believes that contemporary thought demands a modern scientific view of the universe which interprets reality in terms of a closed cause and effect natural order. Such a view excludes the possibility of miracles defined as supranaturally caused events; every event has a natural cause. . . .

Therefore, Bultmann asserts that the biblical myths, such as the three-level universe, with heaven above, the flat earth with hell below, angels, Satan, incarnation, resurrection, ascension, second coming, judgment, and all miracles, require an existential interpretation to be meaningful for modern man. (Alfred A. Glenn, “Rudolf Bultmann: Removing the False Offense,” *JETS* 16, no. 2 [1973]: 73–74; information in brackets added)

<sup>56</sup> Historical rabbinic Judaism and modern Judaism hold the same basic framework and timeline, yet reject a suffering Messiah (see chaps. 7 and 8).

## Metaphysical Construct

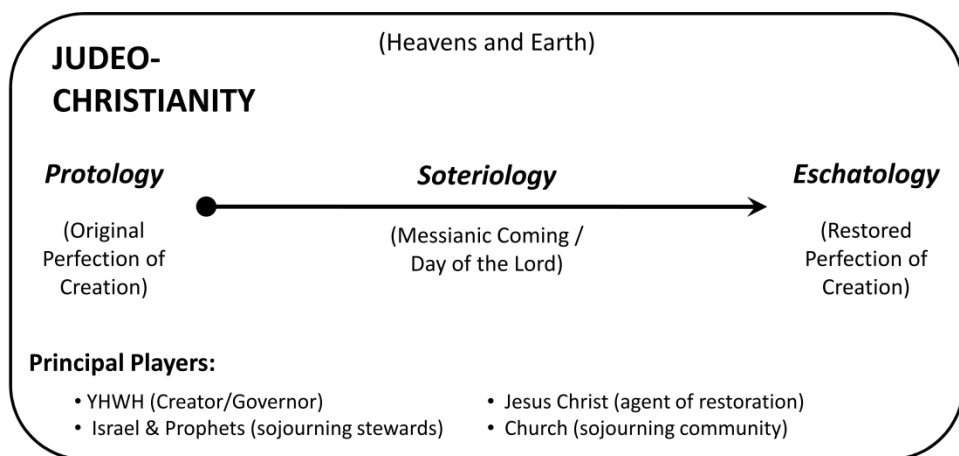


Figure 1.7 – Judeo-Christian Worldview with Its Primary Existential Components

“Christoplatonism” combines elements of Judeo-Christianity with Platonism. The worldview of Plato (c. 427-347 BC) involves a dualistic framework for reality: the immaterial “intelligible” world versus the material “perceptual” world. The former is eternal, consisting of ideal “forms,” while the latter was created, comprised of corrupt “copies.”<sup>57</sup> Platonic protology involves the eternal ideal state and a debased material creation, which sets up its eschatological return to immateriality.<sup>58</sup> Salvation is thus found in transcending materiality by enlightenment and/or death (see figure 1.8).<sup>59</sup> Those who have enlightenment of

<sup>57</sup> The Demiurge (“Artisan/Craftsman”) was the intermediary who used the forms to create materiality. Plato’s theory of the forms is found scattered throughout his dialogues; cf. *Timaeus*, 27–52; *Phaedo*, 73–80; *Republic*, 3:402–3; 5:472–83; *Cratylus*, 389–90, 439–40; *Phaedrus*, 248–50; *Theaetetus*, 184–86; *Sophist*, 246–59.

<sup>58</sup> As portrayed by Plato’s parable of the cave:

This entire allegory, I said, you may now append, dear Glaucon, to the previous argument; *the prison-house is the world of sight*, the light of the fire is the sun, and you will not misapprehend me if you interpret *the journey upwards to be the ascent of the soul into the intellectual world* according to my poor belief, which, at your desire, I have expressed – whether rightly or wrongly God knows. But, whether true or false, my opinion is that *in the world of knowledge the idea of good appears last of all*, and is seen only with an effort; and, when seen, is also inferred to be the universal author of all things beautiful and right, parent of light and of the lord of light in this visible world, and the immediate source of reason and truth in the intellectual; and that this is the power upon which he who would act rationally either in public or private life must have his eye fixed. (Plato, *The Republic*, 7:517 [DP, 3:217]; italics added)

<sup>59</sup> As exemplified by the death of Socrates (see Plato’s *Phaedo*), who on his last day expounded upon the immortality of the soul and embraced death with peace and joy. On the contrast between Socrates

the greater metaphysical reality (i.e., the philosophers) should then rule over the earth so as to help liberate the unlearned.<sup>60</sup>

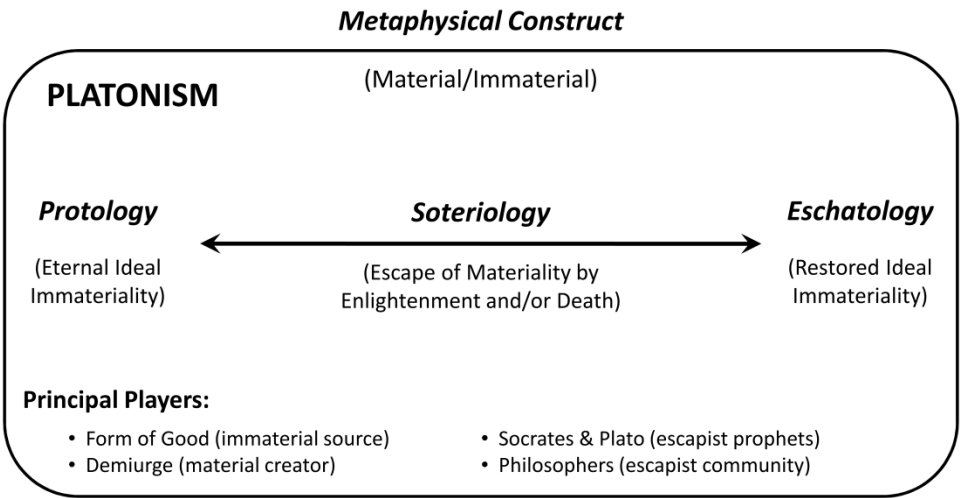


Figure 1.8 – Platonic Worldview with Its Primary Existential Components

Western thought, as Alfred Whitehead is known for saying, is “a series of footnotes to Plato.”<sup>61</sup> This dualistic world of material versus immaterial (later termed “natural” versus “supernatural”) slowly became the playing field upon which Judeo-Christianity was played.<sup>62</sup> Instead of a story line that ended in the restoration of all things and the resurrection of the body, the church began to look forward to the eternal existence of the soul in an immaterial heaven. J. Christiaan Beker described this shift as “a fall from the apocalyptic world of early

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and Jesus, see Oscar Cullmann, *Immortality of the Soul or the Resurrection of the Dead? The Witness of the New Testament* (London: Epworth Press, 1958), 19–27.

<sup>60</sup> “Until philosophers are kings, or the kings and princes of this world have the spirit and power of philosophy, and political greatness and wisdom meet in one, and those commoner natures who pursue either to the exclusion of the other are compelled to stand aside, cities will never have rest from their evils—no, nor the human race, as I believe—and then only will this our State have a possibility of life and behold the light of day” (Plato, *The Republic*, 5:473 [DP, 3:170–71]).

<sup>61</sup> Alfred N. Whitehead, *Process and Reality: An Essay in Cosmology*, ed. David R. Griffin and Donald W. Sherburne, corrected ed. (originally published in 1929; New York: Free Press, 1979), 39.

<sup>62</sup> The crystallized concept of “nature” as a materialistic metaphysical whole developed out of the resurgence of Aristotelian thought in late medieval scholasticism (c. 1250–1350); see “Nature” and “Physical” in *The Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology*, ed. C. T. Onions (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966), 604 and 677, respectively. The Platonic contrast of the immaterial “supernatural” developed in tandem, esp. during the Renaissance; see “Supernatural,” *Chambers Dictionary of Etymology*, ed. Robert K. Barnhart (Edinburgh: Chambers, 1988), 1093.

Christianity to Platonic categories of thought.”<sup>63</sup> By the fourth and fifth centuries such Christoplatonic thought became the standard.

The invention of Islam in the seventh century was another Platonic derivative, seeking a heavenly destiny and roughly framing itself as the fulfillment of the Judeo-Christian tradition, which was prevalent in Arabia at the time.<sup>64</sup> Throughout the Middle Ages, the Hellenistic (i.e., Greek) worldview remained little changed, and though the Reformation restored to Christianity the centrality of the cross and substitutionary atonement (see chapter 8), it did little to restore a biblical playing field, so to speak.<sup>65</sup> The twentieth century, however, inaugurated a radical upheaval of Platonic thought.

## BIBLICAL PROTOLOGY AND ESCHATOLOGY

Modern biblical scholarship has been broadly characterized as grappling with the Bible’s protology and eschatology. On the one hand, studies in ancient Near Eastern and Hebraic thought have provoked heated discussions concerning Genesis and the nature of the biblical worldview.<sup>66</sup> On the other hand, research

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<sup>63</sup> J. Christiaan Beker, *Paul’s Apocalyptic Gospel: The Coming Triumph of God* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982), 108.

<sup>64</sup> Mohammed’s interactions with Jews and Nestorian Christians during his formative years is widely known; see Frederick M. Denny, *An Introduction to Islam*, 4th ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2010), chap. 2. Note also the heavy theological dependence in David Cook, *Studies in Muslim Apocalyptic* (Princeton: Darwin Press, 2002).

<sup>65</sup> J. Christiaan Beker observes,

It must be pointed out that the interpretation of the future eschatological dimension of the hope has been largely a stream of misinterpretation in the history of the church. To be sure, both Albert Schweitzer and Martin Werner have drawn attention to the de-eschatologizing of the early Christian message in the history of the church. However, their basic insights have until recently been neglected by systematic theology and biblical scholarship alike. The history of futurist eschatology in the church has been one long process of spiritualization and/or ecclesiologizing or institutionalizing, especially under the influence of Origen and Augustine. From the condemnation of Montanism in the second century and the exclusion of chiliastic apocalypticism at the Council of Ephesus (A.D. 431) through its condemnation by the reformers (in the Augsburg Confession) and until today, future eschatology was pushed out of the mainstream of church life and thus pushed into heretical aberrations. The impact of this spiritualizing process and the distaste for apocalyptic speculations made by sectarian groups have no doubt contributed to the overwhelmingly negative estimate of apocalyptic by biblical and theological scholarship since the Enlightenment. (*Paul the Apostle: The Triumph of God in Life and Thought* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980], 138–39)

<sup>66</sup> See an introduction in John H. Walton, *Ancient Near Eastern Thought and the Old Testament: Introducing the Conceptual World of the Hebrew Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006), 15–40.

concerning apocalypticism and Jewish eschatology has systematically dismantled Platonic notions of floating on a cloud forever playing a harp.<sup>67</sup> As N. T. Wright observes,

As good creational monotheists, mainline Jews were not hoping to escape from the present universe into some Platonic realm of eternal bliss enjoyed by disembodied souls after the end of the space-time universe. If they died in the fight for the restoration of Israel, they hoped not to ‘go to heaven’, or at least not permanently, but to be raised to new bodies when the kingdom came, since they would of course need new bodies to enjoy the very much this-worldly *shalom*, peace and prosperity that was in store.<sup>68</sup>

In addition, the rise of Jewish scholarship in the twentieth century propelled studies concerning the “Jewish roots” of Christianity.<sup>69</sup> Unfortunately, many of these areas of study were dominated by those of liberal leanings who ultimately framed their conclusions within a naturalistic box—that is, the Bible and its human authors were simply the product of a primitive and obsolete worldview, which tells a generally irrelevant story to modern man.<sup>70</sup>

Because conservatives receive the Scriptures as the word of God concerning the truth of existence, their wrestling with the implications of Jewish eschatology

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<sup>67</sup> See a survey of the rise of apocalyptic research in Klaus Koch, *The Rediscovery of Apocalyptic*, trans. M. Kohl (London: SCM Press, 1972).

<sup>68</sup> Wright, *New Testament and the People of God*, 286.

<sup>69</sup> For example, David Flusser, *Jesus* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1969); and Geza Vermes, *Jesus the Jew: A Historian's Reading of the Gospels* (London: Collins, 1973). See an early summary of the movement by Donald A. Hagner, *The Jewish Reclamation of Jesus: An Analysis and Critique of Modern Jewish Study of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984). The characteristic element of the so-called “third quest” for the historical Jesus has concerned his Jewish background; see esp. Ben Witherington III, *The Jesus Quest: The Third Search for the Jew of Nazareth* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1997).

<sup>70</sup> So Bultmann states,

It is entirely possible that in a past mythical world picture truths may be rediscovered that were lost during a period of enlightenment; and theology has every reason to ask whether this may be possible in the case of the world picture of the New Testament. But it is impossible to reprimatinate a past world picture by sheer resolve, especially a *mythical* world picture, now that all of our thinking is irrevocably formed by science. A blind acceptance of New Testament mythology would be simply arbitrariness; to make such acceptance a demand of faith would be to reduce faith to a work, as Wilhelm Herrmann made clear, one would have thought, once and for all. Any satisfaction of the demand would be a forced *sacrificium intellectus*, and any of us who would make it would be peculiarly split and untruthful. For we would affirm for our faith or religion a world picture that our life otherwise denied. Criticism of the New Testament is simply a given with modern thinking as it has come to us through our history. (*New Testament and Mythology*, 3–4)

and protology has been more difficult. The liberal can speak freely about the simple message of the Bible because in the end he/she is under no obligation to actually believe it.<sup>71</sup> The conservative, however, is forced to grapple with such things because of his/her personal convictions concerning the Bible's authority and potency. Thus, due to the stigma and "embarrassment"<sup>72</sup> of the biblical worldview, its Jewish leanings, and its apocalyptic conclusions—"like a renegade relative in attendance at a family reunion"<sup>73</sup>—many simply avoid the unambiguous message of the Scriptures.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Though Albert Schweitzer jettisoned a theology of the cross and though his mystical conclusions went awry, his basic Jewish-eschatological premise holds true:

The thoroughgoing application of Jewish eschatology to the interpretation of the teaching and work of Jesus has created a new fact upon which to base the history of dogma. . . . The teaching of Jesus does not in any of its aspects go outside the Jewish world of thought and project itself into a non-Jewish world, but represents a deeply ethical and perfected version of the contemporary Apocalyptic.

Therefore the Gospel is at its starting-point exclusively Jewish-eschatological. . . . The history of dogma has to show how what was originally purely Jewish-eschatological has developed into something that is Greek. (Schweitzer, *Paul and His Interpreters: A Critical History*, trans. W. Montgomery [London: A. & C. Black, 1912], ix–x)

Likewise Schweitzer's assessment of the academic tradition remains true: "Theological science has in fact been dominated by the desire *to minimise as much as possible the element of Jewish Apocalyptic in Jesus and Paul*, and so far as possible to represent the Hellenisation of the Gospel as having been prepared for by them. It thinks it has gained something when in formulating the problem it has done its best *to soften down the antitheses to the utmost* with a view to providing every facility for conceiving the transition of the Gospel from one world of thought to the other" (Ibid., ix; italics added).

Unfortunately, Schweitzer commonly associated Jewish-apocalyptic with "the end of the world," which is inaccurate, as many, including N. T. Wright, have pointed out: "The events, including the ones that were expected to come as the climax of YHWH's restoration of Israel, remained within (what we think of as) the this-worldly ambit. The 'kingdom of god' has nothing to do with the world itself coming to an end. That makes no sense either of the basic Jewish worldview or of the texts in which the Jewish hope is expressed. It was after all the Stoics, not the first-century Jews, who characteristically believed that the world would be dissolved in fire" (*New Testament and the People of God*, 285).

<sup>72</sup> The embarrassment of the apocalyptic was highlighted by Klaus Koch, *Ratlos vor der Apokalypitik* (Gütersloh, Germany: Mohn, 1970), roughly translated "At a Loss over Apocalyptic," published in English as *The Rediscovery of Apocalyptic*.

<sup>73</sup> Clayton Sullivan, *Rethinking Realized Eschatology* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1988), 4.

<sup>74</sup> So Beker writes,

Indeed, although scholars usually concede that apocalyptic terminology is an important building block in Paul's theology, its future-imminent aspect represents an obstacle to our modern mentality, to the extent that it is either demythologized in an existentialist fashion or neutralized.



The Bible's protology and eschatology are quite simple and straightforward. The Scriptures as a whole speak of a literal creation and an apocalyptic restoration of creation centered around the day of the Lord. This is taken for granted by conservative orthodox Jews, but its acceptance by the Christian academy has been exceedingly slow and arduous. Unfortunately, the reckless approach of various popular movements—particularly the creationist movement<sup>75</sup> and the Bible prophecy movement<sup>76</sup>—have resulted in a common disdain for biblical protology and eschatology. Though these movements have manifold problems in both content and methodology, they do interpret the Scriptures at face value in a literalistic manner, as would a first-century Jew.<sup>77</sup>

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Here, if anywhere, the interpretive tension between “what it meant” and “what it means” is obvious. The so-called primitive world view of apocalyptic and the delay of the parousia are, for most interpreters, such an overwhelming problem, and the utopian distortions and delusions of apocalyptic fanatics such an embarrassment, that Paul's emphasis on the imminent parousia is for all practical purposes either treated as peripheral, or existentially reinterpreted, or subjected to developmental theories. (*Paul's Apocalyptic Gospel*, 45)

<sup>75</sup> See a comprehensive history of the movement by Ronald L. Numbers, *The Creationists: The Evolution of Scientific Creationism* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1992). The expanded edition (Harvard University Press, 2006) addresses the intelligent design movement.

<sup>76</sup> See Hal Lindsey, et al; cf. Bart D. Ehrman, *Jesus: Apocalyptic Prophet of the New Millennium* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 3–19. But as Beker points out, “Legitimate criticism, however, should not make us complacent or blind to the sad fact that respectable theologies of the established church have continuously dismissed apocalyptic from their own theological agenda and are thus indirectly responsible for the distortions of neo-apocalypticism among us. For the apocalyptic silence of the established church certainly left the vacuum that this movement now fills” (*Paul's Apocalyptic Gospel*, 28).

<sup>77</sup> As Dale C. Allison acknowledges, “In like fashion, when the Jesus tradition envisions the Son of man coming on the clouds or foretells the general resurrection, we should, *even if this puts us in the disagreeable company of modern fundamentalists*, think of the redeemer literally flying upon the clouds and of the redeemed literally coming forth from their graves—and also of all that those events represent: the vindication of Jesus, the triumph of believers, the judgment of the wicked, the fulfillment of prophecy, etc. The literal and the symbolic need not be sundered” (*Jesus of Nazareth: Millenarian Prophet* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998], 164; italics added).

Moreover, Allison asserts,

Beginning with Origen, most of the church fathers disparaged chiliasm and literal eschatological expectations as “judaizing.” They were right—not to disparage, but to make the association with Judaism. For the literal interpretation corresponds to the original intention of the texts, which were forged within the Jewish tradition, a tradition that so often anticipated a literal messianic kingdom in Jerusalem. In other words, the prophecies of a millennium or golden age were originally taken at more or less face value, and this continued to be the case through much of the second century. But as Christianity became an almost wholly Gentile phenomenon and the elapse of the years saw the fires of eschatological enthusiasm die down, things changed. Eventually the fathers, like the rationalist Maimonides after them, and like some New Testament

Though popular distortions abound, biblical protology must be taken seriously. Naturalistic explanations for the infinite complexities of life are radically deficient.<sup>78</sup> Many of the building blocks of life are “irreducibly complex,”<sup>79</sup> and the probability of their evolution by chance is “essentially zero.”<sup>80</sup> The “icons” of evolution have been shown to be heavily slanted in their presentation (e.g., Darwin’s finches, the Miller-Urey experiment, and vertebrate homology), or outright fraudulent (e.g., peppered moths and Haeckel’s embryos).<sup>81</sup> Even radiometric dating has been shown to have serious flaws.<sup>82</sup> No evolutionist can even begin to adequately explain gigantism in the fossil record,<sup>83</sup>

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scholars today, came to regard eschatological prophecy as “merely a parable and a figure of speech” (*Mishneh Torah* 14). (Ibid., 169)

<sup>78</sup> See the mounting criticisms by Michael Denton, *Evolution: A Theory in Crisis* (Bethesda, MD: Adler & Adler, 1985); Phillip E. Johnson, *Darwin on Trial* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1991); William A. Dembski, ed., *Uncommon Dissent: Intellectuals Who Find Darwinism Unconvincing* (Wilmington, DE: ISI Books, 2004); and the particularly incisive David Berlinski, *The Devil’s Delusion: Atheism and Its Scientific Pretensions* (New York: Crown Forum, 2008).

<sup>79</sup> See Michael J. Behe, *Darwin’s Black Box: The Biochemical Challenge to Evolution* (New York: The Free Press, 1996).

<sup>80</sup> “To claim that life evolved is to demand a miracle. The simplest conceivable form of single-celled life should have at least 600 different protein molecules. The mathematical probability that even one typical protein could form by chance arrangements of amino acid sequences is essentially zero—far less than 1 in 10<sup>450</sup>. To appreciate the magnitude of 10<sup>450</sup>, realize that the visible universe is about 10<sup>28</sup> inches in diameter” (Walt Brown, *In the Beginning: Compelling Evidence for Creation and the Flood*, 8th ed. [Phoenix: Center for Scientific Creation, 2008], 17).

<sup>81</sup> See Jonathan Wells, *Icons of Evolution: Why Much of What We Teach About Evolution Is Wrong* (Washington, DC: Regnery Publishing, 2000).

<sup>82</sup> Radiometric dating is based upon three assumptions: 1) the *original amount* of both parent and daughter elements is known, 2) the *decay rate* has remained constant, and 3) the sample has remained in a *closed system* (i.e., no leaching, diffusion, and/or metamorphism. See a summary in John Morris, *The Young Earth*, rev. ed. (Green Forest, AR: Master Books, 2007), 48–70. All three assumptions have problems. See Larry Vardiman, Andrew A. Snelling, and Eugene F. Chaffin, eds., *Radioisotopes and the Age of the Earth: A Young-Earth Creationist Research Initiative*, 2 vols. (El Cajon, CA: Institute for Creation Research; St. Joseph, MO: Creation Research Society, 2000, 2005); archived at <http://www.icr.org/rate>. See a summary in Donald DeYoung, *Thousands . . . Not Billions: Challenging an Icon of Evolution, Questioning the Age of the Earth* (Green Forest, AR: Master Books, 2005).

<sup>83</sup> Average dinosaur body size is exceedingly difficult to calculate. However, based on 63 dinosaur genera, Nicholas Hotton estimated an average generic mass in excess of 850 kg and a median generic mass of nearly two tons. This contrasts sharply with extant mammals (788 genera), whose average generic mass is 863 grams, with a median mass of 631 grams; see Nicholas H. Hotton, “An Alternative to Dinosaur Endothermy: The Happy Wanderers,” in *A Cold Look at the Warm Blooded Dinosaurs*, eds. R. D. K. Thomas and E. C. Olson (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1980), 311–350. Though this estimate has been disputed (see Robert Bakker in the same volume, pp. 351–462), it generally represents the massive difference between ancient and modern animals. For a survey, see Gregory S. Paul, *The Princeton Field Guide to Dinosaurs* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010).

especially concerning the sauropods (dwarfing the largest modern land animals by a factor of ten or more)—How *on this earth* did they ever exist?<sup>84</sup> And the handful of questionable transitional fossils will never cover up the glaring lack of *missing chains* in the fossil record.<sup>85</sup>

Moreover, the utter lack of any signs of erosion in the geologic column argues for the rapid deposition of sedimentary layers in a global deluge,<sup>86</sup> which is also a superior explanation for the earth's uniform stratification and fossilization.<sup>87</sup> The discovery of ancient unfossilized DNA, bacteria, and soft

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<sup>84</sup> Though explanations have been attempted (e.g., P. Martin Sander, et al., "Biology of the Sauropod Dinosaurs: The Evolution of Gigantism," *Biological Reviews of the Cambridge Philosophical Society* 86, no. 1 [February 2011]: 117–155), there remains the glaring ecological problem of limited land mass. Only an earth with far greater habitable land mass could sustain such animals (see Brown, *In the Beginning*, 117–31).

<sup>85</sup> As Brown explains,

If evolution happened, the fossil record should show continuous and gradual changes from the bottom to the top layers. Actually, many gaps or discontinuities appear throughout the fossil record. At the most fundamental level, a big gap exists between forms of life whose cells have nuclei (eukaryotes, such as plants, animals, and fungi) and those that don't (prokaryotes, such as bacteria and blue-green algae). Fossil links are also missing between large groupings of plants, between single-celled forms of life and invertebrates (animals without backbones), among insects, between invertebrates and vertebrates (animals with backbones), between fish and amphibians, between amphibians and reptiles, between reptiles and mammals, between reptiles and birds, between primates and other mammals, and between apes and other primates. In fact, *chains* are missing, not *links*. The fossil record has been studied so thoroughly that it is safe to conclude that these gaps are real; they will never be filled. (*In the Beginning*, 11–12)

<sup>86</sup> "If the sedimentary deposits around the world formed over hundreds of millions of years, we would expect to find evidence of erosion over time, resulting in the periodical creation of irregular surfaces. But many times when sedimentary layers are exposed, such as in road highway cuttings, beach cliffs, and river canyons, there is very little evidence of erosion between the layers. . . . If the millions of years had actually occurred, why are the tops of the under layers not highly irregular like the present topography that we now observe?" (John F. Ashton, *Evolution Impossible: 12 Reasons Why Evolution Cannot Explain the Origin of Life on Earth* [Green Forest, AR: Master Books, 2012], 102).

See also Ariel A. Roth, "'Flat Gaps' in Sedimentary Rock Layers Challenge Long Geologic Ages," *Journal of Creation* 23, no. 2 (August 2009): 76–81.

<sup>87</sup> See Brown's discussion on liquefaction as the means of stratification and fossilization (*In the Beginning*, 169–81); cf. Guy Berthault, "Experiments on Lamination of Sediments," *Journal of Creation* 3, no. 1 (April 1988): 25–29. Also notable is the formation of polystrate fossils, which are found all over the world and indicate rapid burial (see Tas Walker, "Polystrate Fossils: Evidence for a Young Earth," *Creation* 29, no. 3 [June 2007]: 54–55). Evolutionists argue that these and other rapid burial fossils (e.g., fossilized jellyfish, worms, eggs, scales and fins) are caused by local catastrophes such as landslides, river floods, volcanic ash, or blown sand dunes (cf. <http://www.talkorigins.org/indexcc/CC/CC363.html>). However, the size of many of these fossils (e.g., whales and sauropods), their complete remains, their contorted positions (sometimes in mass graves), and their global placement indicate a large-scale, global event (cf. Michael Oard, "Dead Whales:

tissue—even *T. rex* blood<sup>88</sup>—also argues forcefully for recent fossilization.<sup>89</sup> Other age-limiting factors, such as the recession of the moon,<sup>90</sup> the “faint young sun paradox,”<sup>91</sup> and the earth’s decaying magnetic field,<sup>92</sup> will not be resolved by evolutionists, because they cannot be resolved. Furthermore, the plate tectonic theory is hopelessly flawed—Where is *the rubble* in the trenches (among a host of other questions)?<sup>93</sup>

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Telling Tales?” *Creation* 26, no. 4 [September 2004]: 10–14). See a summary in Morris, *The Young Earth*, 96–119.

<sup>88</sup> See M. Schweitzer and T. Staedter, “The Real Jurassic Park,” *Earth* (June 1997), 55–57; and M. H. Schweitzer, J. L. Wittmeyer, J. R. Horner, and J. K. Toporski, “Soft-tissue Vessels and Cellular Preservation in *Tyrannosaurus Rex*,” *Science* 207 (2005): 1952–55. Mary Schweitzer, student of the famous paleontologist “Dinosaur” Jack Horner, describes the incident as it happened at Montana State University: “The lab filled with murmurs of amazement, for I had focused on something inside the vessels that none of us had ever noticed before: tiny round objects, translucent red with a dark center. Then a colleague took one look at them and shouted, ‘You’ve got red blood cells. You’ve got red blood cells!’”

Unfortunately, Schweitzer’s evolutionary worldview completely distorted a reasonable interpretation of the evidence: “It was exactly like looking at a slice of modern bone. But of course, I couldn’t believe it. I said to the lab technician: ‘The bones are, after all, 65 million years old. How could blood cells survive that long?’” (quoted in Carl Wieland, “Sensational Dinosaur Blood Report!” *Creation* 19, no. 4 [September 1997]: 42–43).

<sup>89</sup> Such materials, known to break down rapidly under common conditions, require special pleadings to sustain an old earth timescale. See Shaun Doyle, “The Real ‘Jurassic Park’?” *Creation* 30, no. 3 (June 2008): 12–15; and Carl Wieland, “Ancient DNA and the Young Earth,” *Journal of Creation* 8, no. 1 (1994): 7–10; cf. Brown’s detailed list (*In the Beginning*, 35–36).

<sup>90</sup> See Don DeYoung, “Is the Moon Really Old?” *Creation* 14, no. 4 (September 1992): 43; and Jonathan Sarfati, “The Moon: The Light That Rules the Night,” *Creation* 20, no. 4 (September 1998): 36–39.

<sup>91</sup> Michael J. Oard observes,

It was discovered about 40 years ago that in the evolutionary origin of the solar system the sun would have been significantly less luminous with the earth receiving about 20 to 30% less sunlight than today. . . . On this basis, the earth should have been totally glaciated from near its beginning, after it cooled down from its initially hot state within evolutionary scenarios. . . .

This glaciation should have continued indefinitely to this day with no possible biological evolution, unless something drastic occurred to warm the earth. . . .

Evolutionary scientists need the earth relatively warm for the evolution of life, which would be impossible within their paradigm if the earth is totally frozen over. (“Is the Faint Young Sun Paradox Solved?” *Journal of Creation* 25, no. 2 [August 2011]: 17–19; cf. Danny R. Faulkner, “The Young Faint Sun Paradox and the Age of the Solar System,” *Journal of Creation* 15, no. 2 [2001]: 3–4)

<sup>92</sup> See D. Russell Humphreys, “Can Evolutionists Now Explain the Earth’s Magnetic Field?” *Creation Research Society Quarterly* 33, no. 3 (December 1996): 184–85; and Humphreys, “The Earth’s Magnetic Field Is Still Losing Energy,” *Creation Research Society Quarterly* 39, no. 1 (June 2002): 3–13.

<sup>93</sup> See Brown, *In the Beginning*, 148–61.

Though evolutionists may respond with vindictive condescension,<sup>94</sup> only a nonuniformitarian history of the earth (i.e., one with a radical geological catastrophe like the flood of Noah) can account for the earth's major features.<sup>95</sup> It seems that only scientists outside the Christian academy are bold enough to state the plain realities of evolutionism, while theologians are too afraid to question the naturalistic status quo.<sup>96</sup>

## CONCLUSION

The historicity of biblical protology is important because it dictates the playing field, the players, and the subsequent story of our worldview, which in turn fundamentally informs our identity, our understanding of life, and our interpretation of the Bible. Many receive Genesis theologically or doctrinally, but when push comes to shove they reject it existentially. It is little more than an ancient myth, which bears little upon modern society and its dealings. This is not the case with the biblical writers, who clearly interpreted Genesis plainly and literally (cf. Ex. 20:11; 31:17; Ps. 8:3–8; Matt. 19:4; 1 Tim. 2:13–14).

Moreover, the historicity of biblical protology is the foundation upon which the Bible's eschatology is built, for creation will be restored to its original *historical* state (cf. Matt. 19:28; Acts 3:21; Rom. 8:21). Sin and death entered creation at a historical point in the past through Adam (cf. Rom. 5:12–19; 1 Cor.

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<sup>94</sup> From its infantile beginnings in Tim M. Berra, *Evolution and the Myth of Creationism* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1990), to its mature development in Mark Isaak, *The Counter-Creationism Handbook* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), which is a published form of *The TalkOrigins Archive*, available at <http://www.talkorigins.org/indexcc/>. See a systematic response by *CreationWiki*, available at [http://creationwiki.org/index\\_to\\_creationist\\_claims](http://creationwiki.org/index_to_creationist_claims).

<sup>95</sup> See Brown's overview of the earth's twenty-five major features (esp. oceanic ridges, mountain ranges, earthquakes, plateaus, and overthrusts) that are better explained by flood geology (*In the Beginning*, 105–41).

<sup>96</sup> See John F. Ashton, ed., *In Six Days: Why Fifty Scientists Choose to Believe in Creation* (Green Forest, AR: Master Books, 2000).

Morris recounts, "Recently, a group of professors from a major, conservative evangelical seminary met with scientists from ICR. Every one of them had abandoned the recent creation position, usually in favor of the framework hypothesis. . . . The theologians admitted they held to an old earth in spite of the obvious sense of Scripture and would adopt a young-earth belief only if the consensus view of secular scientists shifted to recent creation" (*The Young Earth*, 125).

Of course, scientists who do question the Darwinian dogma face stiff consequences; see Jerry Bergman, *Slaughter of the Dissidents: The Shocking Truth about Killing the Careers of Darwin Doubters*, 2nd ed. (Southworth, WA: Leafcutter Press, 2011).

15:21–22), and they will be judged and eradicated at a historical point in the future through Jesus Christ (Acts 17:31; 2 Cor. 5:1–10). To undermine the historicity of Genesis is to subvert the very heart of the biblical message.

Most liberal theologians simply dismiss the Bible's protology and eschatology as delusional concepts generated by a primitive and outdated worldview.<sup>97</sup> Many conservative theologians find these concepts to be such an embarrassment that they avoid talking about them altogether, or they neutralize them through various literary and typological techniques of reinterpretation.<sup>98</sup> However, the Word of God does not need our mitigation. It simply calls for us to accept its incisive message at face value.

Furthermore, in light of its glorious protology we must *hold together* its apocalyptic eschatology with its cruciform center (as we will see in chapter 3). To break the cohesion of such a timeline is to break the biblical story as a whole. One cannot drive a car without wheels, nor one lacking an engine. All the parts must hold together. So it is with a biblical worldview. Within the framework of the heavens and the earth, all the parts, *from beginning to end*, must work together for it to work at all.

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<sup>97</sup> Clayton Sullivan, for example, echoes the conclusions Schweitzer et al.: "Having expressed these caveats, I conclude this chapter by observing that scholars such as Johannes Weiss, Albert Schweitzer, and Martin Dibelius were correct: Jesus' Kingdom preaching was predicated on a mistake. His fervent belief that the Kingdom would appear on earth within his listeners' lifetime was an error, an illusion, an unfulfilled hope" (*Rethinking Realized Eschatology*, 64).

<sup>98</sup> As exemplified by Bruce K. Waltke's essay "Kingdom Promises as Spiritual," in *Continuity and Discontinuity: Perspectives on the Relationship Between the Old and New Testaments*, ed. John S. Feinberg (Wheaton: Crossway, 1988), 260–87.