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TOWARD A BAPTIST VIEW OF METAPHILOSOPHY:
AN ANALYSIS OF E. Y. MULLINS, JOHN NEWPORT,
RICHARD CUNNINGHAM, AND L. RUSS BUSH

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TOWARD A BAPTIST VIEW OF METAPHILOSOPHY:
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To Angie McDonald,
whose sacrifice and support made this dissertation possible;
to Maddie, Libby, and Emma,
whose patience and understanding are beyond their years;
to Charles and Shelly McDonald,
who instilled in me a love of the Lord and of learning;
and to
Ted Cabal,
who first introduced me to philosophy and its value for the service
of Christian theology.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<i>PI</i>	Ludwig Wittgenstein, <i>Philosophical Investigations: The English Text of the Third Edition</i> , trans. G. E. M. Anscombe
SBC	Southern Baptist Convention
SBTS	Southern Baptist Theological Seminary
SEBTS	Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary

PREFACE

As I reflect upon my time at Southern Seminary, words cannot express the gratitude I have for my wife and the sacrifice she has made so that I can pursue not only a M.Div. at Southern, but a Ph.D. as well. She has been a source of encouragement, motivation, accountability, and stability for me, and without her I could not have attained that which I once thought impossible.

I am also grateful for Dr. Ted Cabal's guidance and friendship since my M.Div. days at Southern. He took a directionless masters level student desiring to further his studies, and introduced me to and helped develop in me a love and appreciation for philosophy. His desire for believers to understand the value of and need for philosophy in theological discussion helped inspire the topic of this dissertation. Second only to my wife, Dr. Cabal has served as a significant reason for my writing this dissertation.

While I can go on for quite some time acknowledging those who have played an integral part in my seminary career, the following bear mentioning: my parents for instilling within me a desire to pursue higher education; Dr. Michael A. G. Haykin, whose church history seminars gave final direction to my dissertation; Dr. James Parker and Dr. Mark Coppenger, who willingly took me on as their Garrett Fellow; and Jeffersontown Baptist Church and Ninth and O Baptist Church, who have loved my family and me through the teaching of God's Word and the fellowship of the saints.

Danny McDonald

Louisville, Kentucky

May 2014

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In *A Case for Christian Philosophy*, Richard B. Cunningham, retired Professor of Christian Philosophy from The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, recalls an encounter he had with an Anglican philosopher at Cambridge. When Cunningham introduced himself as a professor of philosophy at SBTS, the Anglican “replied wryly, ‘Oh! I didn’t know Southern Baptists were interested in philosophy.’”¹ Though there have been well-known Baptist thinkers that have transcended the boundaries of the SBC into broader evangelical circles (and even into secular academia), Baptists in general are not known to be major contributors to Christian philosophy in particular, and to philosophy in general.²

Why is it that Southern Baptist institutions, despite their rich theological heritage, historically lack influence in Christian philosophy—a field that has witnessed tremendous growth in the last half century through the work of thinkers like Alvin Plantinga, Nicholas Wolterstorff, Richard Swinburne, William Lane Craig, and J. P. Moreland?³ The general lack of Baptist influence in the larger philosophy community is

¹Richard B. Cunningham, “A Case for Christian Philosophy,” *Review and Expositor* 82 (1985): 493.

²There is some disagreement whether there is such a thing as a “Christian philosophy.” Richard Cunningham makes a case for such a philosophy in his 1985 article “A Case for Christian Philosophy.” John Newport argues that Christians should develop a distinctly biblical philosophy or worldview (John Newport, *Life’s Ultimate Questions* [Dallas: Word Publishing, 1989], 6). Cunningham points to Enlightenment thinkers such as Descartes, Hume, Kant, and resulting modern thinkers as having “made little allowance for Christian philosophizing or even a broader approach to the philosophy of religion” (“A Case for Christian Philosophy,” 493–94).

³It should be noted that there have been Southern Baptist philosophers who were influential in the philosophy community, such as Carl F. H. Henry, Ronald Nash, and William Lane Craig. The bulk of their work, however, was done while they were at non-Southern Baptist institutions.

even more perplexing when one considers the impact Baptist thinkers like John Newport (1917–2000), L. Russ Bush (1944–2008), and William A. Dembski had in the SBC. The reasons for such sparse Baptist contribution to Christian philosophy are complex and varied. Though a detailed discussion on these reasons goes beyond the intended focus of this dissertation, a summary of reasons is provided as a contrast to the contribution made by the subjects of this dissertation.

John Newport suggests in *Life's Ultimate Questions* three reasons why evangelicals (which can be applied to Baptists in particular) have “resisted submitting the claims of their faith to the scrutiny of reason or developing a distinctive biblical worldview or philosophy.” The first reason is that evangelical growth is a result of revivals that emphasized emotions and the will over the intellect. Second is the development and growth of the struggle over biblical inerrancy and higher criticism. Last, evangelicals have excluded themselves from mainstream philosophical thought while post-Enlightenment philosophy made no room for Christian thought.⁴

Particularly for Southern Baptists, in the formative years of the Southern Baptist Convention in the mid- to late-nineteenth century, isolated communities and religious revivals contributed to a wariness of speculative thinking. William Brackney suggests that the few number of urban areas in the South and the larger number of rural communities tended to foster individualism and the sheltering of Baptist members from “larger cultural trends.” Baptists tended to value experience over liturgy, confessionalism, or education for their ministers.⁵ With the firestorm created by the encroachment of Darwinian science and higher criticism in theological education, Baptists neglected the pursuit of Christian philosophy as they sought to defend orthodox beliefs against modern scholarship.

⁴Newport, *Life's Ultimate Questions*, 8–9.

⁵William Brackney, *A Genetic History of Baptist Thought: With Special Reference to Baptists in Britain and North America* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2004), 385–86.

Despite the prevailing lack of attention given to philosophy by Baptists, SBC seminaries have housed over the years influential Baptist thinkers and philosophers who have sought to bring philosophy into Baptist thought, particularly as a discipline worth studying for the defense of and the advancement of Christian doctrine. The SBC's two biggest seminaries in the early twentieth century—Southern Seminary and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary—consistently offered courses in the philosophy of religion, though these courses usually were offered in the department of theology. It was not until the mid-1920s that one finds a department within a SBC seminary devoted to philosophy as a discipline when Southwestern Seminary offered Christian ethics, apologetics, and philosophy of religion in a division of instruction titled “Philosophical and Historical Courses.”⁶ In the mid-1950s, Southern Seminary formed a Department of Christian Philosophy which combined the areas of philosophy of religion and apologetics.⁷ Today, four of the six SBC seminaries house a department or division devoted to Christian philosophy.⁸

It bears noting that the teachings of SBC seminaries have not always reflected the beliefs of Baptist laity as a whole. The battle between Fundamentalism and Modernism in the denomination that began in the late-nineteenth century and culminated

⁶Mark Whitten, “Philosophy of Religion,” in *Has Our Theology Changed? Southern Baptist Thought Since 1845*, ed. Paul A. Basden (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994), 275, referencing the 1922–1923 Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary course catalogue. Whitten provides a brief, but helpful, overview of philosophy courses offered in the early days of Southern and Southwestern up to 1994, the professors of these courses, and under what department the courses were offered.

⁷*Ibid.*, 276.

⁸Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary offers Christian Ethics and Christian Philosophy under “Historical-Theological Studies,” *2012–2014 Seminary Catalog*, accessed July 14, 2013, http://www.mbts.edu/downloads/_current_students/seminary_catalog_12-14.pdf. Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary offers only Christian Ethics, *2013–2014 Catalog*, accessed July 14, 2013, <http://www.ggbts.edu/docs/File/catalog/Catalog1314.pdf>. New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, *2012–2013 Graduate Catalog*, accessed July 14, 2013, <http://www.nobts.edu/resources/pdf/GraduateCatalog.pdf>. Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, *2012–2013 Academic Catalog*, accessed July 14, 2013, http://www.sbts.edu/future-students/files/2010/11/2012–2013-Catalog_Feb2013_complete.pdf. Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, *Academic Catalog, 2013–2014*, accessed July 14, 2013, <http://www.sebts.edu/files/catalog.pdf>. Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, *2013–2014 Academic Catalog*, accessed July 14, 2013, <http://catalog.swbts.edu/>.

in the eventual battle over inerrancy in the mid- to late-twentieth century illustrates the deep divide that existed between the seminaries and the Baptist members they served. One does not find the teachings of the SBC seminaries mirroring the beliefs of the denomination's members until the recent conservative resurgence that occurred in the late twentieth century. The progress of the conservative resurgence has been partially successful in SBC colleges, though, as some institutions hold out against any attempt to return these colleges to their historic, Baptist roots. As such, the works of particular Baptist philosophers in SBC institutions of higher education—whether past or present—may not reflect the general attitude of contemporary SBC laity and ministers. Though a study of the attitudes of SBC laity and ministers toward philosophy is beyond the scope of this paper, it is one that merits attention elsewhere if one is to understand the general silence of philosophy in Baptist circles.

The focus of this dissertation on seminary professors (as presented below) is not to ignore the views of Baptists at large. Rather, focus is given to the work of these professors due to their accessibility and because they interacted with the leading thought of their day. Though the views of these professors may not reflect the prevalent Baptist thought of their time, it would be irresponsible to ignore what they have to say regarding the nature of philosophy for the Baptist believer because of the value it can have for not just Baptists, but for evangelical Christians as well. Likewise, a study of their work can serve as a warning of various intellectual pitfalls to believers. A study of these thinkers is also important because they trained a number of today's intellectual leaders of the SBC. Baptist laity, ministers, and scholars who seek to face an increasingly secular culture must address the question of the nature of philosophy and its role in the life of the believer. This dissertation is a small means to this grand end—to see how Baptist scholars have struggled with the question, “What is philosophy?”

Thesis

The purpose of this dissertation is to analyze how four Southern Baptist scholars: E. Y. Mullins (1860–1928), John Newport, Richard Cunningham, and L. Russ Bush, understood (explicitly or implicitly) the nature of philosophy. In addition, three implications will be explored as a result of their metaphilosophical views. First, what is the relationship between faith and reason? Second, is a Christian philosophy possible? And third, what role does philosophy serve in the life of the believer?

The dissertation seeks to bring to light a philosophical issue that is neglected not only by Baptists and Christians alike, but even by secular philosophers and academicians as well.⁹ Despite this neglect, one at the very least implies a metaphilosophical view in their work, which in turn affects how they view the relationship of philosophy to other disciplines of study.¹⁰ Therefore, an analysis of Mullins, Newport, Cunningham, and Bush on this issue can ultimately help Baptists—those of today and of tomorrow—understand how to (or not to) utilize philosophy in the service of theology. Based upon the analysis, implications will be drawn regarding the strengths and weaknesses of their approach to philosophy, and how Southern Baptists can move forward today regarding the study of and utilization of philosophy in the service of the gospel.

Background

Personal Interest

The topic of this dissertation is born out of my studies in Christian philosophy during my M.Div. years at Southern Seminary, and from my studies in Christian philosophy and church history in my Ph.D. seminars. The driving force behind my masters and doctoral work has been the desire to better understand the relationship

⁹Søren Overgaard, Paul Gilbert, and Stephen Burwood, *An Introduction to Metaphilosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 4. More will be said to this end below.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, 6–7.

between faith and reason. I knew that the extremes of fideism and absolute reason were inadequate solutions, so I became interested in how philosophy as a discipline can serve not only the advancement of truth in general, but also in the defense and advancement of the Christian faith.¹¹ My doctoral seminars in the early church fathers aided my studies by giving me an appreciation for and understanding of how the church has used philosophy in the service of theology, which can then serve as a model for Christians in a post-Enlightenment age.

I became interested in metaphilosophy after Theodore J. Cabal, Professor of Christian Philosophy and Applied Apologetics at SBTS, introduced me to *An Introduction to Metaphilosophy* by Søren Overgaard, Paul Gilbert, and Stephen Burwood—a book that has shaped my approach to understanding and teaching philosophy. Before reading this book, how I did philosophy dictated my view on the nature of philosophy. Yet, if Overgaard, Gilbert, and Burwood are correct (which I think they are), doing philosophy without an explicit understanding of the nature of philosophy is akin to putting the cart before the horse. Thus, developing a metaphilosophical view can provide for the believer a better understanding of the relationship between faith and reason, and ultimately the role of philosophy in the life of Christians today. Because I have grown up my entire life in a Southern Baptist church and I have a deep appreciation for the SBC's commitment to remain faithful to orthodox, biblical truths, it is only natural that I study how those who have gone before me in the Baptist tradition have answered the question, "What is philosophy?" Mullins, Newport, Cunningham, and Bush have laid the groundwork for establishing a Baptist view of metaphilosophy.

History of Research

Though the subjects of this dissertation are widely published, the amount of research analyzing their view on the nature of philosophy is minimal at best, with the

¹¹In which one finds the culmination of truth in Jesus Christ—Truth incarnate (John 14: 6).

exception of E. Y. Mullins. Mark Whitten's "Philosophy of Religion" in *Has Our Theology Changed?* provides a summary discussion of Southern Baptist Christian philosophy. In his essay, Whitten provides much space to Mullins (relative to other Baptist thinkers mentioned in the essay), but focuses primarily on various characteristics that defined his philosophy, particularly Mullins' emphasis on Christian experience.¹² Mention is also made of John Newport and Richard Cunningham, but Whitten only highlights their affirmation of the possibility of a Christian philosophy.¹³ No discussion is provided on L. Russ Bush in "Philosophy of Religion."

E. Y. Mullins is the only thinker whose philosophy has been analyzed, but even then these analyses are usually in the context of his overall theology.¹⁴ A common feature of any analysis of Mullins' philosophy is his use of personalism and pragmatism as a way of modernizing Christian theology in light of contemporary scientific and philosophic advances. Yet, as with Whitten's discussion of Southern Baptist philosophy, little is provided on Mullins' metaphilosophy.

Finally, few works exist that attempt to analyze and critique particular Baptist philosophers as philosophers in their own right. Any publication about these thinkers tends to focus on an aspect (or aspects) of their philosophy or theology, or are

¹²Whitten, "Philosophy of Religion," 272–75.

¹³Ibid., 278–79.

¹⁴For instance, just over seven decades after Mullins' death, R. Albert Mohler wrote an article titled "Baptist Theology at the Crossroads: The Legacy of E. Y. Mullins," *The Southern Baptist Theological Journal* 3, no. 4 (Winter 1999): 4–23, in which he discusses the long-term impact of Mullins' use of Personalism and Pragmatism on Baptist thought, particularly on the growing liberalism of the SBC throughout most of the twentieth century. In fact, Mohler's article served as the lead article in the journal issue devoted to E. Y. Mullins and his legacy on the Southern Baptist Convention. That same year, *Review and Expositor* likewise devoted an entire journal issue to Mullins and his legacy, but presented from the point of view of Southern Baptist moderates. As will be shown below, Mullins' legacy is ambiguous at best as a result of his attempt to steer the middle course between Fundamentalism and Modernism. J. Gresham Machen critiqued Mullins' view of autonomy in the relationship between science, philosophy, and religion in a review article of Mullins' *The Christian Religion in Its Doctrinal Expression* ("The Relation of Religion to Science and Philosophy," *The Princeton Theological Review* 24 [1926]: 28–66).

biographical in nature. Thus, this dissertation seeks to break new ground in the study of these Southern Baptist thinkers.

Methodology

Explanation of Subjects

Various other Baptist thinkers from SBC seminaries and colleges, in addition to the ones chosen for this dissertation, merit an analysis of their metaphilosophical view. James P. Boyce (1827–1888), one of the founding fathers of Southern Seminary and its greatest statesman, was steeped in Scottish Common Sense Realism from his time at Princeton Seminary and the influence of the likes of Charles Hodge (1797–1878). Eric Rust (1910–1991) and William Mueller (1902–2001) were both professors of philosophy at Southern—Professor of Christian Philosophy and Professor of Philosophy of Religion respectively. Others who at least taught in the realm of philosophy in the past include Calvin Goodspeed (1842–1912), Albert Venting, Jr. (1883–1965), and Dale Moody (1915–1992). More recent SBC seminary philosophers include Douglas K. Blount, Theodore J. Cabal, Mark Coppenger, William A. Dembski, Steve W. Lemke, Bruce A. Little, Ronald Nash (1936–2006), and many others. The four I have chosen, though, are those whose reputations are established in Baptist tradition and who received their education, particularly their graduate-level work, from Southern Baptist institutions. The work they have done as philosophers helped make possible the work Baptist philosophers do today. Three thinkers, however, deserve further justification for their exclusion.

First, one name that is glaringly absent from this dissertation is that of Eric C. Rust. His exclusion from this dissertation is not intended to slight his work as a Christian philosopher. No doubt his presence was felt the moment he stepped foot at Southern Seminary as he sought to meet a need felt by Baptists for decades—the reconciliation of the relationship between faith and science. Indeed, many Baptists in particular and Christians in general can relate to Rust’s emphasis on bridging faith and science, but such

a focus would detract from the thesis of this dissertation. Further, William L. Hardee's dissertation, "The Christian Philosophy of Eric Charles Rust: A Critical Evaluation," accomplishes what this dissertation sets out to do with Mullins, Newport, Cunningham, and Bush. In his dissertation, Hardee provides a detailed discussion of Rust's view on the nature of philosophy, the nature of Christian philosophy, and the relationship of faith and reason.¹⁵ Any attempt on the part of this dissertation to analyze Rust's metaphilosophy would only repeat the work of Hardee.

Second, anyone with a working knowledge of Baptist history will immediately note that one of the four Baptist thinkers chosen for this dissertation is not a Baptist philosopher—E. Y. Mullins. Indeed this claim is correct, for Mullins served, in addition to his role as president of Southern Seminary, as a professor of theology—a role he considered of such importance that he "would always consider himself a theologian as well as president of" Southern Seminary.¹⁶ Nevertheless, his use and development of William James' pragmatism and Borden Parker Bowne's personalism merits a study of his thought as an attempt to use philosophy in the service of theology. Further, Mullins' influence on Baptist thought for subsequent generations warrants a closer look at his view of the nature of philosophy.

Last, current Southern Baptist philosophers are not the subject of this dissertation because their work is ongoing. While a study of their metaphilosophical views would undoubtedly be fruitful and useful, such a study is left to others for another time. Additionally, an analysis of contemporary Baptist thinkers would include a rather large number of philosophers relative to the number of those in the early- to mid-twentieth century. A discussion of the reasons for the growth in the number of Baptist philosophers goes beyond the purpose of this paper, but undoubtedly the rise in the

¹⁵William L. Hardee, "The Christian Philosophy of Eric Charles Rust: A Critical Evaluation" (Ph.D. diss., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1985), 28–52.

¹⁶Mohler, "Baptist Theology at the Crossroads," 7.

number of institutions of higher education since the mid-twentieth century is one such reason, as is Alvin Plantinga's influence in the resuscitation of Christian philosophy. It should suffice that a survey of late-twentieth and early-twenty-first century Baptist philosophers and their metaphilosophical views would be too broad for a Ph.D. thesis.

Sources Used

The analysis of the metaphilosophies of Mullins, Newport, Cunningham, and Bush depends primarily upon a review of the published works of each thinker, in particular their books, journal articles, and published sermons (when applicable). On occasion, reference is made to other primary sources that are not published, but are referenced in other works (such as John Newport's unpublished paper titled "Baptist Thought and Philosophy").¹⁷ Secondary works are referenced, not as an aid in interpreting the thought of each subject of analysis, but to help bring in other perspectives or to add clarity.

Dissertation Outline

The remainder of Chapter 1 presents an overview of how philosophers and theologians have viewed the nature of philosophy since the inception of Western philosophy. Because of the broad nature of this historical survey, brief mention is made of philosophers discussed in Overgaard, Gilbert, and Burwood. The chapter then closes by presenting a working model with which to analyze the metaphilosophy of the subjects of this dissertation.

Chapters 2–5 provide an analysis of Mullins, Newport, Cunningham, and Bush in regard to how they answered, "What is philosophy?" Each chapter begins with the historical context and a short biographical sketch of each thinker. An analysis of their

¹⁷John Newport, "Baptist Thought and Philosophy" (paper presented at the Conference on Teaching Philosophy in Southern Baptist Colleges and Universities, Ouachita Baptist University, Arkadelphia, Arkansas, April 1986), box 78, John Newport Archives, B. H. Carroll Theological Institute, Arlington, Texas.

metaphilosophical view then follows based upon the model provided by Overgaard, Gilbert, and Burwood. Each analysis is followed by a discussion of their resulting views on the relationship between faith and reason, the possibility of a Christian philosophy, and the role of philosophy in the life of the believer. The dissertation concludes with Chapter 6.

An Historical Overview: Philosophers on Philosophy

Despite the growing discussion of metaphilosophy since the early twentieth century, it is a relatively new discipline of philosophy that has garnered attention for only a small fraction of Western philosophy's long history. In fact, the word "metaphilosophy" is not mentioned in philosophical works until approximately the last one hundred years, which raises the question: Why is the study of the nature of philosophy an issue now despite the rich history of Western philosophy? Something happened such that philosophy turned its gaze on itself, making metaphilosophy not only a discipline in its own right, but a necessary one as well. In order to understand why metaphilosophy has recently become a topic of interest, an historical overview of how philosophers have viewed philosophy is presented to set the context of twentieth-century philosophy.

Philosophy before Descartes: The Love of Wisdom

Thales of Miletus (ca. 624 BC–546 BC) is widely regarded as "the first philosopher of Western civilization," when he "opened up a new area of thought" by moving beyond the prevalent mythology of his day through the contemplation of the nature of things.¹⁸ Shortly after Thales' claim that water was the source of the many—the One—others followed suite, speculating about the ultimate reality of the universe. Early pre-Socratic thinkers sought a unifying principle for the universe based upon observable

¹⁸Samuel E. Stumpf and James Fieser, *Philosophy: History and Problems* (Boston: McGraw-Hill Higher Education, 2003), 8. Much of the discussion in this section relies upon the work of Stumpf.

phenomenon. As such, early Greek philosophical inquiry consisted of matters that are considered today to be scientific in nature, for no distinction between scientific and philosophical inquiry existed in Western philosophy's infancy.¹⁹ The inclusion of scientific inquiry as a form of philosophical investigation remained virtually intact until approximately the nineteenth century when natural science became a discipline in its own right.²⁰

Though speculative investigation among the Greek thinkers produced numerous theories, no consensus existed regarding the ultimate principle of the universe. Philosophers eventually shifted their intellectual gaze to the problem of human knowledge, the possibility of universal truth, and the concept of goodness.²¹ But, through the influence of the Sophists and others, skepticism arose about reason's ability to discover any objective truth. Despite the Sophists' appeal to subjective truth, Socrates' (470 BC–399 BC) commitment to objective truth ultimately set the tone for Western philosophy for centuries to come.²² Abstract concepts such as “beauty” and “goodness,” and the search for universal definitions became the perennial issues of philosophy. Socrates is also credited with employing the philosophic method of inductive argumentation, which has been employed by philosophers ever since.²³ While the Sophists and Socrates elevated epistemology to a fundamental area of study for

¹⁹Stumpf and Fieser, *Philosophy*, 7.

²⁰Michael Dummett, *The Nature and Future of Philosophy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 2–4. Richard Rorty states that the distinction between philosophy and science began to be widely held after Kant (Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979], 132).

²¹Stumpf and Fieser, *Philosophy*, 29.

²²*Ibid.*, 35.

²³Frederick Copleston, *A History of Philosophy*, vol. 1, *Greece and Rome—From the Pre-Socratics to Plotinus* (New York: Image Books, 1993), 105.

philosophy, the work of the first Greek philosophers—metaphysics²⁴—would continue as another essential subject in the quest for truth.

In addition to his contribution to the scope and method of philosophy, Socrates' teleological approach to his pursuit for truth provided the goal for subsequent philosophers. Socrates did not seek truth just for the sake of truth or “as a matter of pure speculation”; rather, he did so “with a view to the good life.” If one were to “act well, one must know what the good life is.”²⁵ Philosophy, then, was not just an academic endeavor—an attempt to gain knowledge for the sake of knowledge. Rather, it was a means to ordering one's life. Socrates' purposive pursuit for a conduct of life gave philosophy a goal for its endeavors and a third area of philosophical investigation—ethics.

While ancient Western philosophers contributed to the goal, method and scope of philosophy, they seemingly spent more effort on actual philosophizing than on defining and clarifying the nature of philosophy itself. The etymological meaning of “philosophy” illustrates how the Greeks answered the question: “What is philosophy?” In Greek, “philosophy” is a compound noun including the words *philo*—“love”—and *Sophia*—“wisdom.” Philosophy, then, was the “love of wisdom,” and what one loves, they pursue; hence, philosophy was regarded as the pursuit of wisdom or truth.²⁶ Though

²⁴The term “metaphysics” refers to the study into the ultimate reality—the “really real.” Though “metaphysics” was coined by Aristotle, it can aptly apply to the work of the early Greek philosophers.

²⁵Copleston, *A History of Philosophy*, 1:107.

²⁶The definition of “philosophy” as “the love of wisdom” is the classical view of philosophy (John Jenkins, *Knowledge and Faith in Thomas Aquinas* [Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1997], 6). According to Diogenes Laertius, the first ancient Greek thinker to call himself a “philosopher” was Pythagoras: “for, said he, no man is wise, but God alone.... All too quickly the study was called wisdom and its professor a sage, to denote his attainment of mental perfection; while the student who took it up was a philosopher or lover of wisdom” (Diogenes Laertius *Lives of Eminent Philosophers* I.13, ed. E. H. Warmington, trans. R. D. Hicks, The Loeb Classical Library, vol. 184 [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1972], 13). Hicks notes in footnote a that Laertius' claim regarding Pythagoras is confirmed by Clement, *Stromata* i. 61 (12). See also Kenneth S. Guthrie, *The Pythagorean Sourcebook and Library: An Anthology of Ancient Writings Which Relate to Pythagoras and Pythagorean Philosophy* (Grand Rapids: Phanes Press, 1987): “Others before had called themselves wise (*sophos*), but Pythagoras was the first to call himself a philosopher, literally a *lover of wisdom*” (30, emphasis original). Lastly, reference Peter Gorman, *Pythagoras: A Life* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979), 38, 44.

numerous philosophical systems were erected, dismantled, or modified throughout the centuries following Socrates, philosophers in general remained undeterred in their pursuit for ultimate truth.

Particular to the study of this dissertation is the general attitude of early Christians toward philosophy. By the time of the birth of Christianity and the early church, Western philosophy was over five centuries old. Many early Christian thinkers were exposed to Greek thought and employed philosophical ideas for the support and explanation of the teachings found in scripture without conforming Christianity to a particular philosophical system.²⁷ Christian thinkers such as Justin Martyr (100–165), Irenaeus (130–202), Clement of Alexandria (150–215), and Origen of Alexandria (182–254) utilized philosophical ideas in defense of Christianity. Later thinkers such as Augustine of Hippo (354–430) and Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274) utilized various aspects of philosophy in support of Christian doctrine and developed original philosophical ideas as well.²⁸

A common view among early Christians was that any true idea in philosophy—that which did not contradict revelation—was harmonious with Christian theology. Some believers, though, went as far as viewing Christianity as the true philosophy. In the biography of his sister Macrina (ca. 330–379), Gregory of Nyssa (335–394) gives several accounts of her leading a family member to the “ideal of philosophy.” For instance, Macrina, known for the exemplary life she led, provided her

²⁷The idea that the early church did not Hellenize Christianity is not without debate. While there is some overlap in Greek and Christian thought, it is the author’s view that any similarity is due not to Christianity’s accommodation to Greek philosophy. Rather, it is because any truth—whether found in Platonism, Epicureanism, or whatever—is ultimately grounded in the person of Jesus Christ and expressed in the Word of God. That is, all truth comes from God through his general revelation and divine revelation. A pagan, therefore, can discover truth that is part of God’s general revelation, and this truth will harmonize with Christian belief, which finds its source in God the Father given through the Son, Jesus Christ.

²⁸Ted Cabal, “The Influence of Plato on Theology” (classroom lecture, 28510—*History of Philosophy I: Classical & Medieval*, 4 September 2007, electronic file). Not every early church father viewed philosophy with a favorable eye. For example, Tertullian, though familiar with Greek thought, is commonly known for his antagonistic attitude toward philosophy.

own mother “great guidance...towards the same goal, namely that of philosophy, drawing her on little by little to the immaterial, more perfect life.”²⁹ When her brother Basil the Great (329/30–379) returned from school where he was trained in rhetoric, he was “monstrously conceited” about his rhetorical skill and full of self-importance. Macrina “swiftly” won Basil over “to the ideal of philosophy” such that he renounced his worldly appearance and his admiration of rhetorical skills. Basil, “on his own accord,” changed to a life of manual labor and of “complete poverty”—ways of life “which would tend without impediment towards virtue.”³⁰ Likewise, Macrina took her younger brother Peter under her wing and he “was lifted up towards the sublime goal of philosophy.”³¹ Throughout the biographical account are more instances where Macrina led others toward the ideal of philosophy.

According to Kevin Corrigan, the belief that Christianity is the ideal philosophy (as found in *The Life of St. Macrina*) is in sharp contrast to today’s narrow conception of philosophy. According to Gregory and Macrina, the roots of philosophy “lie in a living tradition which includes and, for the Christian, perfects the best of pagan thought.” Philosophy is a “spirit of living wisdom which embraces the whole of human life”—a life given entirely to God. This life of true philosophy consists in a “vibrant intellect,” continuous study and inquiry, culminating in “the divine love of a person, Christ.”³² For Plato (427 BC–347 BC), the goal of philosophy was the conversion of oneself wholly to the Good.³³ Macrina, on the other hand, and other early Christians

²⁹Gregory of Nyssa, *The Life of St. Macrina*, trans. Kevin Corrigan (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2005), 26.

³⁰Ibid.

³¹Ibid., 31.

³²Ibid., 15.

³³Ibid., 58n10.

visualized the goal of philosophy as the progression of one's self "into true loving union with God."³⁴

Though not every early Christian held such an ideal view of philosophy, the general approach, at least among early Christian thinkers, was a careful adaptation of philosophy in the service of Christian beliefs and doctrine. Theology and philosophy became intricately intertwined, particularly in the Middle Ages³⁵ with the likes of Augustine, Boethius (480–524/25), Anselm of Canterbury (1033–1109), Peter Abelard (1079–1142), and Aquinas. Philosophy, however, would soon lose its place of prominence as a discipline among theologians and secular scholars alike shortly after the birth of modern science, leading many to question the relevance and purpose of philosophy. Christians in general would soon become distrustful of philosophy, skeptical of its influence on the traditional beliefs and doctrines of Christianity.

Philosophy from Descartes to James: An Uncertain Identity

While Descartes is generally viewed as the father of modern philosophy,³⁶ Frederick Copleston emphasizes that it was primarily the works of Descartes and Francis

³⁴Gregory of Nyssa, *The Life of St. Macrina*, 17.

³⁵If one takes the beginning of the Middle Ages to begin at the Fall of Rome (see Paul V. Spade, "Medieval Philosophy," in *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* [Winter 2012], ed. Gyula Klima, Jack Zupko, and Thomas Williams, para. 1, accessed October 29, 2013, <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/medieval-philosophy/>), then Augustine lies right on the cusp of the dawning of the Middle Ages. While his work can be viewed as late-Patristic writing, his work influenced much medieval thinking, warranting his place among medieval thinkers.

³⁶John Cottingham says of Descartes, "Beyond question, Descartes was the chief architect of the seventeenth-century intellectual revolution which destabilized the traditional doctrines of medieval and Renaissance scholasticism, and laid down the philosophical foundations for what we think of as the 'modern' scientific age" ("Descartes, Rene," in *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy*, 2nd ed., ed. Ted Honderich [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005], 201). Elsewhere, Cottingham credits Descartes as founding the modern age ("Descartes, Rene," in *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*, 2nd ed., ed. Robert Audi [Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 2006], 223). Simon Blackburn credits him as the "father of modern philosophy" ("Descartes, Rene," in *Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy*, 2nd ed. [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005], 95). Enrique Chavez-Arviso labels him as one of the greatest Western philosophers, second only to Plato ("Introduction," in *Descartes: Key Philosophical Writings*, ed. Enrique Chavez-Arviso, trans. Elizabeth S. Haldane and G. R. T. Ross [London: Wordsworth Classics of World Literature, 1997], vii).

Bacon (1561–1626) that indicate a clear break between medieval and post-medieval philosophy with “each possess[ing] important characteristics which the other does not possess.”³⁷ Writing at roughly the same time, Descartes and Bacon voiced their dissatisfaction with philosophy’s lack of progress in the advancement of truth, thus beginning a trend among philosophers to decry philosophy’s impotence and to attempt to set the beleaguered discipline on the right course to success. Dissatisfaction with philosophy grew to the extent that some philosophers came to doubt philosophy’s ability to obtain knowledge, particularly in metaphysical issues.³⁸ As such, the scope and purpose of philosophy was increasingly narrowed relative to that of classical philosophy.

In the preface of *Principles of Philosophy*, Descartes defined philosophy as “the study of wisdom,” which consists of an understanding of “prudence in affairs,” and “a perfect knowledge of all things that man can know” for conduct, health, and the arts. One derives this knowledge from first principles, or first “causes.”³⁹ Like Socrates and the ancient philosophers, Descartes held that philosophy is necessary “for the regulation of our manners and for our conduct in life”⁴⁰ and serves a preeminent role over all other sciences.⁴¹

³⁷Frederick Copleston, *A History of Philosophy*, vol. 4, *Modern Philosophy—From Descartes to Leibniz* (New York: Image Books, 1994), 1.

³⁸The survey of the various views on the nature of philosophy from Descartes to the early twentieth century is largely indebted to the work of Overgaard, Gilbert, and Burwood, *An Introduction to Metaphilosophy*. Here it should be noted that the distinctions between the various disciplines of philosophy: metaphysics, epistemology, etc., is a recent phenomenon. Generally, philosophy was divided into speculative philosophy (also known as metaphysics) and natural philosophy (which what one would call natural science today). The views presented in this section all deal with speculative philosophy.

³⁹Descartes, “Principles of Philosophy,” in *Descartes: Key Philosophical Writings*, ed. Enrique Chavez-Arviso, trans. Elizabeth S. Haldane and G. R. T. Ross (London: Wordsworth Classics of World Literature, 1997), 261.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, 262.

⁴¹*Ibid.*, 269. Descartes provides the illustration of a tree in which the roots represent metaphysics, the trunk represents physics, and the branches all other sciences.

Though Descartes' attitude toward philosophy is relatively positive, it is his philosophical method that ushered in modern philosophy. Confronted with the number of false opinions he held as true—opinions upon which he built his beliefs—Descartes sought to “raze everything to the ground” in an effort to find certainty. In other words, he desired those truths one can know such that their falsity was impossible.⁴² Once he established certainty independent of any outside authority, these truths would serve as a foundation upon which all other beliefs were to be built.⁴³ Descartes' method of doubt led him to his “rational scheme”—the process of directing one's reason to discover unknown truths.⁴⁴ Though confident in the possibilities of philosophy, his attempt to do philosophy anew essentially dismissed the centuries of philosophy prior to his day—a theme that subsequent philosophers would continue and develop.

John Locke (1632–1704) followed Descartes in his rational method by bringing all opinions and beliefs before the “tribunal of reason”⁴⁵ in order to “inquire into the origin, certainty, and extent of human knowledge, together with the grounds and degrees of belief, opinion, and assent.”⁴⁶ Knowledge, according to Locke, derives from common experience (as opposed to foundational truths) and the “perception of the operations of our own mind within us.”⁴⁷ For Locke, his method allowed for progress in the pursuit of knowledge, leaving less room for skepticism.⁴⁸ David Hume (1711–1776),

⁴²Descartes, “Meditation One: Concerning Those Things That Can Be Called into Doubt,” in *Meditations of First Philosophy in Which the Existence of God and the Distinction Between the Soul and the Body are Demonstrated*, 3rd ed., trans. Donald A. Cress (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1993), 13.

⁴³Stumpf and Fieser, *Philosophy*, 223.

⁴⁴*Ibid.*, 225.

⁴⁵Copleston, *A History of Philosophy*, vol. 5, *Modern Philosophy: The British Philosophers From Hobbes to Hume* (New York: Image Books, 1994), 69.

⁴⁶John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, collated and annotated by Alexander Campbell Fraser (New York: Dover Publications, 1959), 1:26.

⁴⁷*Ibid.*, 1:123.

⁴⁸Copleston, *A History of Philosophy*, 5:72.

however, was less optimistic regarding the progress of philosophy up to his day. In his book *An Inquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, the British philosopher does not see philosophy as having contributed “either to the advantage or pleasure of society; while [the philosopher] lives remote from communication with mankind, and is wrapped up in principles and notions equally remote from their comprehension.”⁴⁹ The abstract philosophy (what Hume calls metaphysics) produced by philosophers is detached from everyday life and “is objected to, not only as painful and fatiguing, but as the inevitable source of uncertainty and error.” As such, metaphysics is not properly called a science, for instead of being the result of accurate and just reasoning, it derives from “the fruitless efforts of human vanity ... the craft of popular superstitions.”⁵⁰ Nevertheless, Hume remained hopeful that philosophy could be fruitful once again; metaphysics could be done, and done well, by freeing it from “abstruse questions” and inquiring into the abilities and limits of human understanding, after which one could “cultivate true metaphysics with care.”⁵¹

Like Hume, Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) perceived all previous metaphysical philosophy as worthless and that before one studied metaphysics, they should first determine the possibility of such an investigation. In *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant claims that metaphysics, which falls under the realm of reason,⁵² has made “miserable progress” and “no one system yet brought forward as far as regard its true aim, can it be

⁴⁹David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding: With a Letter from a Gentleman to His Friend in Edinburgh and Hume's Abstract of a Treatise of Human Nature*, 2nd ed., ed. Eric Steinberg (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1993), 3.

⁵⁰*Ibid.*, 5.

⁵¹*Ibid.*, 6–8.

⁵²In his *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant says of reason that it lies beyond the sensible in the supra-sensible and is beyond experience; high value is placed on the investigation of reason, which focuses on the fields of God, freedom of the will, and immortality. Further, metaphysics seeks to dissect and analytically illustrate *a priori* conception, which are then used as principles upon which to add other conceptions (Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. J. M. D. Meiklejohn [Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 1990], 4–5, 11).

said that this science really exists.”⁵³ Elsewhere, he lamented that it was “ridiculous” that while other sciences were “continually advancing, [metaphysics]...pretends to be Wisdom incarnate, for whose oracle every one inquires, without gaining a single step.”⁵⁴

The problem with the lack of progress in metaphysics resulted from philosophers studying the problems of metaphysics without any foundation. What philosophers should have done was to first find out how human understanding arrives at *a priori* conceptions, and “the extent, validity, and worth which they may possess.”⁵⁵ Only then could one pursue metaphysics within the limits of reason.⁵⁶ Based upon this foundation, one should employ Newton’s scientific method⁵⁷ in inquiring into metaphysical questions by first “clarifying the confused concepts of experience and giving them adequate and abstract expression; but he may then be able to proceed to inference” and build up metaphysics.⁵⁸

⁵³Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 13.

⁵⁴Immanuel Kant, *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics That Can Qualify as a Science* (Chicago: Open Court, 1997), 2.

⁵⁵Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 5.

⁵⁶Kant states in his *Critique* that “pure reason” can be used in the “foundation and construction of all sciences which contain theoretical knowledge *a priori* of objects” (*Critique of Pure Reason*, 13). He defines “pure reason” as “the faculty which contains the principles of cognizing anything absolutely *a priori*” (*Ibid.*, 15).

Kant does not seek to do away with abstract philosophy; he actually believes that one can do abstract philosophy and that it can have value in the pursuit of knowledge. He concedes that the mind is “naturally disposed” to metaphysics, and that there have been those who have sought to answer metaphysical questions that naturally come up, but these attempts “have always met with unavoidable contradictions.” One must regard all past metaphysical philosophy as “non-existent” (*Ibid.*, 13–14).

⁵⁷Kant was enamored with Newtonian physics and wrote several treatises of a scientific nature. He believed that the progress of the natural sciences since Newton could be replicated in metaphysical philosophy (Frederick Copleston, *A History of Philosophy*, vol. 6, *Modern Philosophy: From the French Enlightenment to Kant* [New York: Image Books, 1994], 181, 193).

⁵⁸*Ibid.*, 193.

Thomas Reid (1710–1796) likewise compared the progress of speculative philosophy to that of natural philosophy, arriving at virtually the same conclusion as those who preceded him:

There is a natural order in the progress of the sciences, and good reasons may be assigned why the philosophy of the body [i.e., natural philosophy] should be the *elder sister* to that of mind [i.e., speculative philosophy], and of a quicker growth; but the last hath the principle of life no less than the first, and will grow up, though slowly, to maturity. The remains of ancient philosophy upon this subject, are venerable ruins, carrying the marks of genius and industry, sufficient to inflame, but not to satisfy, our curiosity.⁵⁹

It was not until the work of Descartes and others after him that philosophical discoveries were made, and, despite the differing conclusions and the skepticism of some (i.e. Hume), “they have all given light, and cleared the way to those who shall come after them.”⁶⁰ However, unlike Descartes, Hume, and Kant, Reid maintained that the root problem for philosophy was not that it did not employ a rigorous method like the sciences. Rather, speculative philosophy’s lack of progress was due to “the votaries of this Philosophy, from a natural prejudice in her favour, have endeavoured to extend her jurisdiction beyond its just limits, and to call to her bar the dictates of Common Sense.”⁶¹ In other words, the problem stems primarily from philosophers neglecting to bring their conclusions before the tribunal of common sense and for employing reason beyond its given limits. Speculative philosophy, then, rightly employed, can lead to progress: “We ought never to despair of human genius, but rather to hope, that, in time, it may produce a system of the powers and operations of the human mind, no less certain than those of optics or astronomy.”⁶²

⁵⁹Thomas Reid, “Preface,” in *Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man*, ed. Derek R. Brookes (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2002), 13. Emphasis original.

⁶⁰*Ibid.*

⁶¹Thomas Reid, “Introduction,” in *An Inquiry into the Human Mind On the Principles of Common Sense*, ed. Derek R. Brookes (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1997), 19.

⁶²Reid, *Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man*, 13–14.

G. W. F. Hegel⁶³ (1770–1831) stands in contrast to the philosophers mentioned above in the way he viewed the various competing philosophies of the past and of his day. Such disparity indeed existed, but rather than pointing to the impotence of philosophy, the fractured nature of philosophy actually pointed to the need for philosophy.⁶⁴ Furthermore, unlike his predecessors, Hegel did not view the various philosophies as independent of each other; rather, each one “complements each other, and displays internal incoherences that can only be resolved by the transition to another philosophy.”⁶⁵ Hegel believed that the philosophy he developed synthesized all truths from other philosophies such that his was the universal philosophy.⁶⁶ Virtually absent in Hegel is any form of skepticism or pessimism regarding the nature of philosophy; his optimism, however, did not stem the tide of those who viewed philosophy as fractured, anemic, and in need of reworking.

Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900) declared philosophy to be faulty at its core, and the only remedy was to reduce it to rubble. “The fundamental faith of the metaphysicians is *the faith in opposite values*. It has not even occurred to the most cautious among them that one might have a doubt right here at the threshold where it was surely most necessary.” But, “who has the will to concern himself with such dangerous

⁶³ By the time of Hegel, due to the growth of then natural sciences, natural philosophy was viewed as science, and psychology was viewed as its own discipline distinct from speculative philosophy (Michael Inwood, “Philosophy,” in *A Hegel Dictionary* [Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1997], 219).

⁶⁴ Frederick Copleston, *A History of Philosophy*, vol. 7, *Modern Philosophy: From the Post-Kantian Idealists to Marx, Kierkegaard, and Nietzsche* (New York: Image Book, 1994), 166.

⁶⁵ Inwood, “Philosophy,” 221.

⁶⁶ Ibid. Laurence Dickey, “Hegel on Religion and Philosophy,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Hegel*, ed. Frederick C. Beiser (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993) provides a fascinating analysis of Hegel’s development of his speculative philosophy in response to the speculative philosophy of his day. Hegel presented speculative philosophy as a “definite methodical procedure” for making “what is of substantive value” in a “spiritual” sense both “intelligible” and “communicable” in a pedagogic sense...Hegel offered speculative philosophy as a method for teaching students how to think.” The end of Hegel’s method for teaching was threefold: he sought to raise philosophy to the level of science; raising philosophy to the level of science was “a way of giving man back the dignity of a ‘philosophical consciousness’; and, he sought to ‘remind men of the religious dimension of their nature’” (306-7).

maybes?”⁶⁷ Philosophers were guilty of not being “honest enough in their work, although they make a lot of virtuous noise when the problem of truthfulness is touched even remotely.” Their truth claims, rather than being objective, were just “an assumption, a hunch, indeed a kind of ‘inspiration’—most often a desire of the heart that has been filtered and made abstract—that they defend with reason they have sought after fact.”⁶⁸ Every great philosophy was merely “the personal confession of its author and a kind of involuntary and unconscious memoir,”⁶⁹ with each motivated not by a “drive to knowledge,” but some other motive for self-gain or preservation; thus, selfishness drives one to “understanding (and misunderstanding).”⁷⁰

Nietzsche did not end with the destruction of speculative philosophy; rather, he sought to build philosophy anew. What was needed, and what Nietzsche hoped for, was “a new species of philosophers, such as have somehow another a converse taste and propensity from those we have known so far—philosophers of the dangerous ‘maybe’ in every sense,” and such philosophers are “coming up.”⁷¹ In the process of discovering “what it means to be true,”⁷² Nietzsche stressed that “true knowledge is a matter of method.”⁷³ If one utilizes proper method in the search for truth, one attains certainty and does not lose himself in “absolute knowledge or in the negativity of a nonknowledge that

⁶⁷Friedrich Nietzsche, “On the Prejudices of Philosophers” I.2, in *Basic Writings of Nietzsche*, trans. and ed. Walter Kaufman (New York: The Modern Library, 1992), 200. Emphasis original.

⁶⁸Nietzsche, “On the Prejudices of Philosophers” I.5, 202.

⁶⁹Ibid. I.6, 203.

⁷⁰Ibid. I.6, 203–4.

⁷¹Nietzsche, “On the Prejudice of Philosophers” I.2, 200–201.

⁷²Karl Jaspers, *Nietzsche: An Introduction to the Understanding of His Philosophical Activity*, trans. Charles F. Wallraff and Frederick J. Schmitz (Tucson, AZ: The University of Arizona Press, 1966), 171. Laurence Lampert states that “On the Prejudices of Philosophers” is Nietzsche’s “unargued assertions of a new basis for philosophy” (Laurence Lampert, “Nietzsche’s Philosophy and True Religion,” in *A Companion to Nietzsche*, ed. Keith A. Pearson [Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006], 133).

⁷³Jaspers, *Nietzsche*, 172.

is skeptical of everything.”⁷⁴ Ultimately, science “presupposes the passion for knowledge,” which is essentially philosophy. Philosophy, then, is the search for knowledge by means of the scientific method. Any truth that is to be found ought to unite science and philosophy.⁷⁵

The last philosopher to be considered in the overview of philosophers since Descartes is William James, a thinker who had significant influence on E. Y. Mullins. In Lecture I of *Pragmatism*, James admits that philosophy does not immediately connect with everyday life—“it ‘bakes no bread.’” Philosophy is fractured, “repugnant as its manners, its doubting and challenging, its quibbling and dialectics,” yet no one can do without its insights. James argued that the reason for conflicting philosophies was the temperament of each philosopher, which gave “him a stronger bias than any of his more strictly objective premises” and which caused one to see things in their own way while disregarding opposing views. Having pointed out the problem of philosophy, he saw “no reason to suppose that this strong temperamental vision is from now onward to count no longer in the history of beliefs.”⁷⁶

Another reason for the divergence in the various philosophies was the tendency of philosophers to emphasize empiricism over rationalism, or vice versa. Empiricism emphasizes facts, while rationalism emphasizes more of the religious aspects of life.⁷⁷ James sought to bridge the rational and the religious emphases—the “scientific loyalty to facts and willingness to take account of them...[and] the old confidence in human values and the resultant spontaneity.”⁷⁸ The result, then, was pragmatism which, for James, was

⁷⁴Jaspers, *Nietzsche*, 172.

⁷⁵*Ibid.*, 180.

⁷⁶William James, *Pragmatism* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1981), 8–9.

⁷⁷*Ibid.*, 10–11. James goes on to provide examples illustrating his distinction between the two prevalent types of philosophy of his day.

⁷⁸*Ibid.*, 13.

not a philosophy, but a method,⁷⁹ and which fit his penchant for “radical empiricism”—that philosophy draws from experience.⁸⁰

A common thread that runs the course of philosophy from Descartes through roughly the end of the nineteenth century is an acknowledgement (at the least) of speculative philosophy’s lack of progress in the advancement of truth—relative to that of natural philosophy—and a need for a new philosophical methodology. The methodology modern philosophers appealed to was that which mirrored the inductive scientific method. Yet, just as modern philosophy bemoaned the number of competing philosophies—both past and contemporary—it fared no better despite the efforts of many to resuscitate a seemingly dying discipline. As the twentieth century dawned, philosophy was not met with bright hope, but darker days.

Philosophy in the Twentieth Century: A Reduced Identity

The twentieth century witnessed a divide between what is now known as Analytic philosophy and Continental philosophy over philosophical methodology. In his “Introduction” for *Continental Philosophy in the Twentieth Century*, Richard Kearney illustrates the nature of the division by pointing to the fact that both Analytic and Continental philosophers appeal to Kant. Whereas Analytic philosophers give greater emphasis to the epistemological reading of Kant’s First *Critique*, Continental philosophers are drawn to the moral and aesthetic questioning of the Second and Third *Critiques*.⁸¹ In short, “continental thought is on balance more likely than Analytic thought to bypass the confines of pure reason, venturing into the liminal areas of noumenal

⁷⁹James, *Pragmatism*, 25.

⁸⁰Frederick Copleston, *A History of Philosophy*, vol. 8, *Modern Philosophy: Empiricism, Idealism and Pragmatism in Britain and America* (New York: Image Books, 1994), 332.

⁸¹Richard Kearney, “Introduction,” in *Continental Philosophy in the 20th Century*, ed. Richard Kearney, Routledge History of Philosophy, vol. 8 (London: Routledge, 2004), 3.

experience and dialectic.”⁸² As such, Continental philosophy maintained a more traditional view regarding the data of philosophy relative to Analytic philosophy in that it did not limit the field of philosophical investigation as had Analytic philosophy. As the twentieth century progressed, the divide between Analytic and Continental philosophy grew such that each is a school of thought in its own right, each with its own purpose and methodology.

Edmund Husserl, the “founder of the phenomenological movement,”⁸³ developed his philosophy out of the conviction that philosophy had “departed from its true goal ... to provide the best possible answers to human concerns, to deal rigorously with our quest for the highest values, and ... to develop the unique broad-range capacities of human reason.”⁸⁴ Husserl states in his *Phenomenology and the Crisis of Philosophy* that from its earliest times, philosophy claimed to be “rigorous science,” but it has never been able to live up to this claim.⁸⁵

Since Plato, philosophy’s attempt for scientific rigor resulted in only the reformulation of problems and methods. However, what “the highest interests of human culture demand [is] the development of a rigorously scientific philosophy,”⁸⁶ seeking, like Descartes, a firm foundation upon which to build.⁸⁷ For Husserl, the foundation that philosophy needed was the investigation toward “a scientific essential knowledge of consciousness, toward that which consciousness itself ‘is’ according to its essence” and

⁸²Kearney, “Introduction,” 3.

⁸³Richard Cobb-Stevens, “The Beginnings of Phenomenology: Husserl and His Predecessors,” in *Continental Philosophy in the 20th Century*, ed. Richard Kearney, Routledge History of Philosophy, vol. 8 (London: Routledge, 2004), 5.

⁸⁴Stumpf and Fieser, *History*, 448.

⁸⁵Edmund Husserl, *Phenomenology and the Crisis of Philosophy: Philosophy as Rigorous Science and Philosophy and the Crisis of European Man*, trans. Quentin Lauer (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1965), 71.

⁸⁶Husserl, *Phenomenology and the Crisis of Philosophy*, 116.

⁸⁷Copleston, *A History of Philosophy*, 7:434.

what consciousness means.⁸⁸ Husserl's scientific rigor was not empirical, but rational, for phenomenology can "only be essence investigation."⁸⁹

Martin Heidegger (1889–1976), who was Husserl's assistant at the University of Freiburg-im-Breisgau,⁹⁰ characterized philosophy as simultaneously historical recollection and reflection on the present.⁹¹ Philosophy does not necessarily seek to develop a more modern philosophy based upon an adaptation of or reaction to a particular philosophical system of the past. Nor does one choose a philosopher from the past just to "install [himself] in it as in the presumptive truth, in order then to tailor and supplement it ... for modern needs."⁹² Rather, the philosopher strives to possess "genuine understanding" by taking on "fundamental questions"—those that drive at "the understanding of what precedes everything else, what is earlier, prior to everything else."⁹³ Philosophy does not work in the abstract, but within the medium of "rigorous conceptual knowledge" with the goal of "apprehension of [existence] in freedom."⁹⁴

⁸⁸Husserl, *Phenomenology*, 89. Quentin Lauer, in his introduction to Husserl's *Phenomenology*, explains that those in the natural sciences seek "the establishment of 'laws' that will enable the scientist to predict what 'things' will do in given circumstances. Positive science simply is not interested in what 'things' are. However, when the science in question is philosophy, when the object under investigation is being ... the investigator cannot be satisfied with a knowledge only practically valid. It is the philosopher's task to penetrate to the deeper validity rooted in the very essence of the object under investigation, which essence, of course, is also the ultimate explanation for the way things act—because they are what they are" (45).

⁸⁹Ibid., 116.

⁹⁰Jacques Taminiaux, "Philosophy of Existence I: Heidegger," in *Continental Philosophy in the 20th Century*, ed. Richard Kearney, Routledge History of Philosophy, vol. 8 (London: Routledge, 2004), 39–40.

⁹¹Martin Heidegger, *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, trans. Michael Heim (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), 8.

⁹²Ibid., 8.

⁹³Ibid., 13.

⁹⁴Ibid., 18. The German word Heidegger uses for "existence" is *Dasein*.

Gabriel Marcel (1889–1973), whom Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908–1961) labeled as a Christian existentialist,⁹⁵ characterized the nature of philosophy as “a matter of venture and experience,” for one develops a philosophical system from human experience.⁹⁶ The philosopher does not reject scientific thinking nor the scientific method, but he does not limit himself to science’s limited field of investigation. According to Marcel, thinking begins with attention to what appears to a person, thus anything is open to philosophical investigation.⁹⁷ Questions such as those on despair and salvation demand one’s attention; such questions do not abandon reason, but demand a “thoughtfulness not reducible to scientific knowledge.”⁹⁸ Merleau-Ponty, who labeled himself as an atheistic existentialist, claims that philosophy allows one to see things in the world and in history “in all their clarity and in all their ambiguity.”⁹⁹ Philosophy is best done when it ceases to be “intellectualizing philosophy.”¹⁰⁰ Ultimately, philosophy is to serve as a guide to life.¹⁰¹

Though philosophers in the Continental tradition understood the data of philosophy to include all of human experience, philosophy had its limits. Henri Bergson (1859–1951) claimed that philosophy up to his time had lacked precision and did not fit

⁹⁵Maurice Merleau-Ponty, “The Humanism of Existentialism,” in *Classics of Western Philosophy*, 5th ed., ed. Steven M. Cahn (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1999), 1028.

⁹⁶William Desmond, “Philosophies of Religion: Marcel, Jaspers, Levinas,” in *Continental Philosophy in the 20th Century*, ed. Richard Kearney, Routledge History of Philosophy, vol. 8 (London: Routledge, 2004), 133.

⁹⁷*Ibid.*, 133–34.

⁹⁸*Ibid.*, 136.

⁹⁹Bernard Cullen, “Philosophy of Existence 3: Merleau-Ponty,” in *Continental Philosophy in the 20th Century*, ed. Richard Kearney, Routledge History of Philosophy, vol. 8 (London: Routledge, 2004), 118.

¹⁰⁰*Ibid.*

¹⁰¹Frederick Copleston, *A History of Philosophy*, vol. 9, *Modern Philosophy: From the French Revolution to Sartre, and Levi-Strauss* (New York: Image Books, 1994), 411.

the reality of life.¹⁰² Rather than philosophy being based on analysis (“the reduction of the complex to its simple constituents”¹⁰³), it is based upon intuition—the direct awareness of reality.¹⁰⁴ Whereas Bergson finds philosophy’s limitations in its application, Jacques Derrida (1930–2004) locates it in what philosophy can communicate about the value of presence.¹⁰⁵ Western philosophy has, without question, assumed that meaning requires vocal expression—“the spoken word coincides with its sense, disappears as it delivers up its meaning...and attests to the animating presence of the intending, meaning-giving consciousness of the speaker.”¹⁰⁶ Written word, however, provides difficulty when communicating any metaphysical truth, for the written text is a “worldly *remainder* in the form of *script* or *text* which invites repeated but repeatedly different readings without further corrective.”¹⁰⁷ Thus, philosophy is unable to “ever establish itself successfully as uniquely philosophical, and therefore opens it to scrutiny from non-philosophical agencies.”¹⁰⁸

The works of Bertrand Russell (1872–1970) and Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889–1951) ushered in Analytic philosophy, which would eventually come to dominate philosophy in Britain and the United States. The philosophy first birthed in Britain

¹⁰²Copleston, *A History of Philosophy*, 9:180.

¹⁰³*Ibid.*, 9:181.

¹⁰⁴*Ibid.*, 9:180–81.

¹⁰⁵Geoffrey Bennington explains: “Derrida is concerned to argue something like this: the self-identifying tradition of Western philosophy (“Western metaphysics,” “onto-theology”) is, as Heidegger argued, dominated by the value of *presence*. Whatever its perception of the complexities involved, and whatever its doctrinal inclination, metaphysics seeks out some supreme value which is inseparable from this value of presence, whatever particular content it may otherwise be supposed to exhibit” (“Derrida,” in *A Companion to Continental Philosophy*, ed. Simon Critchley and William R. Schroeder, Blackwell Companions to Philosophy [Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1998], 549–50).

¹⁰⁶*Ibid.*, 550.

¹⁰⁷*Ibid.*, emphasis original.

¹⁰⁸*Ibid.*, 554, emphasis original.

shifted the focus of investigation from that of thought to that of language.¹⁰⁹ Michael Dummett explains why the shift in focus to language: “It is in thought that we conceive of reality. The philosopher is concerned with the nature of reality, and hence with how we conceive of it. He must therefore occupy himself with the clarification of human thought.”¹¹⁰ Each thinker, past and present, saw the contradictions and disagreements that characterized philosophy, and emphasized the scientific method with a particular emphasis on linguistics.

Bertrand Russell defined the purpose of philosophy as “merely the attempt to answer ... ultimate questions ... critically, after exploring all that makes such questions puzzling, and after realizing all the vagueness and confusion that underlie our ordinary understanding.”¹¹¹ The philosopher, then, is concerned with “humanity as a whole.”¹¹² Whereas previous modern philosophers sought to classify philosophy with science, Russell claimed that philosophy does not answer its questions dogmatically like science¹¹³ and that philosophy does not bring about definite knowledge like science.¹¹⁴

Though Russell’s emphasis on the scientific method was nothing new among philosophers of his day, he illustrates a changing attitude toward the result of philosophy. That is, philosophers in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries appealed to the scientific method as a necessity for philosophy because they thought the inductive method would produce for philosophy true knowledge. Just as the natural sciences give one true knowledge of the physical world, so could philosophy (by virtue of the scientific

¹⁰⁹Dummett, *The Nature and Future of Philosophy*, 87–88.

¹¹⁰*Ibid.*, 117.

¹¹¹Bertrand Russell, “The Problems of Philosophy,” in *Classics of Western Philosophy*, 5th ed., ed. Steven M. Cahn (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1999), 1007.

¹¹²Bertrand Russell, *The Art of Philosophizing* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1968), 34.

¹¹³Russell, “The Problems of Philosophy,” 1007.

¹¹⁴Russell, *The Art of Philosophizing*, 1.

method) give one true knowledge of the perennial questions of humankind. Russell, however, downgraded the result of philosophy from “certain” knowledge to “most likely” knowledge—philosophy “tells us how to proceed when we want to find out what may be true, or is *most likely to be true*, where it is impossible to know with certainty what *is* true.”¹¹⁵ Science alone gives one certain knowledge of the world; the questions left unanswered by science—the “residue” of science—is left to philosophy.¹¹⁶

If Russell viewed philosophy as the “residue of science,” Ludwig Wittgenstein dismissed any notion of philosophy as the pursuit of truth, relegating its role to merely that of clarifying any confusion in theories and ideas.¹¹⁷ Wittgenstein’s attitude toward the traditional view of philosophy is illustrated well in *Philosophical Investigations*: “A philosophical problem has the form: ‘I don’t know my way about.’”¹¹⁸ “When we do philosophy, we are like savages, primitive people, who hear the expressions of civilized men, put a false interpretation on them, and then draw the queerest conclusions from it.”¹¹⁹ The problem with philosophy, then, is its inappropriate use of language. Because earlier theories were misconstrued (due to unclear language) by their proponents, later thinkers took these misconceptions and developed them into new theories, only to

¹¹⁵Russell, *The Art of Philosophizing*, 1. Emphasis original.

¹¹⁶Bertrand Russell, *The Problems of Philosophy*, 155. That is, because science answers those questions that can produce certain answers, philosophy is left with those questions that do not have definite answers. Once philosophy determines a definite answer to a question, that particular question no longer belongs to philosophy, but becomes a separate science (155). In this diminished role, philosophy aims at knowledge which “gives unity and system to the body of sciences, and the kind which results from a critical examination of the grounds of our convictions, prejudices, and beliefs” (154). See also Bertrand Russell, *An Outline of Philosophy* (London, G. Allen & Unwin, 1927), 2: philosophy seeks to expose vagueness and contradictions; to critique scientific knowledge from a view point “less concerned with details and more concerned with the harmony of the whole body of special sciences”; and to reconstruct fundamental beliefs—common sense.

¹¹⁷Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations: The English Text of the Third Edition*, trans. G. E. M. Anscombe (New York: Prentice Hall, 1958), §109, 47; §125, 50; and §133, 51. This discussion of Ludwig Wittgenstein focuses only on the later Wittgenstein and not on the early Wittgenstein because Wittgenstein’s later work ultimately became more influential than his earlier work.

¹¹⁸*Ibid.* §123, 49.

¹¹⁹*Ibid.* §194, 79.

perpetuate the original error(s).¹²⁰ Rather than building new systems and perpetuating erroneous thinking, philosophy should “induce” one to abandon misconceptions.¹²¹ As such, philosophy does not draw any conclusions, but only “states what everyone admits.”¹²²

To clear up existing misconceptions, Wittgenstein suggested that the philosopher is to utilize linguistic rules to aim at clarity, such that “the philosophic problems should *completely* disappear.” Such a method gives philosophy “peace, so that it is no longer tormented by questions which bring *itself* in question.... Problems are solved (difficulties eliminated).”¹²³ Thus, the essential role of philosophy is clarification; no longer does it seek to explain problems. Instead, philosophy should describe them.¹²⁴

G. E. Moore (1873–1958) presented a similar view of the nature of philosophy as that of Wittgenstein. The most important aim of philosophy, according to Moore, is “to give a general description of the whole of the Universe, mentioning all the most important kinds of things which we know to be in it,” what we do not know to be in the universe, and the how they are related.¹²⁵ Moore appealed to common sense—beliefs about the universe that are generally held by mankind. Past philosophers erred by going beyond or contradicting common sense.¹²⁶ The cacophony of competing philosophical

¹²⁰Robert Fogelin, “Wittgenstein’s Critique of Philosophy,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Wittgenstein* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 34. See Wittgenstein, *PI* §11, 6.

¹²¹Fogelin, “Wittgenstein’s Critique of Philosophy,” 34.

¹²²Wittgenstein, *PI*, §599, 156.

¹²³*Ibid.*, §133, 51. Emphasis original.

¹²⁴*Ibid.* §109, 47. These descriptions “get their purpose” from philosophical problems, which are not empirical problems, but are solved “by looking into the workings of our language,” not by “giving new information, but by arranging what we have already known. Philosophy is a battle against the bewitchment of our intelligence by means of language” (§109, 47). Emphasis original.

¹²⁵G. E. Moore, *Some Main Problems of Philosophy* (New York: Humanities Press, 1953), 1.

¹²⁶*Ibid.*, 2. Moore lists the following beliefs as falling under the umbrella of common sense: that there are numerous and various kinds of material things, and that humans have minds and perform acts of consciousness (2–4). Philosophers contradict common sense by claiming that one does not know the

systems results from philosophers proving their own systems while refuting the views of others; instead, philosophers should provide descriptions of the entire universe.¹²⁷ That is, philosophers have dealt primarily with peripheral questions as opposed to those within the confines of common sense.¹²⁸ Philosophy ought to search for and determine the correct analysis of propositions—the analysis of concepts or of meanings.¹²⁹

Similarly, A. J. Ayer (1910–1989) contended that philosophy can only legitimately clarify the propositions of science “by exhibiting their logical relationships, and by defining the symbols which occur in them.”¹³⁰ The traditional disputes of philosophers are “as unwarranted as they are unfruitful.”¹³¹ Philosophy does not and cannot justify beliefs; the best it can do is “to show what are the criteria which are used to determine the truth or falsehood of any given proposition.”¹³² As such, philosophy as a discipline is a part of science in that it does not make speculative assertions, but only stays within that which can be scientifically investigated.¹³³ J. L. Austin (1911–1960), widely known for his theory of speech acts, exhibited confidence in Analytic philosophy when he claimed that though philosophy still had questions to answer, it would soon be finished as a discipline.¹³⁴

If nineteenth century philosophy accommodated philosophy to natural science, and Analytic philosophy minimized philosophy’s role to that of clarifying propositions,

existence of material things nor the existence of other minds or conscious acts (19–20).

¹²⁷Moore, *Some Main Problems of Philosophy*, 23–24.

¹²⁸*Ibid.*, 24.

¹²⁹Dummett, *The Nature and Future of Philosophy*, 101.

¹³⁰A. J. Ayer, *Language, Truth, and Logic* (New York: Dover Publications, 1952), 32.

¹³¹*Ibid.*, 33. Elsewhere he states that the reason for the numerous misunderstandings in philosophy is because philosophical statements have been expressed as if they were facts (57–58).

¹³²*Ibid.*, 48.

¹³³*Ibid.*, 151.

¹³⁴Overgaard, Gilbert, and Burwood, *An Introduction to Metaphilosophy*, 30.

Karl Popper (1902–1994) stripped it of any distinctive role or value apart from any other discipline. According to Popper, anyone and everyone is a philosopher, and one should be skeptical of professional and academic philosophers—the philosophical elite.¹³⁵ The only justification for the “philosophical elite” is “the existence of urgent and serious philosophical problems and the need to discuss them critically.”¹³⁶ Because everyone is a philosopher of sorts, there is no need to defend the need of professional philosophy through metaphilosophy—such endeavors are just “idealistic naval gazing”¹³⁷ and a result of bad philosophy.¹³⁸ The primary task of philosophy is intricately tied to the sciences and is to critically inquire into the findings and methods of the sciences.¹³⁹ Philosophy is “to speculate critically about the universe and about our place in the universe, including our powers of knowing and our powers for good and evil.”¹⁴⁰

¹³⁵Karl Popper, “How I See Philosophy,” in *The Owl of Minerva: Philosophers on Philosophy*, ed. Charles J. Bontempo and S. Jack Odell (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1975), 42.

¹³⁶Popper, “How I See Philosophy,” 45. Popper’s claim that everyone is a philosopher is qualified by his admission that there are those who more philosophic than others (42).

¹³⁷Overgaard, Gilbert, and Burwood, *An Introduction to Metaphilosophy*, 6.

¹³⁸Popper, “How I See Philosophy,” 42.

¹³⁹*Ibid.*, 53. Popper does concede that there is some value to academic philosophy, such as mathematical logic, but he charges that most philosophy is so narrow in focus that it misses the forest for the trees. Interestingly, Popper’s view of the method and questions of philosophy is presented negatively—what philosophy is not—more extensively than positively. He provides nine examples of what philosophy is not:

1. It is not “the solving of linguistic puzzles” (46).
2. It is not “a series of works of art, as striking and original pictures of the world” (46).
3. The history of philosophy is not “one of intellectual edifices in which all possible ideas are tried out, and in which truth may perhaps come to light as a by-product” (46-47).
4. It is not an attempt to analyze or clarify concepts, words, or languages (47).
5. It is not “a way of being clever” (47).
6. It is not a way of leading others out of “philosophical perplexities” (47).
7. It is not a study in how to express things more clearly or precisely (47).
8. It is not an attempt to set up a framework for solving problems that will arise in the near or distant future (47).
9. It is not “an expression of the spirit of the time” (47).

¹⁴⁰*Ibid.*, 55.

Richard Rorty (1931–2007) mirrors Popper with his skepticism of academic philosophy and his divergence from the traditional view of philosophy. In *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, Rorty distinguishes between systematic and edifying philosophy. Systematic philosophy consists of “mainstream” philosophers and centers on epistemology, taking “its point of departure from suspicion about the pretensions of epistemology.”¹⁴¹ Edifying philosophy, on the other hand, “aims at continuing a conversation rather than at discovering truth.”¹⁴² Philosophers of this kind (which includes thinkers like John Dewey [1859–1952], Martin Heidegger [1889–1976], and Wittgenstein) are skeptical of systematic philosophy and are concerned with striving for truth, not necessarily to find “all of Truth.”¹⁴³ Edifying philosophy aims not at discovery nor at truth, but in continuing a conversation which views “human beings as generators of new descriptions rather than beings one hopes to be able to describe accurately.”¹⁴⁴ Philosophy may open new veins of discourse, new sciences and philosophical research, and new objective truths, but these are only “accidental byproducts. The point is always the same—to perform the social function which Dewey called ‘breaking the crust of convention,’ preventing man from deluding himself with the notion that he knows himself, or anything else, except under optional descriptions.”¹⁴⁵

Rorty seeks to free “ourselves from the notion that philosophy must center around the discovery of a permanent framework for inquiry” and from seeing philosophy as explaining that which science cannot.¹⁴⁶ The fundamental error of Western philosophy

¹⁴¹Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), 366.

¹⁴²*Ibid.*, 373.

¹⁴³*Ibid.*, 369, 377.

¹⁴⁴*Ibid.*, 377.

¹⁴⁵*Ibid.*, 378.

¹⁴⁶*Ibid.*, 380.

from its inception has “always been the notion that [its] questions are to be answered by some new descriptive explanatory discourse.”¹⁴⁷ Philosophy can develop methods of inquiry into the perennial philosophical questions, but this is for individual use and not to be prescriptive for society.¹⁴⁸ No longer is there any merit for philosophical discussions regarding knowledge, meaning, consciousness, and value. Instead, philosophical value is found in “a study of comparative advantages and disadvantages of the various ways of talking which our race has invented.”¹⁴⁹ One finds himself now in a post-Philosophical culture where philosophy¹⁵⁰ is no longer a “‘constructive’ discipline, aimed, like the sciences, at the determination of truth.”¹⁵¹

Within a short two and a half centuries, the way in which philosophers perceived philosophy changed drastically. Once viewed as the pursuit of truth, philosophy was no longer aimed at objective truth, but at clarification and the continuation of a conversation among mankind. Within this broad, philosophic framework that Christian philosophers sought to understand the nature of philosophy and its relationship with theology. While some shared in the growing skepticism toward philosophy’s purpose, method, and value, others sought to redeem from philosophy that which could serve Christian theology.

Metaphilosophy: Definition and Purpose

In their 2013 book, *An Introduction to Metaphilosophy*, Søren Overgaard, Paul Gilbert, and Stephen Burwood seek to rescue philosophy from itself by finding common

¹⁴⁷Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, 383.

¹⁴⁸Richard Rorty, “Priority of Democracy to Philosophy,” in *Objectivity, Relativism, and Truth* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 192.

¹⁴⁹Thomas Baldwin, *Contemporary Philosophy: Philosophy in English Since 1945*, A History of Western Philosophy vol. 8 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 270.

¹⁵⁰Philosophy with a capital ‘P’ represents philosophy viewed as a truth-discovering discipline, as opposed to philosophy with a lower-case ‘p’—the way philosophy should be viewed according to Rorty.

¹⁵¹Baldwin, *Contemporary Philosophy*, 272.

emphases among modern philosophers (particularly those in the twentieth century and later) in order to build a serviceable model for the nature and method of philosophy. Despite the views of some that metaphilosophy is unnecessary or idealistic introspection,¹⁵² their claim is that because philosophy has “been thought to include the critical examination of the forms and methods of human knowledge and understanding,”¹⁵³ it is only natural that philosophy inquires into the nature of its own questions and methods.¹⁵⁴ Philosophers, however, have not given much thought or effort toward answering “What is philosophy?”¹⁵⁵ hence the confused state in which the ancient discipline finds itself today.¹⁵⁶ Further, the general approach taken by philosophers in answering the question has been done descriptively—what philosophy “looks like”—as opposed to prescriptively—what philosophy should be.¹⁵⁷ To bring order

¹⁵²Overgaard, Gilbert, and Burwood summarize Karl Popper’s attitude toward metaphilosophy as “ideal naval gazing” (*An Introduction to Metaphilosophy*, 6).

¹⁵³*Ibid.*, 8.

¹⁵⁴*Ibid.*, 4.

¹⁵⁵From this point forward, “What is philosophy?” will also be referred to as “the question.”

¹⁵⁶Overgaard, Gilbert, and Burwood, *An Introduction to Metaphilosophy*, 4. While this may be true to an extent, there have been works produced in the twentieth century and later regarding the nature of philosophy. See Charles J. Bontempo and S. Jack Odell, ed., *The Owl of Minerva: Philosophers on Philosophy* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1975); this book is a collection of essays from contemporary, well-known philosophers on the nature of philosophical method and questions—philosophers such as A. J. Ayer, Frederick Copleston, Herbert Marcuse, Karl. Popper, and W. V. Quine, among others. See also Michael Dummett, *The Nature and Future of Philosophy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010). While Dummett’s book is helpful, it approaches metaphilosophy from the aspect of Analytic Philosophy only, whereas Overgaard et al. seeks to transcend the distinction between Analytic and Continental philosophy. John Kekes’ *The Nature of Philosophy* (Totowa, NJ: Rowman and Littlefield, 1980) presents philosophy as the study of the perennial questions of life with the end of developing a worldview by which one is to live. Last, James Chase and Jack Reynolds’ *Analytic Versus Continental: Arguments on the Methods and Value of Philosophy* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2010) is an attempt to open dialogue between the two approaches to philosophy regarding philosophical methods and questions without seeking to rectify the divide.

¹⁵⁷Overgaard, Gilbert, and Burwood, *An Introduction to Metaphilosophy*, 12, 21. The authors further clarify the *descriptive* definition of the question: “A descriptive reply to the [question] would give a characterisation of what past and present philosophers have understood their discipline to be, or what it has been in their hands” (12).

to the question at hand, Overgaard, Gilbert, and Burwood distinguish between the ‘What’, ‘How’, and ‘Why’ questions of metaphilosophy.

“What is philosophy?” is best answered prescriptively—what philosophy ought to be— thus preventing a view of philosophy that is too narrow or too broad. A descriptive answer, on the other hand, leads either to a deflationary view—philosophy is whatever a professional philosopher does (which waters down the discipline)—or an essentialist answer which seeks to describe the essential characteristics of philosophy such that it excludes subjects that traditionally have been viewed as philosophic in nature.¹⁵⁸ The best approach is to acknowledge a “center of gravity” regarding the various subjects within the discipline; that is, “there is some relatively limited number of notions that are, and have always been, central to what concern philosophers,” including some peripheral issues that are “fundamental within particular spheres of human life.”¹⁵⁹

If there is a “center of gravity” of questions answered by philosophy, what is their nature? Are they scientific in nature, or do they have no relation to science whatsoever? Roughly since Rene Descartes, modern philosophy has attempted to define itself in relation to modern science. One tendency has been to view philosophy as a sub-discipline of science, while another approach has been to completely divorce philosophy from science. Despite the fact that the number of attempts to understand philosophy’s relation to science are varied and numerous, Overgaard, Gilbert, and Burwood suggest that the answer lies somewhere between the two extremes.¹⁶⁰

Answering the “How” question can be accomplished by more than one approach. One can “examine the various patterns of argument characteristically endorsed

¹⁵⁸Overgaard, Gilbert, and Burwood, *An Introduction to Metaphilosophy*, 20–21. An example of an essentialist answer to the question that is too narrow is if one defines philosophy as answering the perennial questions of life; while this is true to an extent, the answer leaves out logic as a philosophical subject.

¹⁵⁹*Ibid.*, 23.

¹⁶⁰*Ibid.*, 44.

and employed by philosophers,” but such an approach is tedious and burdensome. The approach preferred by the authors is to “examine the sorts of considerations that usually function as *data* in such arguments.”¹⁶¹ For example, Nicholas Rescher, in *Philosophical Reasoning*, suggests the following as data for philosophical arguments: “common sense,... what have been ‘the ordinary convictions of the plain man’”; “the facts (or purported facts) afforded by the science of the day”; tradition (such as religious tradition); and the “teachings of history,” among others.¹⁶² The data listed is employed by philosophy, but it is not unique to it as other disciplines employ the same data in their own investigations. Thus, some point to what is unique to philosophy to define its method: phenomenology and conceptual analysis¹⁶³ (that is, the data of Continental philosophy versus the data of Analytic philosophy). While some call for methodological purism—one method alone works to the exclusion of others—the authors suggest that “philosophy... benefits from being ‘disciplined’ by more than one sort of data.”¹⁶⁴

Last, one’s metaphilosophy seeks to answer the “Why” question: why would one want to do philosophy? In other words, what is its value? Again, there is more than one approach to answering this question, one of which includes determining the products of philosophy, such as the analysis of concepts and the development of worldviews. Another approach is to distinguish the practice of philosophy, which can fruitfully lead to other disciplines.¹⁶⁵ The authors suggest a method that combines both approaches.

The purpose of *An Introduction to Metaphilosophy* is not to provide a

¹⁶¹Overgaard, Gilbert, and Burwood, *An Introduction to Metaphilosophy*, 70. Emphasis original.

¹⁶²Ibid., 71, quoting Nicholas Rescher, *Philosophical Reasoning: A Study in the Methodology of Philosophizing* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), 15–16.

¹⁶³Overgaard, Gilbert, and Burwood, *An Introduction to Metaphilosophy*, 71.

¹⁶⁴Ibid., 104.

¹⁶⁵Ibid., 218.

definitive answer to the question; rather, it argues that metaphilosophy is not only a valid discipline within philosophy, but one of value as well. Though the authors leave the specifics of how one answers “What is philosophy?” up to the readers, their approach to metaphilosophy—answering the “What,” “How,” and “Why” questions—provides a useful model in analyzing how specific thinkers view the nature of philosophy. With this method in mind, the dissertation now moves into the analysis of the metaphilosophy of E. Y. Mullins, John Newport, Richard Cunningham, and L. Russ Bush.

CHAPTER 2

THE METAPHILOSOPHY OF E. Y. MULLINS

Background

Cultural Context

The nineteenth century witnessed a rapid, seismic shift in prevailing intellectual thought. Though the Enlightenment somewhat weakened the theology's influence in the various disciplines of study, it was able to find an ally in science and philosophy in the pursuit of truth. Yet, from approximately 1869 onward, theology was attacked at its foundation by its former allies, leaving Christian thinkers searching for ways in which to answer the charges from modern science and philosophy. When E. Y. Mullins assumed the presidency of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in 1899, Southern Baptists and evangelical Christians were in the throes of a battle over the relationship between religion, science, and philosophy.

Much of the eighteenth century was dominated philosophically by some form of empiricism (Lockean, Berkelian, or Humean) and eventually by the philosophy of Immanuel Kant. Enlightenment philosophers, cognizant of the conflicting ideas of preceding philosophers, sought to bring all beliefs and opinions before the bar of reason. Locke's empiricism in particular was the philosophy of choice for the American colonies because of "his empiricism, use of the inductive method, reliance on sensory evidence, and belief in an external world."¹ However, the end of the Revolutionary War in America and the "gory culmination" of France's own revolution saw Lockean philosophy fall into

¹Bruce Kuklick, *A History of Philosophy in America, 1720–2000* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2001), 60.

disfavor² and religion at a low point.³ Theodore Bozeman suggests that many thinkers reassessed the tenets of the Enlightenment and modern natural science when “the deistic and atheistic expressions to which the conflict gave vent inflamed awareness of the religiously destructive bent of ‘critical’ science and philosophy.”⁴ Further, while American philosophers favored Locke for his empiricism, they believed that his idealism ultimately led to skepticism as that found in Berkeley and Hume.⁵ American philosophers quickly adopted Scottish Common Sense Realism to fill the void in American philosophy left by idealism.

Common Sense Realism⁶ quickly began to dominate the intellectual landscape of post-Revolutionary War America, becoming the “*lingua franca* of American philosophy in the first half of the nineteenth century.”⁷ The same can be said of CSP regarding Christian theology as it dominated Christian thought through the influence of

²Theodore D. Bozeman, *Protestants in an Age of Science: The Baconian Ideal and Antebellum American Religious Thought* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1977), 23–24.

³Sydney Ahlstrom, “The Scottish Philosophy and American Theology,” *Church History* 24, no. 3 (1955): 267, claims that “the French Revolution provoked a reappraisal of the Enlightenment and the natural science it brought to the fore. The deistic and atheistic expressions to which the conflict gave vent inflamed awareness of the religiously destructive bent of ‘critical’ science and philosophy” (71).

⁴Bozeman, *Protestantism in an Age of Science*, 71.

⁵*Ibid.*, 60.

⁶Scottish Common Sense Realism is commonly known as Common Sense Philosophy. See Gregory Allen Thornbury, “The Legacy of Natural Theology in the Northern Baptist Theological Tradition, 1827–1918” (Ph.D. diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2001), 14n1. In short, CSP is commonly viewed as the philosophy of Thomas Reid and Dugald Stewart that appealed to an objective external world and the reliability of one’s senses in gaining knowledge, and appealed to man’s common sense: “self-evident principles that include, in addition to belief in an external world, belief in other minds and in others’ testimony, belief in empirical evidence, and memory beliefs” (Ted Cabal, “An Introduction to Postmodernity: Where Are We, How Did We Get Here, and Can We Get Home?” *Southern Baptist Theological Journal* 5, no. 2 [2001]: 11).

⁷W. Andrew Hoffecker, *Charles Hodge: The Pride of Princeton* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2011), 416n3.

John Witherspoon (1768–1794) of Princeton University, Francis Wayland (1796–1865) at Brown University and Charles Hodge (1797–1878) of Princeton Seminary.⁸

According to Theodore Bozeman, Baconian thought was viewed as the “true philosophy,” a pattern of thought equated with the inductive methodology of contemporary science which rooted itself in its description “of the general laws of nature in a meticulous survey of particulars.” It fostered a “strenuously empiricist approach to all forms of knowledge,” emphasizing the need for fact while distrusting any hypotheses of “imaginings.”⁹ Reid acknowledged the mind’s “expansive and troublesome capacity” for speculative thinking, but exhibited a suspicious attitude towards such thinking, emphasizing instead a “slow” and “gradual” approach through “a just and copious induction” as one pursued truth.¹⁰ With its “severe” emphasis on the inductive method, CSP virtually separated empirical truth from “inventive fallacy,” thus “generat[ing] reliability in scientific thought.”¹¹

For Christian thought in particular, CSP provided for evangelicals a philosophical system “which the most useful insights (useful in defending orthodoxy and establishing a moral order) of all systems could be used.”¹² Francis Wayland, who largely employed Common Sense Philosophy in his moral philosophy, maintained that

⁸Bozeman, *Protestants in an Age of Science*, 5, 21. In particular, Reid’s attitude toward speculative thinking soon came to dominate the Princeton Theology—that which James P. Boyce, founder of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and the impetus behind the seminary’s use of Old Princeton Theology in its early years, soaked in during his seminary days: “Like Bacon, Reid detected within the human mind an expansive and troublesome capacity for imaginative ‘invention,’ an outthrusting ‘power,’ thus highlighting the ‘suspicious attitude’ of the Scottish School toward inventive reasoning” (Ibid., 17). Reid, therefore, called for a “slow...gradual ascent in the scale of natural causes, by a just and copious induction” (Thomas Reid, *Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man* [Cambridge, MA: M.I.T. Press, 1969], 90, quoted in Bozeman, *Protestants in an Age of Science*, 18).

⁹Bozeman, *Protestants in an Age of Science*, 3.

¹⁰Ibid., 17–18.

¹¹Ibid., 18–19.

¹²Mark E. Matheson, “Religious Knowledge in the Theologies of John Leadley Dagg and James Petigru Boyce: With Special Reference to the Influence of Common Sense Realism” (Ph.D. diss., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1984), 14.

truths that are made known to all men are self-evident truths established by reason and are foundational to all branches of knowledge. Wayland and those who followed after him made philosophy the hand-maiden of theology and the inductive method the preferred method of systematizing the truths of Scripture.¹³

Christians, especially those of the Old Princeton Theology, applied the category of truth to the knowledge of both natural science and religion. Further, they employed the term “fact”—which had with it the notion of “precise empirical implications” as a result of scientific inquiry—for not only scientific truths, but theological truths as well.¹⁴ John L. Dagg (1794–1884) emphasized presenting the facts of the Bible “as they related to the truth of theology.”¹⁵ Just as science deals with facts, theology investigates facts and is to rely upon the scientific method.¹⁶ Charles Hodge also claimed that scripture contains the facts that one must “collect, authenticate, arrange, and exhibit” their inter-relatedness to each other.¹⁷ The Bible serves as a “storehouse of facts” for the believer—facts of divine revelation that concern the nature of God and man’s

¹³Matheson, “Religious Knowledge in the Theologies of John Leadley Dagg and James Petigru Boyce,” 26.

¹⁴Bozeman, *Protestants in an Age of Science*, 138. It should be noted here that Paul Kjoss Helseth has provided a new perspective on Old Princeton Theology, in his article “‘Right Reason’ and the Science of Theology at Old Princeton Seminary: A New Perspective,” *The Confessional Presbyterian* 8, no. 1 (2012): 74–90. He states in his conclusion that there are those who are beginning to question the “accepted wisdom on Old Princeton, and they are doing so by returning to the primary sources of Old Princetonians themselves” (90). Old Princeton theologians “have become the proverbial whipping boys of much contemporary theological discourse,” a view that needs correction and reassessment (90). In particular to the discussion of Old Princeton’s use of “fact” is Helseth’s claim that these theologians were not rationalists who divorced their theology from Christian experience. Rather, though Old Princetonians employed aspects of Scottish Realism, they nevertheless emphasized the necessity of a living Christian experience.

¹⁵Matheson, “Religious Knowledge in the Theologies of John Leadley Dagg and James Petigru Boyce,” 100.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, 101.

¹⁷Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology* (1871; repr., Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1982), 1:1.

relation to him.¹⁸ James P. Boyce taught systematic theology at Southern Seminary after the manner of Hodge and wrote the seminary's primary systematic theology text that was used from its publication in 1887 until well into E. Y. Mullins' presidency.¹⁹ Countering the deism and atheism of the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries, Christians employed CSP and the Baconian methodology of induction to answer the "demand for sensible evidence," using biblical revelation as the source of religious fact, thus avoiding the "rationalist excesses" by "binding" Christian belief to factual evidence.²⁰ For nearly a half century, Christianity, through the influence of Bacon and Reid, saw an ally in science which, when employed correctly, led one toward religious understanding.²¹

The impact of Scottish Common Sense Realism, though significant and widespread, was short lived in American thought as yet another war brought about change in the predominate philosophy of the nineteenth century. If CSP was the "single most powerful current in general intellectual and academic circles"²² up to the Civil War, it would virtually disappear from prevalent thought after the culmination of the War Between the States.²³ From approximately 1865 up through the 1890s, America was

¹⁸Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, 1:10, 21.

¹⁹Boyce states in his *Abstract of Systematic Theology* that theology is "eminently worthy" of the name of science.... It is concerned in the investigation of facts," their existence, their relations to each other, their arrangement, the laws that govern them, and the principles that serve as the basis of their existence (James P. Boyce, *Abstract of Systematic Theology* [1887; repr., Cape Coral, FL: Founder's Press, 2006], 3).

Mullins wrote his own systematic theology in 1917, *Christian Religion in its Doctrinal Expression*, which became the seminary's systematic theology text for numerous years.

²⁰Bozeman, *Protestants in an Age of Science*, 139.

²¹Kuklick, *A History of Philosophy in America*, 62. Bozeman states that "to a significant degree, Presbyterian Baconianism may be understood as a counterthrust against the widespread effort in the eighteenth century to portray the scientific movement as innately hostile to traditional Christianity." The scientific method—modern science—"correctly conceived, was directly correlated with Christian belief" (*Protestants in an Age of Science*, 44).

²²Bozeman, *Protestants in an Age of Science*, 21.

²³Bert J. Loewenberg, "Darwinism Comes to America, 1859–1900," *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 28, no. 3 (1941): 340–42. Loewenberg states that the nation faced rapid change after the

marked by struggle and violence as the Industrial Revolution brought about urbanization, the deterioration of American cities, labor disputes, and class warfare.²⁴ As American society and culture underwent significant change, the intellectual culture of the fracture nation quickly evolved from one in which theology pervaded all disciplines of learning to one in which science dominated nearly every facet of intellectual thought.

The revolution in the prevailing thought of America burst forth with Charles Darwin (1809–1882) and his theory of evolution published in *Origin of Species* (1859). Higher criticism also made some inroads into America beginning in the 1840s with D. F. Strauss' English edition of *Leben Jesu*. Julius Wellhausen's *Prolegomena to the History of Israel* (1878) propelled higher criticism into American mainstream academia and theological education.²⁵ Contemporary German scholarship called into question the authorship of the biblical books, the true nature of the prophecies in the Old Testament, and the reality of any supernatural event recorded in Scripture. In essence, higher criticism was an attack on fundamental Christian beliefs from within the Protestant camp, compromising the very foundation from which Christianity derived its beliefs.

Darwin's epoch-making *Origin of Species* was published in 1859, coinciding with the tumultuous years building up to the Civil War, did not become a significant issue in American churches until after collapse of the Confederacy.²⁶ Though the reasons why Darwinism rapidly dominated American society are complex and varied, the fact the message of Darwinism mirrored the struggles of the war-weary country—its attempt to

war, a period of change that can be broken into two periods. The first period, 1860–1890, consisted of a series of economic revolutions, while the second period, 1890–1900, witnessed the consequences of change in the political, economic, social, and intellectual fields provided the new themes of American life.

²⁴Kuklick, *A History of Philosophy in America*, 104. See also Charles Ferris, "Southern Baptists and Evolution in the 1920's: The Roles of Edgar Y. Mullins, J. Frank Norris, and William Louis Poteat" (Ph.D. diss., University of Louisville, 1973), 9. Also, Loewenberg, "Darwinism Comes to America," 341ff.

²⁵*Ibid.*, 99.

²⁶Sydney Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People*, 2nd ed. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004), 768.

orient itself to the facts of urbanization and industrialization—provides a telling clue about its ascent into mainstream thought.

Darwinian evolution penetrated all disciplines, challenged old ways of thinking and living,²⁷ and questioned theological beliefs previously thought to be in accordance with modern science. Though Darwin originally did not see his theory as a threat to religion in general,²⁸ he challenged nineteenth-century religion by presenting the world as one of change and of randomness and by raising doubts about the validity and accuracy of the Bible, particularly the creation account and any passage that was scientific in nature.²⁹ By the turn of the century, Darwinism was popularized in American culture, had “infiltrated every division of scholarship,” and was widely disseminated within the various denominations and their seminaries.³⁰ Particularly, science reigned supreme among all intellectual disciplines, and philosophy displaced theology in higher education as universities were to “serve as a repository for the knowledge of an advancing and complex society would need.”³¹ By the dawning of the twentieth century, Christianity found itself on the defensive against foes within (higher criticism) and without (science and philosophy).

²⁷Loewenberg, “Darwinism Comes to America,” 339.

²⁸His theory of common decent, however, obviously challenged the traditional view that Genesis taught that all creatures were created inviolable by God—he did not create one species from which all others descended.

²⁹Nineteenth-century theology had posited a changeless world under the governance of an unchanging God and that the world was a part of God’s creative purpose (Ferris, “Southern Baptists and Evolution in the 1920’s,” 7). Ahlstrom states that Christianity, in its struggle against Enlightenment naturalism and atheism, was able to appeal to creation as evidence of God’s existence and work. Yet, after, Darwin, the world was now viewed as a picture of “a relentless struggle for existence, a war of all against all, with blood dripping from every bough, and man involved in the struggle not only against the locusts, but against other men, even other races of men, with victory for the fittest” (*A Religious History of the American People*, 768–69). Thus, Christianity, once able through CSP to find an ally in science by appealing to the orderliness of the universe, now had to either find other ways to defend orthodox Christian beliefs, or to take on a fideistic approach by disregarding the new science (Timothy D. F. Maddox, “E. Y. Mullins: Mr. Baptist for the 20th and 21st Century,” *Review and Expositor* 96, no. 1 [1999]: 95).

³⁰Loewenburg, “Darwinism Comes to America,” 341.

³¹Kuklick, *A History of Philosophy in America*, 100, 107.

A Short Biography

Edgar Young Mullins' youth was marked by a strong work ethic and an insatiable appetite for reading. When Mullins was eleven years old, he began working as a paper delivery boy for the *Bugle*, a local paper, at the encouragement of his father in order to help supplement the family's low income. Mullins eventually obtained jobs as a printer's devil and a typesetter for the *Bugle* before finding work at a telegraph office which he would eventually manage by the age of fifteen.³²

As Mullins worked to support his family and attended grade school, he maintained his proclivity for reading as well. According to William Ellis, Mullins, at fourteen years old, began reading his father's volume of Herbert Spencer,³³ a British philosopher and sociologist "best known for developing and applying evolutionary theory to philosophy, psychology and the study of society."³⁴ His father, Seth Mullins, discouraged him from reading Spencer because Mullins was "too young to read the book profitably." However, when Seth caught his son reading a "cheap pulp novel," he gave the young aspiring scholar a multi-volume set of Jared Sparks' *Library of American Biography*.³⁵ Mullins' affinity toward reading and interacting with philosophical works stayed with him throughout his life,³⁶ serving as a catalyst for many of his publications. Mullins' proclivity for reading and strong work ethic served him well throughout his ministry, enabling him to remain current in the philosophical and theological discussions of his day while still tending to his duties as president of Southern Seminary and as a Southern Baptist statesman.

³²William E. Ellis, '*A Man of Books and a Man of the People*,' *E. Y. Mullins and the Crisis of Moderate Southern Baptist Leadership* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press), 6.

³³*Ibid.*, 5.

³⁴William Sweet, "Herbert Spencer (1820–1903)," in *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, para. 1, ed. James Fieser and Bradley Dowden, accessed September 30, 2013, <http://www.iep.utm.edu/spencer/>; Internet.

³⁵Ellis, '*A Man of Books and a Man of the People*,' 5.

³⁶Harold W. Tribble, "Edgar Young Mullins," *The Review and Expositor* 26, no. 2 (1929): 415.

Mullins attended Southern Seminary from 1881–1885, after which he accepted the call as pastor at the Baptist church in Harrodsburg, Kentucky. Though he enjoyed his ministry to his congregation as their pastor, Mullins sought to be a “man of the books” in addition to a “man of the people,” and strove to stay current in the academic field.³⁷ In 1888, Lee Street Baptist Church in Baltimore, Maryland, called E. Y. Mullins to be their full-time pastor, which he accepted. Mullins’ ministry at Lee Street included community activity through serving the poor, and activism against poverty and in local labor disputes.³⁸ He did all this while continuing to publish his sermons and taking courses at Johns Hopkins to improve upon his sermon delivery.³⁹ After a short stint at the Foreign Mission Board in 1895-1896, Mullins accepted a call to serve as pastor at Newton Centre Church in Boston. Here Mullins came into contact with moderate thinkers in the Boston area, particularly professors at the nearby Newton Theological Institution who were members of his congregation.⁴⁰ It is likely that he came into contact at this time with the works of Borden Parker Bowne, a Harvard professor who developed personalism (a philosophy Mullins freely employed in his own thought),⁴¹ and William James, whose pragmatism Mullins found useful as well. Mullins’ seven years in Baltimore and three years in Boston were perhaps the most influential in shaping his moderate approach to theology and to SBC polity in years to come.⁴²

³⁷Ellis, ‘*A Man of Books and a Man of the People*,’ 18.

³⁸Ibid., 21, 24.

³⁹Ibid., 21.

⁴⁰Ibid., 30–31.

⁴¹James Leo Garrett, *Baptist Theology: A Four-Century Study* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2009), 418.

⁴²R. Albert Mohler, “Baptist Theology at the Crossroads: The Legacy of E. Y. Mullins,” *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 3, no. 4 (1999): 8. As with the discussion of Boyce above, the influences on Mullins’ thought is assumed as valid; to trace out the various influences on Mullins would go well beyond the scope of this paper.

Mullins returned to Louisville in 1899 to serve as Southern Seminary's fourth president. The seminary was trying to climb out of a controversy involving the previous president of Southern, William H. Whitsitt (1841–1911). A group of conservatives in the Southern Baptist Convention known as Landmarkers⁴³ questioned the orthodoxy of the seminary. The point of contention was Whitsitt's article for *Johnson's Universal Cyclopaedia*, "Baptists," in which he argued that English Baptists did not practice baptism by immersion until 1641 and that American Baptists did not baptize by immersion until 1644.⁴⁴ Controversy ensued after Whitsitt's article for if he was correct, then the claim to apostolic succession as the only true church would be void. Throughout the controversy, Landmarkers grew more wary of Whitsitt's conclusions regarding Baptist history, resulting in their weak financial support for the only seminary of the Southern Baptists. With each rumor of questionable doctrine taught at the seminary, their financial support for Southern diminished.⁴⁵ Upon beginning his presidency, Mullins understood the crucial link between the seminary's controversy and financial problems—if the members of the SBC continued to view the seminary as teaching heretical views, financial gifts would then be withdrawn, placing the seminary in a very precarious position.⁴⁶

In addition to the seminary's problems, Mullins faced the challenge of serving in a denomination split by those who favored modernism (many of whom were seminary

⁴³According to Robert Torbet, Landmarkism was a movement particularly in the South among Baptists who sought "to restore to the churches the practices of the early church, many of which [they] felt were being neglected by Baptists." The only true apostolic churches were Baptist churches, and the only true Christians are Baptists (Roger Torbet, *A History of the Baptists*, 3rd ed. [Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 2000], 281).

⁴⁴Gregory A. Wills, *Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1859–2009* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 198. Further, he claimed that Roger Williams, who established the first Baptist church in the American colonies, was not immersed.

⁴⁵*Ibid.*, 217.

⁴⁶Ellis, 'A Man of Books and a Man of the People,' 39–40.

professors and graduates) and a growing faction, known as fundamentalists, within the SBC that sought to protect traditional Christian beliefs from the infringement of any form of modernism. Fundamentalists eventually yielded much influence within not only the convention, but in the seminary as well. Such was the Fundamentalists' influence that as president of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Mullins dealt with internal battles in the divided SBC and with cultural battles over evolution, higher criticism, "and the social implications of Christianity."⁴⁷ In the face of such difficulties, Mullins was able to lead the Seminary into an era of growing influence and transform the Southern Baptist Convention into an influential denomination.⁴⁸

Mullins' Metaphilosophy

E. Y. Mullins' activity in the last twenty-nine years of his life (the years of his presidency at Southern Seminary) went beyond the seminary campus. He participated in conferences with brethren of the Northern Baptists, he helped to begin and preside over the World Baptist Alliance, and he was intimately involved in the Southern Baptist Convention where he served as president (1921-1924) and helped draft the Baptist Faith and Message in 1925, among many other roles. Despite his very active ministry and service, Mullins' still found time to write numerous articles for journals and state Baptist papers, preach and publish sermons, and publish books of significant value to his times. A number of his books, as well as his journal articles and sermons, interacted freely with contemporary philosophy. Throughout these writings, Mullins discussed the nature of

⁴⁷Ellis, *'A Man of Books and a Man of the People,'* 41.

⁴⁸Mohler, "Baptist Theology at the Crossroads," 14. The legacy left by Mullins is not without controversy. Mullins sought to stay in the middle of the road between the modernists and the fundamentalists (Thomas J. Nettles, *The Baptists: Key People Involved in Forming a Baptist Identity*, vol. 3 *The Modern Era* [Fearn, Scotland: Mentor, 2007], 197–98). Such a role, however, leaves him open to various "interpretations and reconstructions of his view" (R. Albert Mohler, "Introduction," in *The Axioms of Religion*, comp. R. Albert Mohler, ed. Timothy George and Denise George [Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1997], 13).

philosophy, providing its definition and function, particularly in light of modern science and religion.⁴⁹

Prevalent throughout Mullins' works is his distinction between science, religion, and philosophy—a distinction that is necessary to grasp if one is to define the nature and role of each discipline. As stated in Chapter 1, eighteenth- and nineteenth-century philosophy and theology increasingly appealed to the natural sciences as the model for investigation into truth. Particular to Southern Baptists, James P. Boyce's *Abstract of Systematic Theology*—the seminary's systematic theology text book used from 1887–1917—presented the study of theology as “a science which treats of God,” analogous to any other natural science in method and purpose.⁵⁰ Yet, by the time Mullins began his presidency at Southern Seminary in 1899, Darwinian evolution seemed to undermine the validity of theological truth, while philosophy replaced theology in the universities as the dominant academic discipline. Thus, like late-eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century thinkers, Mullins defined philosophy in light of science; yet, unlike those who preceded him, he did not identify philosophy with science, but as a realm of knowledge distinct from the realm of science, each autonomous in its purpose and method.

⁴⁹ Though this dissertation focuses on Mullins' published books, journals, and sermons, attention is given to an unpublished manuscript titled “Confused Thinking,” which helps shed light on his definition of “science” and how it applies to his distinction between the realms of science, religion, and philosophy (E. Y. Mullins, “Confused Thinking” [ca. 1925], Mullins Papers, SBTS, Box 39, Folder 22, James P. Boyce Library, Louisville, Kentucky). The manuscript is undated, but contains the following in the first line of the opening paragraph: “Doctor U. M. McGuire says in the October 31st issue of the Baptist ‘A current phenomenon of the changing world is a mass of confused thinking about the relation of science to religion’” (1). According to McGuire's autobiography (U. M. McGuire, *Excerpts from the Autobiography of U. M. McGuire* [n.p., 1936], accessed November 7, 2013, http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~fgww/bio_McGuire.html), he was an editor for *The Baptist* (Chicago) in 1921, and 1925–1929 (§XI, para. 8–12). On October 31, 1925, McGuire had written an article titled “The World in Transit” (*The Baptist*, October 31, 1925, p. 1175) in which he provides a brief summary of Mullins' *Christianity at the Cross Roads*; the quote in Mullins' opening line of his unpublished article is McGuire's opening sentence.

⁵⁰ Boyce, *Abstract of Systematic Theology*, 1.

What is Philosophy?

Before Mullins' metaphilosophy is presented, brief mention of his view of science is necessary to set the discussion in context. Mullins defines science in "Christianity in the Modern World" as that which describes what can be observed—the phenomena.⁵¹ In other words, science describes the rational order of the universe, determines the laws of nature, and uses induction and deduction to discover their relationships and connection.⁵² Any attempt, though, that seeks to interpret what one observes moves beyond the realm of science and into that of philosophy and religion, resulting in conflict between the three disciplines.⁵³ Within its proper sphere, however, science renders great service and value by "uncovering the facts of the natural world" for the cause of truth.⁵⁴

How, then, does Mullins answer the question "What is philosophy?" Though the meaning of philosophy has changed over time since its inception in ancient Greece, he states in *The Christian Religion in its Doctrinal Expression* that philosophy "means the explanation of experience, of truth, and of reality, regarded as a whole."⁵⁵ Elsewhere, he simplifies the meaning of philosophy to that of "one's view of how the world is made and what it means."⁵⁶ Bill C. Thomas notes that according to Mullins, "philosophical

⁵¹ E. Y. Mullins, "Christianity in the Modern World," *The Review and Expositor* 22, no. 4 (1925): 477. Also E. Y. Mullins, *Freedom and Faith in Religion* (Philadelphia: The Griffith and Rowland Press, 1913), 127.

⁵² Mullins, *Freedom and Faith in Religion*, 117, quoting T. H. Huxley from *The Progress of Science* (no specific reference provided by Mullins).

⁵³ Ibid., 118. A more detailed discussion on Mullins' view of science and its relationship with religion and philosophy is provided below.

⁵⁴ E. Y. Mullins, "The Dangers and Duties of the Present Hour," in *The Axioms of Religion*, comp. R. Albert Mohler, ed. Timothy George and Denise George (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1997), 184.

⁵⁵ Mullins, *Christian Religion in its Doctrinal Expression*, 103–4.

⁵⁶ E. Y. Mullins, "Humanizing Our Philosophy," *The Biblical Review Quarterly* 13, no. 2 (1928): 216.

speculation is one of man's perennial pursuits."⁵⁷ Philosophy "builds up its systems on the data supplied by science" working with the principles of rationality.⁵⁸ The end goal of philosophy is to seek "the reason for what science explains; its "chief aim is to find a single principle which will explain the universe."⁵⁹ Essentially, the problems of philosophy are those that "seek to determine the nature of truth and the nature of Being."⁶⁰

Mullins defines philosophy negatively when he claims that philosophy is not a science. While science seeks to describe phenomena, philosophy takes "the lead of science and seeks a rational explanation of the facts of the universe."⁶¹ In an unpublished article, Mullins addresses the unclear meaning of "science," particularly in modern usage, and distinguishes between two uses of the word. First, "science" is generally synonymous with learning and knowledge. A second and more common use of "science" is an

⁵⁷Bill C. Thomas, "Edgar Young Mullins: A Baptist Exponent of Theological Restatement" (Ph.D. diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1963), 137-38. See E. Y. Mullins, *Christianity at the Cross Roads* (Nashville: The Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1924), 162.

⁵⁸E. Y. Mullins, "The Response of Jesus Christ to Modern Thought," in *Axioms of Religion*, comp. R. Albert Mohler, ed. Timothy George and Denise George (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1997); reprint of E. Y. Mullins, "The Response of Jesus Christ to Modern Thought," *The Review and Expositor* 13, no. 2 (1916): 159-66. Elsewhere, he defines philosophy as "the rational attempt whose task in part at least is to explain the forces in the background" of the created world (Mullins, *Freedom and Faith in Religion*, 135).

⁵⁹ Mullins, *Christianity at the Cross Roads*, 212. To achieve its chief aim, philosophy deals with ultimate questions like the problem of mind, the problem of freedom, the problem of knowledge, the problem of being, and the problem of values (morals) (212). See Mullins, *Christian Religion in its Doctrinal Expression*, 104: philosophy's aim is "to discover the underlying principle or principles of the universe ... [and] to express the meaning of the universe in a worldview which combines all the parts of being into a coherent unity." Also Mullins, "Humanizing Our Philosophy," 217: "The aim of philosophy is to find a pass key, which will unlock all closed doors and show us the secret Power behind all things." Finally, E. Y. Mullins, "The Present Situation in Theology," *The Review and Expositor* 20, no. 2 (1923): 129-30: modern philosophy takes "the lead of science and seeks a rational explanation of the facts of the universe."

⁶⁰Mullins, *Christianity at the Crossroads*, 157.

⁶¹Mullins, "The Present Situation in Theology," 129-30. Further, "This is a gain of modern philosophy over ancient philosophy. Instead of adopting *a priori* principles, philosophy builds off *a posteriori*" (104).

“ordered knowledge of natural phenomena and of the relations between them.”⁶²

Philosophy, along with any other intellectual discipline, is indeed a science in the first sense of the word, but is not so in the second sense. Science refuses to “go behind what appears to the observer”;⁶³ only philosophy (and religion) can interpret the observed phenomena.⁶⁴

Though philosophy may share with religion the role of interpreting the data of science, Mullins further defines philosophy negatively by stating that it is not religion either. First, philosophy always seems to be on the verge of discovering the secret of the universe, yet it fails to do so without fail because it neglects religious experience—more specifically, it has failed to consider the reality of God.⁶⁵ As such, philosophy—despite its value—provides only an incomplete picture of truth,⁶⁶ whereas religion—the Christian religion—gives us knowledge of reality through Jesus Christ.⁶⁷

How is Philosophy Done?

Though philosophy does utilize facts like those from the sciences, the facts philosophy employs are not those that can be seen or touched; rather, the facts of philosophy “arise out of human experience.”⁶⁸ Hence, Mullins answers the question “How is philosophy done?” by providing the data of philosophy: it is not only using that

⁶² Mullins, “Confused Thinking,” 1.

⁶³ Mullins, “The Present Situation in Theology,” 129.

⁶⁴ Mullins, “Christianity in the Modern World,” 477.

⁶⁵ Mullins, “The Testimony of Christian Experience,” 217–19.

⁶⁶ E. Y. Mullins, *The Axioms of Religion*, comp. R. Albert Mohler, ed. Timothy George and Denise George (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1997), 86.

⁶⁷ E. Y. Mullins, “The Response of Jesus Christ to Modern Thought,” in *The Axioms of Religion*, comp. R. Albert Mohler, ed. Timothy George and Denise George (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1997), 213. A more detailed discussion regarding the relationship of philosophy with science and religion is provided below.

⁶⁸ Mullins, *Christianity at the Cross Roads*, 104.

which one can observe (fact in the scientific sense—that which is only perceived by the senses), but also employing human experience. Any valid philosophy is not built upon abstractions or an imagined concept, but upon “something given, a datum of observation or of experience.” Thus, Mullins uses “fact” in a broader sense than the narrower scientific use of “fact.”⁶⁹

But what human experiences count as fact? As Mullins seeks to conclude his article “Humanizing Our Philosophy,” he concedes that philosophy does utilize fact in the narrow sense, but it also considers human emotion, volition, aesthetics, morals, and spirituality.⁷⁰ Likewise, in his sermon “Christ’s Challenge to Manhood,” he includes as facts the sense of right and wrong; “brotherhood, man’s kinship to all other men”; and immortality—life after death.⁷¹ While experience plays a significant role in Mullins’ theology, it bears upon other disciplines as well, such as philosophy.⁷²

Mullins’ appeal to human experience in its totality as the data of philosophy is in reaction to what he perceives as the failure of modern philosophy—that it erroneously operated within a narrow sphere of rationality by focusing only on the physical realm while ignoring human experience as a whole.⁷³ Modernity incorrectly views “fact” as

⁶⁹Mullins, “Humanizing Our Philosophy,” 217.

⁷⁰Ibid., 230. In E. Y. Mullins, “Pragmatism, Humanism and Personalism,” *The Review and Expositor* 5, no. 4 (1908): 510. This article is his statement in support of Bowne’s personalism as the “sanest and most satisfying of all the world-views.” Mullins provides Bowne’s method of arguing from the totality of human experience (transcendental empiricism) as: “deducing ultimate truth from empirical facts,” which include: “the coexistence of persons;...the law of reason valid for all and binding upon all; ... the world of common experience, actual or possible, where we meet in mutual understanding.”

⁷¹E. Y. Mullins, “Christ’s Challenge to Manhood,” in *The Life in Christ* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1917), 113.

⁷²Garrett, *Baptist Theology*, 418.

⁷³Mullins, *Christian Religion in its Doctrinal Expression*, 105. Mullins’ appeal to experience is not unique to his metaphilosophy; rather, experience—particularly Christian experience—was the centerpiece to his theology. According to Michael Plato, Christian experience preoccupied Mullins’ works from the very beginning of his theological career. He first addresses this topic in an article titled “Is Jesus Christ the Author of Religious Experience?” *The Review and Expositor* 1, no. 1 (1904): 55–70. Mullins’ “grandest treatment of experience” was presented in his systematic theology titled *Christian Religion in its Doctrinal Expression*, the text which replaced James P. Boyce’s *Abstract of Systematic Theology* for

only that which can be seen or touched—“it must be a mass of matter in some form to pass muster as belonging to the real world.”⁷⁴ Philosophy has also failed because it “does not do justice to the idea of truth.” Human reason, particularly the logical faculty, is emphasized, and reason is made supreme; however, in the process, humanity’s feelings, will, and moral nature are ignored.⁷⁵ Yet, because philosophy ignores human experience since it lies in the realm behind sense-experience,⁷⁶ philosophers have been, as it were, caught in an eddy, going in a circle “with way stations along the route, but never able to escape from the circular movement of human thought.” The only way out is to consider the totality of human experience, including religious experience.⁷⁷ With this in mind, philosophy deals with answering ultimate questions like: the problem of mind, the

Southern Seminary (Michael Plato, “Mullins and Christian Experience” [classroom lecture, 26100A—*History of the Baptists*, Fall 2013, photocopy], 4–5).

Mullins’ appeal to experience was not unique to him among thinkers; rather, one can perhaps point to the 1799 work of Friederich Schleiermacher, *Speeches on Religion*, as one of the first to establish theology established upon feelings and intuitions instead of a set of doctrine or abstract principles. Theologians were not the only ones who developed the doctrine of experience as poets and other thinkers emphasized the importance of experience since the Enlightenment (Plato, “Mullins and Christian Experience,” 2). Mullins most likely was influenced by William Newton Clarke regarding experience when Mullins took over as pastor of Newton Center Church after Clarke. Though Clarke may have introduced Mullins to the emphasis on Christian experience, Mullins would not buy into his doctrine as a whole because Clarke’s theology of God was “vague” (Plato, “Mullins and Christian Experience,” 2. Quoting from Mullins, *Christian Religion in its Doctrinal Expression*, 215). Mullins essentially sought to develop a mediating theology—one that culled the best from the theology developed in the vein of the rationalist CSP, and from the best of those who developed the doctrine of experience (particularly William James and Borden Parker Bowne) (Plato, “Mullins and Christian Experience,” 3).

⁷⁴Mullins, “Christ’s Challenge to Manhood,” 112.

⁷⁵Mullins, *Christian Religion in its Doctrinal Expression*, 106. Reason is not detached from emotion or the will; rather, philosophy must begin first with “the material for thought from life’s experiences before logic can advance a single step toward truth.”

⁷⁶E. Y. Mullins, “The Testimony of Christian Experience,” in *The Life in Christ* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1917), 216.

⁷⁷*Ibid.*, 219. It should be noted that Mullins does not appeal to general religious experience; rather, he explicitly states that it is only Christian experience that “is the one datum of all philosophy, and all science. The experience of the individual and of the race is the grist which is poured into all the scientific and philosophical mills.” It is only until recently that science and philosophy have slowly recognized the value of experience (Mullins, “The Testimony of Christian Experience,” 215–16).

problem of freedom, and the problem of knowledge. Further, philosophy seeks to determine the nature of truth and the nature of Being.⁷⁸

Why Philosophy?

If philosophy has only until recently begun to find its way out of the eddy of human thought, what is its value? As stated earlier, in its current state, philosophy, though it seeks to solve the ultimate problems of this world,⁷⁹ has failed because it cannot know the secrets of the world until philosophers consider God.⁸⁰ Philosophy is “inconclusive, and inherently unstable in results, [affording] no program for the serious work of life.”⁸¹ Nevertheless, philosophy, along with science and religion, seeks truth based upon facts, and all three are harmonious when each is “pursuing their respective aims.”⁸² In other words, when philosophy remains within its domain, it helps serve in the progression of human knowledge. As such, Mullins’ account of the failure of philosophy does not discredit philosophy; rather, it highlights that philosophy can only flourish when pursued correctly.⁸³

Philosophy rightly emphasizes truth when it stays within its own realm, incorporates the totality of human experience, and inquires into the nature of truth and how it arises. One knows truth from experience and seeks “to combine all departments of truth into a universal and coherent system of truth.”⁸⁴ Philosophy also emphasizes reality by going beyond “the real as given in phenomena.” One’s understanding of ultimate

⁷⁸Mullins, *Christianity at the Cross Roads*, 155.

⁷⁹Ibid., 162.

⁸⁰Mullins, “The Testimony of Christian Experience,” 219.

⁸¹Mullins, *Christianity at the Cross Roads*, 165.

⁸²E. Y. Mullins, “The Freedom of Faith,” in *The Life in Christ* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1917), 26–27.

⁸³Mullins, “The Testimony of Christian Experience,” 219.

⁸⁴Mullins, *The Christian Religion in its Doctrinal Expression*, 104.

reality must be grounded in what one can know by experience.⁸⁵ Last, philosophy emphasizes unity and cohesiveness—it provides “a complete explanation of all things, so far as it is humanly possible.”⁸⁶ The value of philosophy, then, is found not in its loyalty to fact as found in science and religion, but in its contrast with science and religion—philosophy’s own distinct role and method.⁸⁷

When speaking of theology, Mullins states that when life and experience are made explicit in theology, the errors of past philosophy are avoided. When one appeals to the totality of human experience, “a restraint is felt thus which prevents too great license in speculation and metaphysical deductions from biblical truth.” The same can be said regarding Mullins’ implied attitude toward the value of philosophy—by grounding philosophy in human experience, one does not adopt *a priori* principles, but lays a foundation of *a posteriori* principles, assuring a right foundation for philosophical thinking.⁸⁸

Some Implications of Mullins’ Metaphilosophy

The Relationship between Faith and Reason

Mullins’ influence by and use of William James’ pragmatism, Borden Parker Bowne’s personalism, and to some extent Friedrich Schleiermacher,⁸⁹ indicates a familiarity with the philosophy of his day and his ability to utilize philosophy constructively in the service of theology. Further, Mullins’ sermons, articles, and books,

⁸⁵Mullins, *The Christian Religion in its Doctrinal Expression*, 104–5.

⁸⁶*Ibid.*, 105.

⁸⁷Mullins, *Christianity at the Cross Roads*, 21.

⁸⁸Mullins, *The Christian Religion in its Doctrinal Expression*, 104.

⁸⁹The reason for the hesitancy in tone is due to James L. Garrett’s claim that Mullins tends to mention Schleiermacher not so much as in agreement or in employment of his thought, but because he is correcting or refuting Schleiermacher. Garrett claims that Mullins tends to favorably quote Lewis F. Stearns and Frank H. Foster regarding Christian experience (Garrett, *Baptist Theology*, 416–17).

exhibits a deep level of familiarity he has with the history of philosophy—specific thinkers and philosophical systems—and his ability to discuss them in some detail. Indeed, he did not buy into philosophy wholesale at the sacrifice of his theology, but neither did he reject philosophy outright because of the harm it has done to the Christian religion. Instead, as he did with his dealings with the modernists and fundamentalists, Mullins sought to reconcile the attitudes of the fundamentalists toward philosophy and that of the modernists, taking the middle road between the two extreme approaches to philosophy.

Recall the scene of theology in the late nineteenth century. Natural science had claimed the role of preeminence over all other disciplines and had sought to undercut the very foundation of Christian belief—the Scripture—by calling into question vital truths to the Christian faith: belief in miracles, belief in God as creator of the world, belief in the resurrection of Christ, etc. Higher criticism was an attack on Christian belief from within as scholars sought to demythologize Scripture. In fear of the encroachment of modern thought into traditional Christian belief, some Christians tended towards “insularity and provincialism.”⁹⁰ Mullins, however, saw that each extreme had its valid points, and therefore sought to present a view of science, philosophy, and religion that allowed for each to pursue its end but within the bounds of its limited role.

Ever present throughout Mullins’ writings is his persistent affirmation that science, philosophy and religion “all seek truth based upon facts.” Though their methods may differ, they share the same aim—truth. Each discipline has its own value that it brings in the pursuit of truth, but “it is folly to attempt to flatten out the universe, to level it down to one principle.” Thus, neither science, nor philosophy, nor even religion can claim itself as the sole arbiter of truth. Each has a distinctive role such that when the

⁹⁰Nettles, *The Modern Era*, 153.

three are wedded, a fuller picture of truth is presented.⁹¹ What, then, are the specific roles that define science, philosophy and religion?

In a sermon titled “Faith and Science,” Mullins says of science—that is, the natural sciences—that it describes the world.⁹² From these facts of the observable world, science works from the principle of causality⁹³ and formulates the laws of nature.⁹⁴ Science assumes the existence of a material world, the universality of the law of causation, and the “permanent validity of the laws of nature.”⁹⁵ It employs the inductive method in its modern, technical sense (as opposed to religion’s general use of the method) by taking what is observed and “obeys general conclusions.”⁹⁶ Science, when done well, is “wholly admirable” and is “as modest and teachable and as broad as truth itself,” unable to destroy anything true and valid, particularly in religion.⁹⁷ Nevertheless, though the truths of science are “mathematically exact and clear,” not everything can be explained by science in such a manner, necessitating philosophical and religious investigation.⁹⁸

⁹¹Mullins’ view on the relationship between science, philosophy, and religion would not resonate well with Fundamentalists, particularly Mullins’ claim that neither science, nor philosophy, nor religion can claim itself as the sole arbiter of truth. For Fundamentalists, the Bible is the sole arbiter of truth and speaks to all areas of knowledge. To say that religion (the Bible in particular) is not the sole arbiter of truth is akin to saying that Scripture is insufficient for all things and on par with science and philosophy.

⁹²E. Y. Mullins, “Faith and Science,” in *Faith in the Modern World* (Nashville: The Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1930), 43.

⁹³Mullins, “The Freedom of Faith,” 26.

⁹⁴Mullins, “The Response of Jesus Christ to Modern Thought,” 212. In *Christianity at the Cross Roads*, Mullins identifies the role of science as dealing with the realm of nature, observing facts and phenomena, sequences and causes while operating from the principle of causality (31). See also idem, “The Dangers and Duties of the Present Hour,” 184, as well as idem, “The Freedom of Faith,” 26.

⁹⁵Mullins, *Freedom and Faith in Religion*, 117.

⁹⁶Mullins, “The Present Situation in Theology,” 129.

⁹⁷*Ibid.*, 133.

⁹⁸Mullins, *Freedom and Faith in Religion*, 157.

Mullins' view regarding the role of philosophy has already been presented above; however, a brief mention is necessary in order to present an accurate picture of Mullins' view of the triune nature of truth. If science describes the facts of the observable world and formulates them into natural laws, philosophy seeks the reasons behind the explanations of science.⁹⁹ In short, philosophy seeks a unifying principle which will explain the universe.¹⁰⁰ Grounded in the facts of the world, philosophy employs the principle of rationality (speculation) in its pursuit of truth (the meaning of the world)¹⁰¹ while attempting to be practical in some sense, meeting a need of man.¹⁰² This process, however, stops short of conforming one to live according to "a lofty idea." Further, philosophy does not dogmatically claim one explanation over another, for philosophers "constantly refute its own conclusions by setting them aside for new ones."¹⁰³ Taken in isolation or together, science and philosophy give only an incomplete picture of truth and demonstrate "the conception of an external source" of truth.¹⁰⁴

The picture painted thus far is a hierarchical view of truth: science observes natural phenomenon, describes the facts of the world, and formulates these facts into laws of nature. Philosophy then steps in to combine the facts of science into a single, unifying principle, and in the process provides answers to the perennial questions of mankind. Unfortunately, despite the best efforts of science and philosophy, the answers provided are lacking as they fail to attain ultimate truth; it is here where religion steps in as the third and final step in the pursuit of truth.

⁹⁹Mullins, "The Response of Jesus Christ to Modern Thought," 212.

¹⁰⁰Mullins, *Christianity at the Cross Roads*, 31.

¹⁰¹Mullins, *Freedom and Faith in Religion*, 135.

¹⁰²Mullins, "Pragmatism, Humanism, and Personalism," 502.

¹⁰³Mullins, *Christianity at the Cross Roads*, 155.

¹⁰⁴Mullins, *Axiom of Religion*, 86.

Religion helps to balance out the aims of science and philosophy by virtue of its appeal to religious experience, for without this appeal, science and philosophy remain caught in the eddy of human thought.¹⁰⁵ Specifically, it is Christian religious experience that “is the one datum of all philosophy, and all science. The experience of the individual and of the race is the grist which is poured into all the scientific and philosophical mills.”¹⁰⁶ Like science and philosophy, religion deals with the facts, but it also deals with God and the soul of humankind, and their relations to one another—“the proper office of theology is to set forth as exhaustively as may be the meaning of these facts.”¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁵Mullins, “The Testimony of Christian Experience,” 219. Mullins says of philosophy that it labors in vain because it does not consider all human experience, especially the religious. Philosophy “splits experience into little bits and hunts among the bits for some single abstract principle, which will explain all the rest” (Mullins, “The Testimony of Christian Experience,” 218).

¹⁰⁶Mullins, “The Testimony of Christian Experience,” 215.

¹⁰⁷E. Y. Mullins, “The Theological Trend,” in *The Axioms of Religion*, comp. R. Albert Mohler, ed. Timothy George and Denise George (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1997), 249.

Mullins states in *Freedom and Faith in Religion* that the questions of the soul, freedom, immortality, and God—questions that religions seek to answer—are “the inextricable *residues* of science. That is to say, [science] resist[s] to deal with them. Science is compelled to abandon them altogether and acknowledge her own incompetency” (128, emphasis mine). In *Freedom and Faith in Religion*, Mullins says of philosophy that it applies the laws of logic to scientific data, selecting parts that are most significant to “explain the remainder” (253). Interestingly, Mullins’ label for religious questions as the “residues of science” harkens to Bertrand Russell’s labeling the problems of philosophy as the “residue of science” in *The Problems of Philosophy*, written in 1912 (Bertrand Russell, “The Problems of Philosophy,” in *Classics of Western Philosophy*, 5th ed., ed. Steven M. Cahn [Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1999]).

Both Russell and Mullins view philosophy and religion (respectively) as incapable of answering problems with science’s level of precision and accuracy. For Russell, however, because of science’s significant progress, philosophy was relegated to a status beneath science because of its lack of clarity and progress. He labeled philosophical questions as “the residue of science” in a negative sense—philosophy receives the leftovers of science. Mullins, on the other hand, labels religious questions as “the residue of science” in a more positive sense. Like Russell, he exhibits confidence in the abilities of modern science, but because science, religion, and philosophy operate in their own autonomous spheres, there are questions that sciences naturally cannot answer. Science, therefore, must abandon these questions due to its own limitations, leaving them to religion. The idea here, then, is that science is in a more humble position than that presented by Russell. Religion is able to deal with the “residue of science” because it is not limited to observable facts only, but considers human experience as a whole.

Though no evidence has been found by this author that Mullins was specifically responding to Russell, it is known that Mullins read widely in the philosophy of his day (reference Tribble, “Edgar Young Mullins,” 415) and that he quoted Russell in his sermon “Are We Sitting at the Deathbed of Christianity?” in *Faith in the Modern World* (Nashville: Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1930), 109. It is possible, then, that Mullins in *Christianity at the Crossroads*, published a year after Russell’s *The Problems of Philosophy*, indirectly responded to Russell’s view of science and the “residue” it left behind.

In addition to the unifying role of religion in regards to truth, it has its own unique aim—one that does not fall within the realm of science, nor of philosophy. The aim of religion is “God and salvation from sin. Religion is a personal revelation. It seeks adjustment with the infinite life ... it seeks moral character conformed to that of God.” According to Mullins, then, the operating principle of religion is personality,¹⁰⁸ which is best expressed in the Christian religion, for Christianity harmonizes “with every element of truth in all systems.”¹⁰⁹ Christian experience is “the supplemental link to complete philosophy,” and therefore, by extension, science as well.¹¹⁰

Thus, science, philosophy, and religion are harmonious when each pursues “their respective aims.”¹¹¹ While Mullins emphasizes the harmony of science, philosophy, and religion, he simultaneously stresses the autonomy of each as well. Each mode of truth is harmonious with each other only when they are each “pursuing their respective aims.” Further, each is autonomous with its own methods and criterion of truth.¹¹² In *The Response of Jesus Christ to Modern Thought*, Mullins defends the autonomy of religion—and by extension the autonomy of science and philosophy—by claiming that Jesus himself claimed the autonomy of religion: “religion is interpreted in its own legitimate terms,...as the direct approach of the soul to God,...as the satisfaction of man’s craving for the eternal.” He concludes, then, that “all the great values and satisfactions have their place.” In other words, science and philosophy are autonomous as well:¹¹³ each “pursue different tasks” while they all “seek to deal with reality” and to

¹⁰⁸Mullins, *Christianity at the Cross Roads*, 31-32.

¹⁰⁹E. Y. Mullins, “Christianity as Power,” in *The Life in Christ* New York: (Fleming H. Revell, 1917), 160.

¹¹⁰Mullins, “The Testimony of Christian Experience,” 217.

¹¹¹Mullins, “The Freedom of Faith,” 26.

¹¹²*Ibid.*, 26–27.

¹¹³Mullins, “The Testimony of Christian Experience,” 212.

know the truth. “Their aims are diverse, their methods vary, the principles with which they operate are not the same. But they are harmonious and should cooperate.”¹¹⁴

Nevertheless, they “must and will insist upon its own rights within its own sphere,” free to “pursue its own aim by its own method;” conflict ensues when this right is ignored.¹¹⁵

The Possibility of a Christian Philosophy

When one considers Mullins’ distinction between the roles and methods of science, religion, and philosophy, and their complete autonomy, one can easily assume that Mullins would not hold to the possibility of a Christian philosophy. Here, however, Mullins is not clear as to where he stands on this issue despite his attempt at clarity.

Stressing the unity of science, religion, and philosophy in their pursuit for truth, Mullins exhibited an optimistic view of the progress of modern human thought. In a sermon titled “All Things Work Together,” he claims that “we are learning through the revelation of science and philosophy and sociology, and through all human experience, that the inspired words of Paul are true.”¹¹⁶ Elsewhere he states that science and

¹¹⁴Mullins, *Christianity at the Cross Roads*, 32–33.

¹¹⁵Mullins, *Christianity at the Cross Roads*, 39. The view of the relationship between faith (Christianity) and reason (science and philosophy) which Mullins presents is an attempt to provide for the Christian a means by which to positively interact with contemporary thought without compromising orthodox Christian beliefs. Yet, his insistence on the harmony of science, philosophy, and religion, while simultaneously claiming the right of autonomy for each (which, when ignored, results in error), was not a view widely heralded among conservative Christians, particularly J. Gresham Machen in his review of *Christianity at the Cross Roads* (J. Gresham Machen, “The Relation of Religion to Science and Philosophy,” *The Princeton Theological Review* 24 [1926]: 28–66).

For Machen, Mullins rightly states the harmony of science, philosophy, and religion; yet, the insistence on the “sharp separation” between the three “leads...logically into an abyss of skepticism.” Such an end is not Mullins’ intention, Machen intimates, for he “contradicts it almost at every turn” in the book. Mullins’ “insistence upon the factual basis of Christianity, is really a protest against his own separation between religion and philosophy,” and science (Machen, “The Relation of Religion to Science and Philosophy,” 46). In his thorough critique of the view of autonomy as presented in *Christianity at the Cross Roads*, Machen argues that each discipline cannot be separated, but are intimately connected. Thus, for the Christian, the “force” of apologetics is strongest when one presents the details of science, philosophy, and religion as “embraced in a harmonious whole.” The autonomy Mullins presents introduces “an inconsistent element that mars the symmetry and the stability of the apologetic edifice” (ibid., 65).

¹¹⁶E. Y. Mullins, “All Things Work Together,” in *The Life in Christ* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1917), 143.

philosophy have slowly come to recognize the value of experience.¹¹⁷ Yet, because each are autonomous (a point he emphasizes with as much force as he does regarding their unity), he states that Christianity is not a philosophy.

Mullins provides a lengthy discussion in *Christianity at the Cross Roads* on the function and method of philosophy. In this discussion, he claims that philosophy seeks to solve the ultimate problems of life: the problems of mind, freedom, knowledge, Being, truth, and values.¹¹⁸ As such, philosophy overlaps with religion (Christianity) in regard to the problems they seek to solve. However, Mullins later claims that “Christianity is primarily not a philosophy of the universe. It is a religion. It is not founded upon metaphysics.” Christianity is in contrast with philosophy in regard to the facts it employs in its investigation.¹¹⁹

Philosophy, though it goes beyond phenomena to seek a unifying principle of the universe, is still tied to the phenomena regarding the data it employs; it does not deal with the spiritual realm of reality. As such, philosophical thought is subject to change and therefore cannot be a “stable basis for religion” because “every great religious verity is constantly called in question.”¹²⁰ Nevertheless, there exists within man a thirst for knowledge—an “unquenchable desire” for new attempts to “solve the world riddle.” This thirst reflects the nature that God has given to man; “it is the eternal seeking expression in and through man and guiding him to his true heritage in the realm of the universe.”¹²¹ Philosophy, however, cannot satisfy this thirst.

¹¹⁷Mullins, “The Testimony of Christian Experience,” 216.

¹¹⁸Mullins, *Christianity at the Cross Roads*, 156–58. In *The Christian Religion in Its Doctrinal Expression*, he states that philosophy aims to “discover the underlying principle or principles of the universe ... [and] to express the meaning of the universe in a worldview which combines all the parts of being into a coherent unity” (104). It emphasizes unity and cohesiveness—“a complete explanation of all things, so far as it is humanly possible” (105).

¹¹⁹Mullins, *Christianity at the Cross Roads*, 163.

¹²⁰*Ibid.*, 167, 172.

¹²¹Mullins, *The Christian Religion in its Doctrinal Expression*, 118.

Religion, on the other hand, is “fellowship with a personal God.”¹²² It involves “fellowship and obedience on man’s part, and self-revelation on God’s part. It is a form of experience and of life.”¹²³ Further, unlike philosophy, religion—particularly Christianity—is concerned with God, one’s salvation from sin, and with conforming one’s life to God.¹²⁴ It appears, then, that because philosophy is still tied to phenomena, and religion is one’s relationship with God, Mullins does not hold to the possibility of a Christian philosophy. Yet, in light of other statements Mullins made regarding the possibility of a Christian philosophy, it becomes clear that he had a more nuanced answer to this question.

Religion, though autonomous from science and philosophy, does not value other forms of human activity less; rather, it does so more. Religion is the supreme “value” and “function” of life in which “all else, art, education, philosophy, are transformed into new forms of development and of ministry.” All disciplines find their fulfillment in religion.¹²⁵ In particular, philosophy “is man reaching up towards God,” while Christian experience “is the effect of God reaching down to man.”¹²⁶ As stated earlier, Mullins claimed that Christian experience is “the one datum of all philosophy” (and science) and is “the supplemental link to complete philosophy.”¹²⁷ A Christian philosophy is possible, then, when philosophy recognizes the competency of the soul—the freedom of an individual to search for and know truth apart from any external authority. Once one accepts the competency of the soul in philosophy, “Christian theism

¹²²Mullins, *Christianity at the Cross Roads*, 97.

¹²³Mullins, *The Christian Religion in its Doctrinal Expression*, 1–2.

¹²⁴Mullins, *Christianity at the Cross Roads*, 31–32.

¹²⁵Mullins, *The Christian Religion in its Doctrinal Expression*, 9.

¹²⁶Mullins, “The Testimony of Christian Experience,” 217.

¹²⁷*Ibid.*, 215, 217.

is the only possible philosophy for the man who accepts our fundamental principle of the soul's competency.”¹²⁸

Mullins' answer to the question of the possibility of a Christian philosophy apparently is predicated on a nuanced use of the word “philosophy.” If one uses “philosophy” to mean that discipline which employs the principle of rationality to interpret the datum of science and to discover a unifying principle of the world, then there is no such thing as a Christian philosophy. Such a view would imply that religion transcends the bounds of philosophy, melting philosophy into just another form of religion. Instead, reason “has more than one dimension”¹²⁹ and is employed in science, religion, and philosophy by Christians and non-Christians alike. A Christian may do philosophy, but he does not do a special form of philosophy different from that of an unbeliever; rather, he employs reason within the bounds of philosophy in the same way as the non-Christian. In this way, there is no possibility of a Christian philosophy.

If philosophy is understood as one's worldview, however, then one can say that Mullins rightly holds to the possibility of a Christian philosophy. When one understands God—as understood in Christian belief—as a “fact given to us actually in experience,” he adds to his stock of knowledge provided by science and philosophy and frames his “general worldview.”¹³⁰ Mullins alludes to one's philosophy as his worldview in the sermon “The Freedom of Faith,” where he chides modernists for interpreting the facts of the world in light of their worldviews. Here one mistakenly views the world in light of his assumptions. Therefore, “world-views, or philosophies, do not afford a satisfactory basis for religion. Philosophies are weak or strong according to their assumptions.”¹³¹

¹²⁸Mullins, *The Axioms of Religion*, 74.

¹²⁹Mullins, *Why is Christianity True?*, 61.

¹³⁰Mullins, *Freedom and Faith in Religion*, 254.

¹³¹Mullins, “The Freedom of Faith,” 28–29.

Christian philosophy is based not upon assumptions, but upon “the historic facts of the New Testament and the facts of religious experience.”¹³² If “philosophy” is understood as a worldview, then one can indeed hold to the possibility of a Christian philosophy.

The Role of Philosophy in the Life of the Believer

Mullins does not explicitly speak to the role of philosophy in the life of the Christian; his view on the unity of truth, however, betrays the view that the Christian need not shy away from philosophy. One reason why the Christian can utilize philosophy is because its aim is truth based upon facts.¹³³ The Christian is particularly interested in facts because his “faith rests upon facts.... Loyalty to fact must be [one’s] watchword.”¹³⁴ The scientific spirit¹³⁵ of the day in is the Christian’s “greatest ally.”¹³⁶ “Ideas rule the world as never before,” Mullins claimed in the sermon “Christ’s Challenge to Manhood.”¹³⁷ Therefore, it is the duty of the theologian (and the believer by implication) to understand philosophy and “to judge it from the point of view of its own avowed purpose.” One is to sympathize with it as an “intellectual construction” before passing judgment.¹³⁸

¹³²Mullins, “The Freedom of Faith,” 29.

¹³³*Ibid.*, 26.

¹³⁴Mullins, “Christianity in the Modern World,” 482. See also Mullins, “The Freedom of Faith,” 26: “Christianity joins hands with science in respect for facts and in hatred and repudiation of sham and make-believes. The common ground of science and the Christian religion is loyalty to fact.”

¹³⁵Here Mullins uses “scientific” in the sense of “learning and knowledge” as defined in Mullins, “Confused Thinking,” 1.

¹³⁶Mullins, “Christianity in the Modern World,” 482.

¹³⁷Mullins, “Christ’s Challenge to Manhood,” 119.

¹³⁸Mullins, “Pragmatism, Humanism, and Personalism,” 501. Mullins does not imply that every Christian will be able to adequately understand and utilize philosophy. He states in *Christianity at the Cross Roads* that the “philosophic mode of thought is beyond the capacity of men generally” and does not always connect with human interests (165). This does not permit one, however, to dismiss philosophy as unnecessary or irrelevant; rather, his mention of philosophy and use of philosophy throughout his works models for his readers how the Christian could and should—in his opinion—employ philosophic thought.

Conclusion

Summary

E. Y. Mullins lived and worked in an era in which traditional Christian beliefs and modern, progressive thought were at loggerheads. Evangelicals, and Southern Baptists in particular, were divided over how to deal with the findings of modern science and philosophy, particularly as fundamental Christian beliefs were undermined. Mullins sought to uphold traditional Christian beliefs while simultaneously culling from modern thought aspects he found amenable with Christianity. He avoided the extreme of dismissing all philosophy in order to protect the Christian faith while at the same time he avoided buying wholesale into modern thought at the expense of Christian belief. To do so, Mullins defined philosophy as the search for the meaning of human life and experience as a whole. Philosophy is to be viewed as an autonomous discipline distinct from science and religion. When all three disciplines operate within their own sphere, they work harmoniously toward the search for truth. The believer, then, ought not to dismiss philosophy, but instead embrace those elements that are true, for they serve to uphold the ultimate truth found in divine revelation.

Closing Thoughts

E. Y. Mullins' most productive years as a thinker and writer coincided with the infancy of Analytic philosophy. For over a century prior to Mullins' election to president at Southern Seminary in 1899, philosophy had been overshadowed by the progress of science such that thinkers began to accommodate philosophy's purpose and nature to that of the natural sciences. As the twentieth century dawned, hope was placed in a narrower view of philosophy as the process of analyzing and clarifying words and ideas. No longer was philosophy concerned with building systems of thought, nor was its focus on the

Mullins' books and sermons, in particular, were written such that those not seminary-trained or versed in philosophy could understand difficult philosophic ideas, such that his directive to theologians to understand philosophy can be applied to every Christian as well.

perennial questions of life. The works of Ayer, Wittgenstein, and Russell, among others, would limit philosophy's role such that it barely resembled the great tradition of Western philosophy.

Despite the growing trends within the philosophy community to reduce philosophy's identity, Mullins viewed philosophy in its classical role and purpose. While maintaining the great value of scientific discovery and the effectiveness of its method, Mullins emphasized that science can do only so much. Scientific investigation operated within the realm of what can be observed; further, it can only describe what is observed. Science cannot explain or interpret what it observes. Those questions that science cannot answer left to philosophy. Yet, even philosophy is limited, for it cannot discover the ultimate truth that unifies all other truth. Religion alone focuses on the data of human religious experience, which ultimately leading one to knowledge of God—his nature and his purpose.

Mullins' consistent affirmation of philosophy (when operating within its proper realm) provides for believers an encouragement to engage in contemporary intellectual ideas. Where one finds truth, there will be unity with the truth of Scripture. Any truth found within the various human disciplines of knowledge accords with the truth of God's revealed Word. The Christian, then, ought not dismiss philosophy (or science), but redeem those disciplines for the advancement of the Christian faith.

The strength of Mullins' metaphilosophy, however, serves as one of his greatest weaknesses as well. J. Gresham Machen rightly points out that Mullins places too much emphasis on the autonomy of religion, science, and philosophy.¹³⁹ Though the three are harmonious when they each work within their arena, the sharp distinction between their roles and purpose ultimately erects walls that separate their respective realms. According to Mullins, "conflict" ensues when any or all realms overlap into

¹³⁹Machen, "The Relation of Religion to Science and Philosophy," 28–66.

issues or questions for which they are unsuited.¹⁴⁰ Philosophy can only function properly when left to its own data and methods. Ultimately, such a view sets religion, science, and philosophy at odds with each other as they each present an incomplete, and possibly conflicting, view of truth about human experience and the world.

Another area in which Mullins' philosophy exhibits weakness is in his emphasis of human experience as the data of philosophy, an idea that is intimately connected with the importance he gives to Christian experience. Mullins rightly points out that philosophy is concerned not only with facts (as understood by CSP in the nineteenth century), but with the whole of human experience as a whole. One cannot seek to understand the world in which he lives by limiting the data of investigation. Mullins, however, fails to move beyond his assertion that philosophy examines human experience. He does not specify how experience is to serve as an epistemological source, and how one avoids slipping into viewing truth as relative to the individual as opposed to an objective reality. Unlike the walls Mullins erected between religion, science, and philosophy, his appeal to experience was given no boundaries. Though Mullins believed in objective truth, his stress on human experience leaves the door open to subjectivity in philosophical investigation.

Though Mullins' metaphilosophy is not without weakness, his overall approach warrants investigation by Baptist thinkers on how one views philosophy and its role in the service of Christian theology. Christians ought to view philosophy as an ally in the search for and defense of truth.

¹⁴⁰Mullins, *Christianity at the Cross Roads*, 39.

CHAPTER 3

THE METAPHILOSOPHY OF JOHN NEWPORT

Background

Context Prior to Newport

The last decade and a half of E. Y. Mullins' life witnessed not only a changing landscape within American Protestant theology brought on by science's ever-expanding influence, but also in the impact global affairs had on the American culture in general and the church in particular. The divide between liberal and conservative Protestants that formed in the latter half of the nineteenth century began to widen irreparably.

More liberal-minded Christians shared in the optimism of their day for progress through their missionary-like zeal in spreading the social gospel. Where the movement was "sporadic" and "uncertain" during the 1860s and 1870s, it "deepened the intellectual foundations of its work, broadened its focus, vastly increased its following," and made inroads into theological schools, some mainline denominations, and in the "prevailing opinions of churchgoing America."¹ By the turn of the century, America's cities experienced unprecedented growth. Coastal cities doubled or tripled in population due to immigration. Midwestern cities like Chicago (which grew from 29,963 people in 1850 to 1.7 million people by the end of the century) rapidly grew from the influx of those from rural areas. Institutional religion could no longer be indifferent of the "ills and pains" of those who sought a better life in the city but met hardship and squalor instead.²

¹Sydney Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People*, 2nd ed. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004.), 793.

²Other Midwestern cities that grew in size were Detroit, Milwaukee, Minneapolis, St. Paul, St. Louis, Indianapolis, Cleveland, Columbus, Toledo, Kansas City, Denver, and Omaha (Edwin Gaustad and

Though initially unsupportive of the First World War (1914–1918), “social gospellers”³ eventually heeded President Woodrow Wilson’s call to “make the world safe for democracy” and “vigorously” supported the war efforts when America joined the Allies in 1917.⁴ By this point, Christopher H. Evans claims in *Histories of American Christianity* that most Protestant denominations in the North and a few in the South consisted of leadership sympathetic to the social gospel agenda. Yet, cracks began to form within the movement when, in 1914, Walter Rauschenbusch (1861–1918)—a Northern Baptist seminary professor who “typified [the] passion and ... soul” of the social gospel movement—claimed that the impending world war served as a moment of crisis for the social gospel movement.⁵ Nevertheless, social gospellers forged ahead, and with the Allied victory in 1918, the way was cleared for the advancement of their agenda.⁶

Yet, as the 1920s dawned and roared into a time of economic prosperity, the movement was “chastened” by resistance to its message and by “an emerging generation of theologians who challenged liberal theological suppositions concerning social and economic progress.”⁷ Further, with the rise of communism after the Russian Revolution of 1917, the Red Scare began to hold a prominent place in the minds of many Americans as a “rash of strikes, bomb throwing, [and] radical advocacy” broke out after the Armistice of World War I.⁸ The social gospel began to lose steam in the 1920s.

Leigh Schmidt, *The Religious History of America: The Heart of the American Story from Colonial Times to Today* [San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2002], 231–32).

³Christopher H. Evans, *Histories of American Christianity: An Introduction* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2013), 236.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid., 242.

⁶Ibid., 272.

⁷Ibid., 271.

⁸Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People*, 899.

As early twentieth-century liberal theology found expression in part through the social gospel, conservative Protestants struggled to be relevant in a culture where science seemed to undercut the validity of religious belief and experience, and liberal ideals guided the American culture. As discontent grew among conservatives over their waning influence and the advancement of liberal theology, Fundamentalism within conservative Protestantism grew considerably in the early twentieth century such that it was no longer a minority group of Protestants crying wolf, but an influential group with a well-developed theology and agenda.

Despite the rise of and influence of the social gospel in American Protestant churches, there were those in many churches that found the movement lacking. Sydney Ahlstrom identifies at least two groups of Protestants that were unsatisfied with the new “mainstream tradition.”⁹ The first group is the Fundamentalists, who consisted of “a vast interdenominational movement of those who protested against innovation in religion.”¹⁰ Closely related to the Fundamentalists, but distinct due to their more noted separation from the mainline Protestantism of their day, was a group of Protestants involved in the Holiness or Pentecostal churches.¹¹

Thomas D. Clark posits in *The Emerging South* that most churches in the South, unlike their counterparts in the North, were not influenced by the social gospel movement. For many Southern Protestants, “the term ‘social’ gospel contained an implication that was alien to an individualistic agrarian society. Problems and sins were

⁹Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People*, 805.

¹⁰Ahlstrom describes this group as follows: “Most of its adherents were troubled by the decline of the old-time religion and with its accent on conversion ... their bonds were chiefly doctrinal. Whether rich or poor, educated or illiterate, rural or urban, Baptist or Presbyterian, they were troubled by the advance of theological liberalism and the passing of Puritan moralism” (*A Religious History of the American People*, 805–6).

¹¹*Ibid.*, 806.

personal, not social.”¹² While this may be true in general, conservatives were involved in some social issues. Southern Baptists in particular—a convention made up of both Fundamentalists and Modernists—encouraged the passing of the Prohibition Act of 1918.¹³ When the 1928 Democratic presidential nomination was given to Alfred E. Smith, an anti-Prohibition candidate, E. Y. Mullins¹⁴ and Southern Baptists threw their support behind pro-Prohibition candidate Herbert Hoover. Nevertheless, the general approach of many conservatives, particularly Fundamentalists, was to stay out of any social gospel movement. Such an attitude was rooted in a two century-old tradition where pastors in the South refrained from involvement in politics and in “direct action in social reform.”¹⁵

The issue that took center stage for conservative Protestants in the twentieth century leading up to World War I was the growing influence of evolutionary thought and its ongoing, but ever-growing, debate with religion. Prevalent thought in America changed rapidly and drastically after the publication of Darwin’s *Origin of Species* and the culmination of the Civil War. Once a nation dominated by theological thought, science quickly dominated academic thought in American universities and its

¹²Thomas D. Clark, *The Emerging South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1961), 252. See also Ellen M. Rosenberg, *The Southern Baptists: A Subculture in Transition* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1989), 41-42.

¹³Rosenberg, *The Southern Baptists*, 43.

¹⁴Mullins’ biography William E. Ellis states that though Mullins was pro-Prohibition, he “took little interest in [the] issue until the mid-1920” during which he “became increasingly concerned over the fate of Prohibition” (“*A Man of Books and a Man of the People*”: *E.Y. Mullins and the Crisis of Moderate Southern Baptist Leadership* [Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1985], 209). Along with many other Southern Baptists and other Protestants, Mullins was “spurred into political activism” as he threw his weight behind Herbert Hoover’s campaign against Alfred Smith. The issue of prohibition was perhaps one of very few public issues that Fundamentalist and Moderate Southern Baptists agreed upon (*ibid.*, 209).

¹⁵Clark, *The Emerging South*, 252. While this may indeed be the case, Clark’s claim cannot be seen to apply to all Southern ministers. For instance, James P. Boyce served in the treasury department for the Confederate government of South Carolina (Gregory A. Wills, *Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1859–2009* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009], 61). There are other instances where ministers were involved politically in some fashion, but if Clark’s claim is understood as stating the case in general, then he is correct.

methodological naturalism adapted by virtually all areas of human knowledge.

Scientific discoveries by the turn of the century presented a vastly different picture of the universe than that given just less than a century prior. Newtonian science presented an orderly universe that operated according to natural laws—the universe was like a machine composed of individual parts working according to its design.¹⁶ For many Christians, Newtonian science did not disprove the existence of God, but served as further proof for his existence. Darwin’s theory of evolution changed the course of science by presenting a naturalistic world devoid of design and purpose. Scientific theories soon began to corroborate such a picture of the world. For example, Max Planck’s (1858–1947) quantum theory (1900) and Albert Einstein’s (1879–1955) special theory of relativity did away with Newtonian physics and a mechanical view of the world. American Protestantism in the first quarter of the twentieth century witnessed much infighting within its churches between Modernists and Fundamentalists over Darwinian evolution and its implications regarding the biblical view of the world as purposely created by God.

After the First World War, America transformed into an urban nation in “statistical fact” and in its “dominant mood.” Movies, radio, and automobiles became common place; the standard of living “took a great jump forward; leisure and play became the right of the many rather than the privilege of the few.”¹⁷ While the 1920s are generally known as a period of fast and loose living, it was also a decade consisting of various battles of ideas between conservatives and liberals. One such battle was the 1925 Scopes Trial, which was essentially a public working out of the Fundamentalist-Modernist controversy over evolution.¹⁸ John Scopes was put on trial for and found guilty

¹⁶John Weaver, *Christianity and Science* (London: SCM Press, 2010), 63.

¹⁷Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People*, 895.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, 909–10.

of teaching evolution in a Tennessee public school. Though the Fundamentalists won the court battle, they lost in the court of public opinion as many viewed the trial as the “defeat” of Fundamentalism.¹⁹

Another issue within Fundamentalism during the first quarter of the twentieth century was the growing number who espoused a premillennial eschatology which stressed that Jesus Christ’s return would occur before the millennial era. The Second Coming would be preceded by “social distress and a widespread rejection of Christ’s message of salvation.”²⁰ The decades following the Civil War were marked by rapidly growing urban populations, the immigration of non-Protestants, and economic upheaval—events that many interpreted through premillennial lenses.²¹ Though various strands of premillennialism developed in the nineteenth century, dispensationalism was the most influential.²²

The form of dispensationalism developed in modern Protestantism is generally credited to an Irish clergyman named John Nelson Darby (1800–1882).²³ This strand of premillennialism taught that church history is divided into seven stages through which God makes known his purpose for mankind. According to Darby, nineteenth-century Christians were living in the sixth dispensation—“Man Under Grace.” Appealing to 1 Thessalonians 4:16–17, the seventh and final stage will be ushered in at the Second Coming of Jesus Christ when all believers will be taken up with Christ, who will then reign over the earth for one thousand years.²⁴ Until Christ’s return, the sixth stage is

¹⁹Evans, *Histories of American Christianity*, 279.

²⁰*Ibid.*, 250.

²¹*Ibid.*

²²*Ibid.*, 251. See also Gaustad and Schmidt, *The Religious History of America*, 306.

²³Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People*, 808.

²⁴Gaustad and Schmidt, *The Religious History of America*, 306. Dispensationalists differ in identifying the seven stages, but one can easily distinguish between them as follows: the stage “of

characterized by “intermittent times of prosperity as well as religious and civil discord.”²⁵ For the dispensationalist, the Bible was authoritative for all mankind throughout history—an authority that was continuous and unchanging. Thus, the “true Christian” need only “to read and interpret correctly the teachings of Scripture” to understand the signs of the times and overarching meaning of history (unlike the social gospellers who looked to church history as the interpretive lens).²⁶

Dispensationalism grew in popularity among Fundamentalists in the early twentieth century primarily through Cyrus I. Scofield (1843–1921) and his lectures, his Correspondence Bible School, and—most significantly—his Schofield Reference Bible.²⁷ Sydney Ahlstrom suggests that the appeal of Scofield’s brand of dispensationalism is found in its dependence on doctrine as its foundation.²⁸ It emphasized the plenary verbal inspiration of the Bible, employed typology and numerology, and practically repudiated any higher criticism.²⁹ In a day when the foundation of Christian belief was attacked on all sides by modern science, philosophy, and higher criticism, Scofield’s dispensationalism provided the means by which Christians could understand the nature of the ever-changing world in which they lived.³⁰

innocency (Adam before the fall), conscience (Adam to Noah), promise (Abraham to Moses), Mosaic law (Moses to Christ), grace (Pentecost to the rapture) and the millennium” (Sinclair B. Ferguson, David F. Wright, and J. I. Packer, ed., *New Dictionary of Theology: A Concise and Authoritative Resource*, s. v. “Dispensational Theology,” H. H. Rowden [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1988]).

²⁵Evans, *Histories of American Christianity*, 252.

²⁶Ibid.

²⁷Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People*, 810.

²⁸Ibid., 811.

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰Christopher H. Evans provides several reasons as to why dispensationalism had such an impact on American Christianity in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. First, it “tapped into a deep-seated American Protestant tradition that emphasized the fact that anyone in America could read and interpret the Bible.” Second, “despite its rather grim view of history, the movement also affirms a discernible pastoral edge that offered an appealing alternative to what appeared to many to be the apostate and equivocal beliefs of religious modernism” (*Histories of American Christianity*, 253–54).

The social gospel's impact eventually waned, and Fundamentalism became less relevant as the mid-1920s gave way to the last third of the decade. By 1925, "denominational vitality" began a downward trend in America that went well into the Depression years. Church attendance declined throughout the nation, there were fewer Protestants entering the foreign mission field, and a growing tendency emerged that "identif[ied] religion with the business-oriented values of the American way of life."³¹ Southern Baptists in particular endured embezzlement controversies at both the Home and Foreign Mission Boards as well as at Baylor University. Between 1922 and 1931, the SBC lost fifty-eight percent of its colleges and seminaries due to debt incurred from the failed 75 Million Campaign.³²

The 1930s witnessed the American economy languishing in the Great Depression, Franklin D. Roosevelt implementing his far-reaching New Deal, and Germany flexing its muscles in defiance of the Armistice. Battle-weary American Protestantism gave rise to the critiques of neo-orthodox theologians like Karl Barth (1886–1968) and Emil Brunner (1889–1966), and other radical theologians like Rudolf Bultmann (1884–1976) and Paul Tillich (1886–1965). These theologians did not share with Protestant conservatives a "literalist worldview," and while they did "concede that traditions of liberal scholarship (such as biblical higher criticism) had their place," they "distrusted the progressive optimism" of the liberal social gospel.³³ Neo-orthodoxy was a force in American and European theology in the years leading up to World War II primarily among academics. Due to the distractions of the deepening economic depression and the eventual onset of World War II, the neo-orthodoxy movement to the

³¹Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People*, 899.

³²Rosenberg, *The Southern Baptists*, 46.

³³Evans, *Histories of American Christianity*, 284–85.

grass-roots level was hindered, though it did have some impact.³⁴ It bestowed upon Protestantism a renewed interest in church doctrine, biblical theology, and a “reshaped Social Gospel” that had a more “realistic awareness of institutional power, social structures, and human depravity.”³⁵

A Short Biography

When studying a particular aspect of another’s work, one can easily isolate the subject of study from other aspects of their lives (family, upbringing, non-academic events of significance, non-academic influences, etc.). To focus only on the intellectual history of a thinker presents a particular view of the subject divorced from the whole person, thus painting an incomplete picture of the subject. An accurate view of someone’s thought necessitates an appreciation of their surrounding context and the forces that shaped their life and thought.

John Paul Newport understood the impact one’s background and influences has on one’s thought. He took “great pains” to provide his readers an account of those who influenced his thought.³⁶ Newport states in the preface to *Life’s Ultimate Questions: A Contemporary Philosophy of Religion* that “a writer’s background and belief structure inevitably color [their] work.”³⁷ In light of this belief, Newport provided in each of his published books “the immediate and more distant backgrounds of [his] personal pilgrimage as it pertain[ed] to the writings” of the particular subject at hand.³⁸ Such an approach gives one a rare glance into those events and people that shaped and influenced

³⁴Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People*, 947.

³⁵Ibid., 947–48.

³⁶Theodore J. Cabal, “Problems and Promise in a Biblical Worldview with Special Reference to John Paul Newport” (Ph.D. diss., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1995), 4–5.

³⁷John Newport, *Life’s Ultimate Questions: A Contemporary Philosophy of Religion* (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1989), xiii.

³⁸Ibid.

a thinker whose work impacted many future SBC leaders and academicians.³⁹

Raised in a godly, Christian home in a small Missouri town, Newport's parents and grandparents gave the highest priority to their evangelical faith "where moral and spiritual values were of central importance."⁴⁰ In the preface of *The Lion and the Lamb*, Newport says of his mother: "my devout mother was fascinated by Revelation—especially as it came alive to her through the notes of the 'old' *Scofield Bible*."⁴¹ His childhood pastor taught the dispensational premillennial view of Revelation in a "dramatic and vivid way," employing the use of Clarence Larkin's (1850–1924) dispensational charts.⁴² For Newport, the value of such preaching at the very least "brought those of us in a provincial town into the drama of world history."⁴³ It was in this church that young Newport was saved at the age of eight.⁴⁴

John Newport participated on his college's debate team as a student at William Jewell College and during a particular six-week debate tour, he stayed in the fraternity houses at each campus he visited. Newport became "repulsed" by the philosophies and life-perspectives exhibited by college students with which he came into contact. Whereas his Christian walk was characterized as "experiential" during his college days,⁴⁵ Newport

³⁹L. Russ Bush, "John Paul Newport: A Man For All Seasons," *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 29, no. 3 (1987): 10–11. By 1987 alone, Newport had supervised L. Russ Bush, Russell Dilday, Randall Lolley, Louis Mauldin, and Yandall Woodfin, among many others (Bush listed twenty-two SBC leaders and academicians who studied under Newport). The number of students whom Newport influenced continued to grow until his passing in 2000. One such former student of Newport's is Theodore J. Cabal.

⁴⁰Cabal, "Problems and Promise in a Biblical Worldview," 2–3.

⁴¹John Newport, *The Lion and the Lamb* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1986), preface.

⁴²*Ibid.*

⁴³*Ibid.*

⁴⁴Frank L. Mauldin, "John Paul Newport," in *The Legacy of Southwestern: Writings That Shaped a Tradition*, ed. James L. Garrett, Jr. (North Richland Hills, TX: Smithfield Press, 2002), 208.

⁴⁵In the preface to *The Lion and the Lamb*, Newport states that while in college, he was "drawn to the experiential side of Christianity.... In reaction to the libertinism of the era, I saw moral and spiritual renewal as a priority" (no page). See also Cabal, "Problems and Promise in a Biblical Worldview," 3.

knew after this particular debate tour that there had to be “a better or more fulfilling life-style or life purpose.” Finally, while attending a national youth conference, he was presented a “refreshing and inviting alternative” to what he witnessed on college campuses. “In positive and exciting terms and life-styles, the dynamics of the biblical and Christian way of life were presented.”⁴⁶

After graduating from William Jewell, Newport attended SBTS (1939–1943) where he obtained his Th.M. and Th.D. in biblical studies, specializing in Apocalypticism. Newport pastored two churches while in seminary: Crab Orchard Baptist Church and Drakes Creek Baptist Church. Upon graduating from seminary, he accepted the call in 1944 as pastor of Clinton Baptist Church in Clinton, Mississippi.⁴⁷ Newport’s time in Clinton shaped the focus of his studies and served as the catalyst that would propel him into the academic world as a philosophy professor. Clinton Baptist Church was located across the street from Mississippi College, a Southern Baptist college. During his pastorate, Newport came into contact with Christian professors who, having done graduate work at secular colleges “dominated by the Enlightenment and the secular worldview,” were having a difficult time relating their faith to their studies. Newport, “realizing a developing need in the evangelical world ... determined” to pursue graduate studies in Europe in the areas of philosophical theology and Christian apologetics.⁴⁸ Newport knew that there was a way that Christians could take that is “valid in modern learning without capitulating to modernity.” The Christian did not have to choose between the “historic Christian faith and modern learning.”⁴⁹

⁴⁶John Newport, *Christ and the New Consciousness* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1978), 8.

⁴⁷Bush, “John Paul Newport,” 5.

⁴⁸John P. Newport, *The New Age Movement and the Biblical Worldview: Conflict and Dialogue* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998), xii.

⁴⁹John Newport, *Paul Tillich, Makers of the Modern Theological Mind*, ed. John P. Patterson (Waco, TX: Word Books Publishers, 1984), 12.

Newport's European studies led him to the University of Edinburgh (Ph.D., 1953) where he studied John Calvin and his view of biblical language and accommodation.⁵⁰ He would later study at the Universities of Basel and Zurich in Europe, and at Texas Christian University (M.A., 1968), Harvard, Boston University, and Union Theological Seminary in the United States.⁵¹ Newport also studied philosophy at the University of Tulsa, Columbia University and Tulane University.⁵² His "voracious reading appetite"⁵³ and an "insatiable desire for all knowledge" directed Newport's studies and his profession.⁵⁴

After his time in Edinburgh, Newport served a short stint as pastor of Immanuel Baptist Church in Tulsa, Oklahoma (1948–1949) after which he became assistant professor and Director of Graduate Studies in Religion at Baylor University.⁵⁵ Just as quickly as he arrived at Baylor he left in 1951 for New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary as a professor in Philosophy of Religion and New Testament. Finally, in 1952, Newport moved to Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. Aside from his professorship at Rice University (1976–1979) in Houston, Texas, he served SWBTS the rest of his life through his teaching, writing, and eventual administrative role as Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost. In the midst of his active academic

⁵⁰Bush, "John Paul Newport," 5.

⁵¹Cabal, "Problems and Promise in a Biblical Worldview," 4. Cabal lists all of the influential theologians and philosophers Newport studied under throughout this time at various universities: "John Ballie, William Manson, Tom Torrance, Oscar Cullmann, Karl Barth, Emil Brunner, Paul Tillich, G. Ernest Wright, Frank Cross, Krister Stehndahl, Reinhold Niebuhr, and John Macquarrie" (4).

⁵²Mauldin, "John Paul Newport," 209.

⁵³Cabal, "Problems and Promise in a Biblical Worldview," 4.

⁵⁴Mauldin, "John Paul Newport," 207. Ferguson states in his review of *Life's Ultimate Questions* that Newport's European studies began a life-long journey "for an authentic faith joined with critical insight, spiritual understanding, and professional competence" ("Forum," *Theological Educator* 41 [Spring 1990]: 34).

⁵⁵Bush, "John Paul Newport," 5.

career, Newport continued to serve SBC member churches as an interim pastor in over fifty churches in Oklahoma, Kentucky, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Texas.⁵⁶

Newport's Metaphilosophy

Russell Dilday (1930–), former president of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary (1977–1994), described Newport as a philosopher who “synthesized” different strands of knowledge into a consistent worldview.⁵⁷ According to Mauldin, Newport’s philosophy “possesses a uniqueness derived from its response to the God of the Bible, from its focus upon persons and values, and from its devotion to the reality of history, historical particulars, and a historical type of thinking.” Newport did not present philosophy in the traditional manner by focusing on the classic philosophical categories of epistemology, metaphysics, and axiology.⁵⁸ Rather, following G. Ernest Wright’s (1909–1974) suggestion, Newport developed a philosophy based upon biblical categories and the “centrality of history and covenant.”⁵⁹ That is, he “began with history, plus existence, then proceeded to revelation and to reason, and from reason to dialogue with world religions, art, science, etc.”⁶⁰

⁵⁶Bush, “John Paul Newport,” 5.

⁵⁷Russell Dilday, “Practical Apologist: Faith Seeking Understanding,” *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 29, no. 3 (1987): 12.

⁵⁸Frank L. Mauldin, “John Newport and a Biblical World View,” *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 29, no. 3 (1987): 34.

⁵⁹Mauldin, “John Paul Newport,” 210. Newport’s “specific faith-commitment” brings about his “key category and metaphysic [that] arises from the interaction of revelation, redemption, personal realism, and history found in the Scriptures, which contain a common set of presuppositions—an implicit metaphysic” (211).

In *Life’s Ultimate Questions*, Newport describes Wright’s approach: the historical grounding of the biblical worldview is “unique among religions—that the Bible is the witness to the only religious movement in history that centers its case squarely in history and its inspired interpretation....Nature in itself does not contain ultimate meaning, although it can point to that meaning. Human beings cannot find authentic meaning through their elaborate attempts to get beyond or out of history. Rather, certain key events have been selected which are unique, remarkable, and unrepeatable—and which, when interpreted under divine inspiration, hold the clues to meaning” (10).

⁶⁰Mauldin, “John Paul Newport,” 210. Newport outlines his rubric in *Life’s Ultimate*

A short survey of the titles of Newport's works illustrates his non-traditional approach—an approach that seems unsystematic at the surface level.⁶¹ *Demons, Demons, Demons* (1972) provides a biblical and philosophical analysis of the occult. *Christianity and Contemporary Art Forms* (1979) biblically and philosophically analyzes popular art and culture. *What is Christian Doctrine?* (1984) presents a summary of “orthodox Christian affirmations” and is written with the layperson in mind. *Christ and the New Consciousness* (1978) provides an analysis of the New Age movement in America, and *Why Christians Fight over the Bible* (1974) was written in response to the inerrancy controversy that was brewing in the Southern Baptist Convention.⁶²

Newport's *Life's Ultimate Questions*, however, best exemplifies his biblical philosophy that is based upon biblical key-categories and life's ultimate questions.⁶³ In short, the key theme that runs through all of his works is that of “biblical worldview.”⁶⁴ All disciplines of human knowledge stem from the practitioner's worldview and deserve analysis if the Christian is to understand the world in which he lives. As Newport wrote, he focused on contemporary issues that affected the believer's interaction with their

Questions—a rubric in which he seeks to deal with ultimate questions in the order as faced by the biblical community:

1. The meaning of history.
2. The meaning of religion language in general and biblical language in particular.
3. The creation of nature and humankind.
4. The relationship between science and religion and miracles, providence, and prayer.
5. God's sovereignty.
6. The existence of evil.
7. Death and the afterlife.
8. The nature of religion experience.
9. The relationship between faith and reason.
10. Human morality, freedom, and moral arguments for God's existence.
11. The meaning of beauty, aesthetics, and culture and their relationship to the knowledge of God and service to him (32–33).

⁶¹Mauldin, “John Newport and a Biblical World View,” 34.

⁶²Bush, “John Paul Newport,” 6.

⁶³Ferguson, “Forum,” 36.

⁶⁴Cabal, “Problems and Promise in a Biblical World View,” 1.

culture in light of a biblical worldview.⁶⁵ In order to understand his view and use of the biblical worldview, one first needs to comprehend his view of the nature of philosophy.

What is Philosophy?

John Newport clarifies the classical definition of philosophy—the love or pursuit of wisdom—as implying not only a breadth of knowledge, “but also sound judgment about the values of different things in life.”⁶⁶ In particular to his study of life’s ultimate questions, philosophy can also be defined as the “attempt to account for the nature of existence as a whole.”⁶⁷ If one were to summarize philosophy in a general sense, it represents “a very general perspective on things which is likely to affect the outlook or emotional attitude of those who accept it and also to influence their conduct.”⁶⁸ This view of philosophy falls in line with the Platonic view of philosophy. Much of Aristotle’s work consisted of what is today known as natural science. In order to distinguish his work from that of Plato, Aristotle labeled Plato’s form of thought “first philosophy,” or “metaphysics,” whereas Aristotle’s work consisted of “physics,” or “physical science.”⁶⁹ Plato’s “first philosophy” served as a means to obtain the Good and the good life.

Like E. Y. Mullins before him, Newport maintains that philosophy is neither equated with nor similar to science (contra eighteenth- and nineteenth-century philosophers), but is to be understood in its classical sense as a discipline that reflects upon the whole of life. Modern science posits that human knowledge is derived only

⁶⁵Though Newport did not submit his philosophy to the traditional rubric of epistemology, metaphysics, and axiology, he did address them in the context of life’s ultimate questions (Mauldin, “John Newport and a Biblical World View,” 34).

⁶⁶Newport, *Life’s Ultimate Questions*, 3.

⁶⁷Ibid.

⁶⁸Ibid.

⁶⁹Ibid., 4.

through “ideas and concepts” that one obtains through empirical contact with the world.⁷⁰ Science, then, is only concerned with natural phenomena.⁷¹ Any questions of meaning, value, and purpose in life lie outside the realm of science,⁷² for it is not intended or adequate to explain all of reality.⁷³ Such questions fall within the realm of philosophy.

In addition to the classical view of philosophy, Newport hones in on his conception of philosophy by appealing to the German philosopher Wilhelm Dilthey (1833–1911).⁷⁴ Dilthey’s work consisted of distinguishing between the natural and human sciences. The natural sciences “arrive at law-based explanations” of the world, whereas human sciences seek to understand human experience.⁷⁵ A worldview is an attempt to provide a broad understanding of the purpose and values of human life and the world.⁷⁶ In short, it is a “concept which includes all dimensions of reality, from the existing individual to the universe itself.” It is more than just one’s “outlook” or “attitude” toward life; rather, it serves as the structure of one’s entire belief system and provides for them a “comprehensive interpretation” of life.⁷⁷

Newport’s definition of “philosophy” and “worldview” led him to adopt a

⁷⁰Newport, *Life’s Ultimate Questions*, 125.

⁷¹Mauldin, “John Paul Newport,” 214.

⁷²Newport, *Life’s Ultimate Questions*, 126.

⁷³Newport, *The New Age Movement and the Biblical Worldview*, 459.

⁷⁴Much of this section is indebted to Cabal, “Problems and Promise in a Biblical Worldview,” particularly Chap. 1, in which he provides the philological history of “worldview,” and more importantly, Newport’s critical interaction with Dilthey’s concept of “worldview.”

⁷⁵Rudolf Makkreel, “Wilhelm Dilthey,” in *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Summer 2012 ed., ed. Edward N. Zalta, para. 1, accessed January 20, 2014, <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2012/entries/dilthey/>.

⁷⁶*Ibid.*, §3, para. 6.

⁷⁷Newport, *Life’s Ultimate Questions*, 4. According to Cabal, Newport follows Dilthey in his understanding of “worldview”—“the means of obtaining an extensive comprehension of life,” but he does not do so uncritically. Newport maintains that one should analyze worldviews for weaknesses and strengths, and compared for “adequacy and normativity” (“Problems and Promise in a Biblical Worldview,” 54–55).

“worldview equals philosophy” approach.⁷⁸ In other words, one can use “worldview” and “philosophy” interchangeably. The Platonic concept of philosophy understood wisdom to include all areas of life with the goal of influencing how one lives. One did not gain knowledge for the sake of knowledge; rather, they gained knowledge that they may know the Good and to attain the good life. Likewise, a worldview serves as the lens through which one understands the world in which he lives and serves as the basis upon which he acts. Though the Platonic view of philosophy implies intent behind one’s search for knowledge (that is, one purposes to find the Good),⁷⁹ the two are equal in essence such that Newport claims that philosophy is “a worldview which affects practical life.”⁸⁰

How is Philosophy Done?

Throughout much of its storied history, philosophy has sought to answer the vexing questions of humanity—those ultimate questions of philosophy. For over two millennia, philosophers have struggled over the problem of suffering and evil; the meaning of life and the goal of happiness; the nature of truth and the problem of subjectivity; the meaning and purpose of history; the role of reason in religious belief; and morals, obligation, and freedom of the will.⁸¹ Concern with such questions involved

⁷⁸This category comes from Albert Wolters’ classifications of the various views on the relationship between philosophy and worldviews. “Worldview repels philosophy” posits that there is an unresolved tension between philosophy and worldviews. “Worldview crowns philosophy” is the approach where the goal of philosophy is a worldview. “Worldview flanks philosophy” is the understanding that philosophy is “value-free” cannot be encroached upon by “worldview considerations.” “Worldview yields philosophy” is the view foundational to all philosophies are worldviews. Finally, “worldview equals philosophy” identifies one to the other (Cabal, “Problems and Promise in a Biblical Worldview,” 51–52; summarized from Albert Wolters, “On the Idea of Worldview and Its Relation to Philosophy,” in *Stained Glass: Worldview and Social Science*, ed. Paul A. Marshall, Sander Griffioen, and Richard J. Mouw, Christian Studies Today Series (New York: University Press of America, 1989).

⁷⁹As opposed to the concept of “worldview,” where one need not to intentionally search for and form a worldview. Rather, one has a worldview whether they know it or not (Newport, *The New Age Movement and the Biblical Worldview*, 40).

⁸⁰Newport, *Life’s Ultimate Questions*, 3.

⁸¹*Ibid.*, 1–2.

two philosophical tasks: the critical and the constructive. Newport defines the critical task as “emphasiz[ing] a range of questions concerning the relationship of our thought and language to reality, truth, and fact.” The constructive task “seeks to integrate all of our knowledge in an inclusive and comprehensive understanding of reality.”⁸²

As modern science questioned the progress of philosophy, doubt and skepticism crept in regarding the role of philosophy as a knowledge-producing discipline. By the twentieth-century, philosophers no longer saw philosophy’s task to include the broader questions of life; instead, these thinkers dismissed ultimate questions as “outmoded,” only to disappear from philosophical and scientific investigation.⁸³ Indeed, philosophy contemporary to Newport limited philosophy to the analysis of language (Wittgenstein and Moore) or to the explanation of scientific propositions (Russell and Ayer). Yet, such views of philosophy are “too shallow,” for humanity’s “concern with ultimate questions . . . is too deeply true to our nature to be permanently displaced.”⁸⁴ The data of philosophy, then, includes the broad questions of humanity.

If philosophy does consist of life’s ultimate questions, then philosophical

⁸²Newport, *Life’s Ultimate Questions*, 20. See also John Newport, “Baptist Thought and Philosophy” (paper presented at the Conference on Teaching Philosophy in Southern Baptist Colleges and Universities, Ouachita Baptist University, Arkadelphia, Arkansas, April 1986, John Newport Archives, B. H. Carroll Theological Institute, Arlington, Texas. Box 78), 12.

⁸³Newport, *Life’s Ultimate Questions*, 2. See Newport, “Baptist Thought and Philosophy,” 3.

John Kekes, in his book *The Nature of Philosophy* (which predates Newport’s *Life’s Ultimate Questions* by almost a decade) views philosophy in the same light as Newport (John Kekes, *The Nature of Philosophy* [Totowa, NJ: Rowman and Littlefield, 1980]). According to Kekes, philosophy has “traditionally aimed at providing a rationally justified worldview” (3). Modern philosophy, however, is failing in this task as it has “abandoned the effort to approximate the ideal” (4). Kekes isolates two reasons for such a failure. First is philosophy’s foundational claim that it provides knowledge, but such a claim fails to stand when the history of philosophy is replete with instances of system-building upon the ruins of other philosophical systems. Unlike the history of other disciplines, there is “no single thing . . . to be found in [philosophy] which is not subject of dispute” (4–5). A second reason is found in what philosophers do: philosophy’s “mater-builders” always begin anew. Unlike other disciplines, philosophy is not cumulative (5–6). Philosophy, then, has abandoned its traditional task and has relegated itself to the analysis of concepts or accommodating itself to science (13).

⁸⁴Newport, *Life’s Ultimate Questions*, 2.

method involves the clarification and analysis of these questions.⁸⁵ Clarification and analysis fall under the traditional critical task of philosophical investigation, which involves the emphasis of a “range of questions concerning the relationship of our thought and language to reality, truth, and fact.” Further, it involves the critical analysis of one’s intellectual tools and their thinking process.⁸⁶ The constructive task is another traditional task of philosophy. This task seeks to “integrate all of our knowledge in an inclusive and comprehensive understanding of reality.”⁸⁷ Here philosophy investigates all dimensions of reality—ranging from the individual to the universe—and “brings integration ... to life,” including “a sense of meaning and value and principle of action.”⁸⁸

Each worldview is founded upon a “key category, an organizing principle, a guiding image, a clue, or an insight selected from the complexity of his or her multidimensional experience.”⁸⁹ These guiding presuppositions may be explicit or implicit, but they necessarily guide one’s beliefs and ultimately their worldview. Because there are numerous key principles and experiences, there are numerous worldviews.⁹⁰ The philosophic method, then, includes one’s admission of his presuppositions and the examination of “what they mean in terms of how they speak to life’s ultimate questions.”⁹¹ Further, philosophic methodology involves the careful comparison of various worldviews for “adequacy and normativity,” the critique of competing worldviews for weaknesses and strengths,⁹² and internal coherence and

⁸⁵Newport, *Life’s Ultimate Questions*, 3.

⁸⁶*Ibid.*, 20.

⁸⁷*Ibid.*, 20–21.

⁸⁸*Ibid.*, 4.

⁸⁹*Ibid.*

⁹⁰*Ibid.*, 5.

⁹¹*Ibid.*, 7–8.

⁹²Cabal, “Problems and Promise in a Biblical Worldview,” 54–55. In *Life’s Ultimate*

consistence.⁹³ In short, the most basic question to ask of any philosophy is “whether it more fully illuminates, interprets, and integrates life’s ultimate questions.”⁹⁴

Why Philosophy?

Newport’s answer to the question “Why philosophy?” is intimately tied into his identification of philosophy with worldview. In an age where society looks to science for answers, one’s worldview goes beyond the inherent limitations of science to provide a holistic view of the world. In his last significant work, *The New Age Movement and the Biblical Worldview*, Newport describes a worldview as “a vision of life and the world that helps us make sense of life [and] helps us understand our role in the historical perspective of good and evil. It tells us who we are and why we are here.”⁹⁵ Further, a worldview is “a vision rooted in faith” (one’s presuppositions) and is that from which one argues their beliefs.⁹⁶ Finally, it illuminates human experience and guides human action,⁹⁷ helping one to “avoid ‘activity’ in the wrong direction.”⁹⁸ Philosophy in the modern world, therefore, still bears its classical identity of guiding one in their way of life, providing a “unifying and clear-cut worldview” that brings unity to one’s thought and life.⁹⁹

Questions, Newport suggests various methods on how to compare “the validity of the various worldviews” (25–32).

⁹³Newport, *The New Age Movement and the Biblical Worldview*, 597.

⁹⁴Newport, *Life’s Ultimate Questions*, 18.

⁹⁵Newport, *The New Age Movement and the Biblical Worldview*, 41.

⁹⁶*Ibid.*, 597.

⁹⁷*Ibid.*

⁹⁸Cabal, “Problems and Promise in a Biblical Worldview,” 59, quoting from John Newport, *A Guide to a Christian Philosophy of Religion* (Fort Worth, TX: Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, n. d.), 1:1.8. See also John Newport, *What is Christian Doctrine?* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1984), 10.

⁹⁹Newport, *What is Christian Doctrine?*, 10.

Some Implications of Newport's Metaphilosophy

The Relationship between Faith and Reason

Modern Western culture is a “child of the Enlightenment,” an age in which people have “placed their faith in science, technology, philosophy, logical theories, psychological science, and mathematical logic.”¹⁰⁰ In the view of many post-Enlightenment thinkers, religion is a form of “backwards” thinking that should be replaced with advanced scientific views. Since the Enlightenment, Christian thinkers have had to go on the defensive by seeking to show how one could believe in Jesus Christ without violating intellectual integrity.¹⁰¹ The primary approach many Christian scholars have utilized is that which begins with reason, followed by a turn to faith or revelation.¹⁰² For example, the “two-story approach” posits that the relationship between faith and reason can be illustrated by a two-story house. The ground floor represents human reason; though it was marred after the Fall, reason was not “seriously defaced” and therefore serves as a foundation for knowing God. The second floor—divine revelation—completes one’s knowledge of God.¹⁰³ Thinkers like Thomas Aquinas, Karl Rahner (1904–1984), and those of the Old Princeton school of thought further developed the two-story approach as they sought to understand how faith and reason interact.¹⁰⁴ Despite the contributions these thinkers have made to Christian orthodoxy, Newport observes that the two-story approach “confines knowledge to an objective awareness of true propositions and often fails to take into consideration the experience of the whole person.”¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁰Newport, *Life's Ultimate Questions*, 414.

¹⁰¹*Ibid.*, 414.

¹⁰²Newport also discusses the various approaches Christian thinkers have taken regarding faith and reason in Newport, *What is Christian Doctrine?*, 157–60.

¹⁰³Newport, *Life's Ultimate Questions*, 415.

¹⁰⁴*Ibid.*, 415–23.

¹⁰⁵Newport, *Life's Ultimate Questions*, 424.

Another approach Christians have taken is one in which reason has little—if any—value and faith is of utmost importance. Those who represent this approach are Tertullian (160–220), Martin Luther (1483–1546), Blaise Pascal (1623–1662), Søren Kierkegaard, and the presuppositionalism of Cornelius van Til (1895–1987).¹⁰⁶ One consequence of such an approach is the neglect of reason as faith is given prominence in the formation and development of one’s beliefs. For example, evangelicals have “resisted submitting the claims of their faith to the scrutiny of reason or develop a distinctive biblical worldview or philosophy.”¹⁰⁷ As evangelicals experienced revivals in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, more emphasis was placed on the emotions and the will while relatively less attention was given to the intellect. Religious language that was devotional and worshipful was given preference, and believers were “satisfied with an inner assurance of the truth of their faith.”¹⁰⁸

Fault for the “distorted and confused” biblical worldview can be found in the Greek metaphysic that has dominated Western thought.¹⁰⁹ Greek thought “equates reality primarily with a transcendent realm of eternal, rational patterns integrated by the Good.” The knower, therefore, is to turn from the concrete to the abstract.¹¹⁰ Hebraic thought,¹¹¹

¹⁰⁶Newport, *Life’s Ultimate Questions*, 424–28. Presuppositionalists would deny holding to such a view of faith and reason. John Frame, in a chapter titled “Presuppositional Apologetics,” states that the presuppositionalist understands faith to “govern reason just as it governs all other human activities.” Human faith, which is grounded upon God’s rationality, guides and directs human reason. “If faith is in accord with God’s own thought, then it will also be in accord with human reasoning at its best, which images God’s” (John M. Frame, “Presuppositional Apologetics,” in *Five Views on Apologetics*, ed. Stanley N. Gundry and Steven B. Cowan [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000], 209).

¹⁰⁷Newport, *Life’s Ultimate Questions*, 8.

¹⁰⁸*Ibid.*, 8–9. Elsewhere, Newport claims that some Christians do not want to utilize reason because they view it as too complicated or they think that Christianity should be simple. Further, some see reason as applied only to the intellect while Christianity should be spiritual (*What is Christian Doctrine?*, 156).

¹⁰⁹Newport, “Baptist Thought and Philosophy,” 3.

¹¹⁰Mauldin, “John Newport and a Biblical World View,” 38.

¹¹¹Newport’s contrast between Greek thought and Hebrew thought is a characteristic of the biblical theology movement that was influential after WWII. D. L. Baker cites B. S. Childs’ summarization

however, stresses the concrete—“ultimate reality and created reality assume personal and historical realities.”¹¹² In other words, for the Greek philosopher, thought determines action, but for the Bible, action determines thought. According to Biblical thinking (i.e. Hebraic thought), “a person participates in a historical context, wherein the business of life comes before and shapes any reflection upon it. In the Bible’s language, the heart ... issues in knowledge.”¹¹³ A proper biblical worldview, then, must adopt primarily the Hebraic way of thinking as its foundation while Greek thinking complements it by “supplying a knowledge of objects, physical and mental,” through areas like math, technology, and science.¹¹⁴

Some Christians appeal to 1 Corinthians 1:21 to justify the view that reason is of little value.¹¹⁵ According to Newport, Paul in this passage is saying that it is non-Christian thinking and philosophies that are foolish; only Christianity is true wisdom.¹¹⁶ Paul does not condemn the use of reason; rather, it is only Christianity that leads reason to its proper end. Therefore, the approach that best presents the relationship between faith and reason is that which begins with faith and is followed by the use of reason (faith seeking understanding).¹¹⁷ Acknowledging reason’s limitations, the Christian ought to use reason “renewed by Christ to show the validity and power of the Christian answer to

of the movement’s five major emphases: “rediscovery of the theological dimension, unity of the whole Bible, revelation of God in history, distinctiveness of the biblical mentality (Hebrew thought in contrast to Greek thought), and the contrast of the Bible to its environment” (Sinclair B. Ferguson, David F. Wright, and J. I. Packer, ed., *New Dictionary of Theology: A Concise and Authoritative Resource*, s. v. “Biblical Theology,” D. L. Baker [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1988]). More will be said about the biblical theology movement below in Chapter 6.

¹¹²Mauldin, “John Newport and a Biblical World View,” 38.

¹¹³Ibid.

¹¹⁴Ibid., 38–39.

¹¹⁵“For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe” (1 Cor 1:21 ESV).

¹¹⁶Newport, *What is Christian Doctrine?*, 157.

¹¹⁷Newport, *Life’s Ultimate Questions*, 428.

man's basic questions.”¹¹⁸ Reason has a significant place in the Christian's faith because they are “creatures of both will and mind, of faith and reason.” Humans think as well as act and feel; one's faith, then, must contain by necessity a “rational component.”¹¹⁹

There are several ways in which the believer utilizes reason as they live out their faith. First, rational reflection serves as a “check upon hasty, superstitious, illogical, or contradictory beliefs.”¹²⁰ Second, one uses reason when formulating and communicating doctrines of the Christian faith. Third, one exhibits their dependence upon reason when “clarifying, organizing, and discovering the implications of revealed truth.”¹²¹ Finally, reason plays a significant role in apologetics as one seeks to remove barriers to faith, when discussing and comparing competing philosophies and religions, and in demonstrating the “unique adequacy” of Christianity as a worldview.¹²²

The Christian need not, then, disparage modern science, philosophy, or any other discipline that elevates reason to the exclusion of religious faith and experience. Science (reason) and Scripture (faith) “occupy different domains and use distinct methods to answer distinct kinds of questions.” Nevertheless, they are “separate maps for the same terrain”—they complement one another.¹²³ All truth is God's truth; therefore,

¹¹⁸Newport, *What is Christian Doctrine?*, 157. Though one can argue that Newport is guilty of begging the question—that is, he argues for the “faith seeking understanding” approach because he already presumes its truthfulness—Newport claims that everyone operates from a faith principle. Appealing to philosopher John Hutchison, Newport claims that faith in something—in God or a substitute god—is “universally human—that to act is to have faith in the assumptions on which one acts” (Newport, *Life's Ultimate Questions*, 6). All philosophies or worldviews, then, operate upon a faith principle that one assumes. There are, therefore, no atheists per se, for “each person has a source of meaning (consciously or unconsciously) for his or her day-by-day decisions and life purposes.... Deep in the structure of your personality is an absolute or final value, a faith principle, or your god. A crisis will reveal the key category of your belief system” (Newport, *What is Christian Doctrine?*, 7).

¹¹⁹Newport, *Life's Ultimate Questions*, 452.

¹²⁰*Ibid.*

¹²¹*Ibid.*, 453.

¹²²*Ibid.*, 454.

¹²³Mauldin, “John Paul Newport,” 214.

the various disciplines all deal with aspects of God's truth. When these disciplines do present something that is true, then the Christian ought to embrace that truth. Newport called for the Christian to engage with science, the arts, and the humanities, and to continually interact with the "modern-postmodern world." Frank L. Mauldin best sums up Newport's complimentary approach to truth: "Nothing short of the free exposure to the truths in all viewpoints and the incorporation of compatible truths in a biblical worldview will suffice, for truth—all of it—is God's truth."¹²⁴

The Possibility of a Christian Philosophy

The model of "faith seeking understanding" implies Newport's belief in the possibility of a Christian philosophy. In fact, his very writings betray his belief that a Christian philosophy is indeed possible, if not necessary. According to Mauldin, Newport's biblical worldview is philosophy, and it "possesses philosophical rigor and content." The starting point for a biblical philosophy, as opposed to other philosophies, is found in "revelation which comes through particulars—not through philosophical reasoning, religious intuition, divination, or human religious consciousness." That is, God's personal revelation in time and space is the only way to become acquainted with him and his purposes.¹²⁵ The faith principle of the biblical worldview stems from God's revelation of himself and man's encounter with him through faith in Jesus Christ.

Lest one conflate a biblical worldview or philosophy with theology, Newport

¹²⁴Mauldin, "John Paul Newport," 215. In his book *Christ and the New Consciousness*, Newport states: "Authentic science is important," for modern science's foundations "have deep roots in the biblical teaching" (John Newport, *Christ and the New Consciousness* [Nashville: Broadman Press, 1978], 166). The American Christian, "in a context of religious freedom and openness of commitment ... should engage in a program of dialogue, testing, and witness" (167).

Elsewhere, in *Theology and Contemporary Art Forms*, Newport claims that "the Bible demands that the theologian move out into a lover's quarrel with the world. Theology must engage in a dialogue with the arts. It must define itself in relation to the arts as well as psychology, science, sociology, and other humanistic disciplines" (John Newport, *Theology and Contemporary Art Forms* [Waco, TX: Word Books, 1971], 18).

¹²⁵Newport, *Life's Ultimate Questions*, 10.

carefully distinguishes between the two, for their tasks are not the same. The biblical philosopher is not doing the dogmatic work of the theologian. Rather, they find “certain basic ideas within the biblical revelation to be philosophically valuable—those that have philosophical or metaphysical implications.”¹²⁶ Biblical teachings of philosophical import are those on the doctrine of man, the nature of God, the doctrine of creation, the doctrine of knowledge, the doctrine of history, and ethics.¹²⁷ The philosopher then organizes these teachings such that they adhere in a cohesive, consistent biblical worldview.¹²⁸ Scripture contains ideas that are central to the theologian but not to the biblical philosopher and his constructive task. Such ideas include “election, grace, repentance, salvation, sanctification and the church.” Yet, in regard to the critical task of the biblical philosopher, it is his task to examine these ideas critically.¹²⁹

Ultimately, the Christian philosopher complements and contributes to theology. The theologian does not typically “probe the philosophical foundations of faith” because his task does not call for him to deal with critical philosophical questions. The biblical philosopher, then, can go beyond the work of theology and deal with life’s ultimate questions related to science, culture, world religions, and other areas of interest to philosophy. He deals with “the question of truth in relation to the religious experience of humanity and the total sweep of human experience” and shows the “explanatory power” of the biblical worldview regarding ontological and metaphysical questions. Finally, he critically assesses theological concepts and assertions for clarity, internal coherence, and consistency in relation to the whole of theological teachings.¹³⁰

¹²⁶Newport, “Baptist Thought and Philosophy,” 7.

¹²⁷*Ibid.*, 8–11.

¹²⁸*Ibid.*, 11.

¹²⁹*Ibid.*, 8.

¹³⁰*Ibid.*, 13–14.

John E. Smith (1921–2009), former philosopher at Yale University, doubted the possibility of a Christian philosophy and a distinctly Christian approach to the perennial issues and questions of philosophy.¹³¹ Newport conceded that Smith was partially correct, for there is no such thing as a Christian logic, or a Christian philosophy of science, economics, etc. The biblical worldview, however, can speak to any of these areas. Newport claims that

many philosophical questions may be illuminated by assumptions and insights taken from the biblical revelation. At the most basic level, Christian philosophy can probe foundational philosophical questions and develop metaphysical world views (*sic*) that reflect and are made philosophically persuasive by key concepts of the Christian faith. To call this approach biblical philosophy is not basically different from identifying other individual philosophies by the commonalities they share in a general philosophical method. These approaches are called empirical, analytical, naturalistic, and idealistic. The qualifiers clearly indicate that such philosophies work within distinctive methodological parameters.¹³²

Newport appeals to Claude Tresmontant (1925–1997) and Edmond La B. Cherbonnier, two philosophers of religion who claim that the Bible contains an “implicit worldview.”¹³³ According to Tresmontant, the structure of the biblical worldview is creation, incarnation, and history.¹³⁴ Cherbonnier, of whom Newport lauded as “one of the leading spokesmen for a biblical philosophy of religion,” emphasized that “there is a philosophical framework intrinsic to the Bible itself which can provide an appropriate metaphysical underpinning for the biblical story of God’s dealings with his creatures.” This worldview is derived from the “rich variety of linguistic forms” found in the Old and New Testaments.¹³⁵

¹³¹Newport, “Baptist Thought and Philosophy,” 14.

¹³²*Ibid.*, 14–15.

¹³³John Newport and William Cannon, *Why Christians Fight Over the Bible* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1974), 81.

¹³⁴*Ibid.*

¹³⁵Newport, “Baptist Thought and Philosophy,” 16. See also Newport, *Life’s Ultimate Questions*, 21.

The biblical worldview does not work in contradistinction from philosophy, for the two do share concerns in the philosophical areas of epistemology, metaphysics, and ethics. Further, the “universality of rational principles” common to all humankind “transcends worldview differences,” allowing for worldviews to be compared with “openness and integrity.”¹³⁶ Ultimately, the Christian has much to offer philosophy because the biblical worldview provides more adequate answers to the perennial questions of humanity.

The Role of Philosophy in the Life of the Believer

In “Southern Baptists and the Bible: Seeking a Balanced Perspective,”¹³⁷ Newport provides a snapshot of the cultural context in which he was writing. Since the 1960s, America had experienced a complete moral breakdown in the Protestant definition of marriage and family, and in the wide experimentation with drugs. Interest in religious experimentation through new religious movements and ancient mysticism was becoming popular, and a moral pluralism developed alongside religious pluralism.¹³⁸ The American Christian, particularly the Southern Baptists, faced a rapid secularization of the American culture and a growing challenge to respond effectively with the Christian gospel.

Though some Christians adopted an approach that isolated themselves from the culture at large, Newport sought to learn from those of differing views and competing worldviews. Through these dialogues, Newport found that critics provided “constructive insights and helped [him] correct or revise teachings or approaches.”¹³⁹ Just as Newport

¹³⁶Cabal, “Problems and Promise in a Biblical Worldview,” 125.

¹³⁷John Newport, “Southern Baptists and the Bible: Seeking a Balanced Perspective,” *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 34, no. 2 (1992): 31-42.

¹³⁸*Ibid.*, 33.

¹³⁹Newport, “Southern Baptists and the Bible,” 34. The context in which this quote appears discusses the differences within Southern Baptist ranks regarding the Bible and interpretation. Yet, Newport’s approach in this particular scenario can be extended broadly to any differing or conflicting

modeled for others, he called believers to reflect deeply on biblical truths in order to develop a biblical worldview. No longer should Christianity be “impoverished” due to the lack of such deep reflection.¹⁴⁰ Christian theology will prosper “when it is not an isolated and independent exercise. Dialogue with such secular disciplines such as science, psychology, sociology, and the arts is oftentimes salutary.” Even these empirical studies are founded upon presuppositions that Christians can “step in with a word of witness and prophetic challenge.”¹⁴¹

Conclusion

Summary

John Newport identified philosophy with worldview—that “very general perspective on things” which affects one’s outlook, attitude, and their conduct.¹⁴² Though he does employ the traditional philosophical categories of epistemology, metaphysics, and axiology, he bases his biblical worldview on categories as found in Scripture. Such an approach helps the believer to view the world not according to Greek categories of thinking, but through the lens of Hebraic thinking as found in the Bible.

The method of philosophy includes the traditional tasks of philosophy, such as the critical task and the constructive task, which involve (respectively) the analysis of one’s thought and the integration of his thought into a coherent worldview. Further, philosophy compares various worldviews for “adequacy and normativity,” analyzes and

views. This is evidenced by his diverse educational background and his willingness to interact with the competing worldviews of his day. For example, when teaching at Rice University, he was assigned to teach a seminar on the New Age Movement. In order to learn more about the movement, Newport joined the Noetic Institute, a prominent organization within the movement (Newport, *The New Age Movement and the Biblical Worldview*, xii–xiv).

¹⁴⁰Cabal, “Problems and Promise in a Biblical Worldview,” 68.

¹⁴¹John Newport, “Secularization, Secularism, and Christianity,” *Review and Expositor* 68, no. 1 (1971): 93.

¹⁴²Newport, *Life’s Ultimate Questions*, 3.

clarifies their ideas, and critiques them for strengths and weaknesses.¹⁴³

Philosophy's value is found in its service as a guide to living effectively. The Christian, then, ought not shun philosophy. Rather, the Christian faith illumines reason, leading reason to its proper end. The biblical worldview is the only worldview that adequately addresses life's ultimate questions, for its faith principle is founded upon God's self-revelation and man's encounter with God through faith in Jesus Christ. Reason, then, is employed in one's faith, not avoided. The Christian should reflect deeply on biblical truths in order to develop a cohesive, comprehensive worldview so that they can witness in a world in need of answers.

Closing Thoughts

John Newport's metaphilosophy stood in stark contrast to the prevalent metaphilosophical views of his day. While contemporary thinkers limited philosophy to its analytic task, Newport's biblical worldview resembled classical philosophy. One's worldview—his philosophy—deals with the ultimate questions of life in order to bring purpose and meaning to life, and to give direction for how to live. To limit philosophy to its analytic role only is to strip philosophy of its most important function –to give purpose and meaning to the whole of human experience.

While Newport's philosophy encompasses a wider field of study than that of contemporary philosophy, he focuses on the ultimate questions of life almost to the neglect of philosophical trends of his day. No doubt that Newport's biblical worldview fills a void in twentieth century philosophy, but he develops it at the expense of the philosophical ideas making headway in academia and popular culture. His approach, though strongly tied to the timeless questions of humanity, appears disconnected at times with the philosophy of his day.

¹⁴³Cabal, "Problems and Promise in a Biblical Worldview," 54–55.

One way in which Newport could have strengthened his metaphilosophy is by dealing with more explicitly the classical categories of Western philosophy. Though philosophy contemporary to Newport primarily dealt with epistemological questions, it also answered metaphysical and axiological questions as well. By bringing these classical categories out of the shadows of his biblical worldview, Newport would have been able to interact with Analytic philosophy more directly. In doing so, his case for the sufficiency of his biblical worldview over contemporary philosophy would have been made clearer.

Nevertheless, Newport's metaphilosophy anticipated the later revival in the of the philosophy of religion community and the value it brings to philosophy. His work helps to reclaim for philosophy its value for all humanity in a day when philosophical thought is relegated to the ivory tower.

CHAPTER 4
THE METAPHILOSOPHY OF
RICHARD CUNNINGHAM

Background

Context Prior to Cunningham

The end of World War II in 1945 marked “the end of a period of great wars; it was the end of the European Age; it was the end of colonial empires; and perhaps the end of the entire Modern Age.”¹ Like all great wars, the Second World War transformed American culture, raising new possibilities, ideas, and concerns for following generations while the ways of life prior to the war became a relic of the past. America emerged from World War II as a dominant international superpower whose influence quickly Americanized much of the world.²

American religion changed rapidly during and after the war years. Individual congregations and entire denominations across the nation experienced “tremendous growth” that had not been seen since the great awakenings of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.³ The explosive growth of Protestant churches after the war was such that historians mark the period of 1945–1960 as one of religious revival. Church membership increased from 50 percent in 1940 to 70 percent by 1960, and by 1955

¹John Lukacs, *The Legacy of the Second World War* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010), 16.

²*Ibid.*, 48.

³Matthew S. Hedstrom, *The Rise of Liberal Religion: Book Culture and American Spirituality in the Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 174.

approximately 50 percent of Americans attended church.⁴ Southern Baptists, for instance, added approximately 300,000 members and 500 new churches between 1946 and 1949. The SBC increased membership by more than 90 percent to 9.7 million members by 1960.⁵ As the number of congregants and churches grew, so did the number of church buildings. By 1949, Protestant denominations had invested nearly one billion dollars in the construction of new churches and other church related facilities.⁶ The end of the war breathed new life into American Protestantism.

The Allied victory in 1945 ushered in changes in the makeup of American religion as well. Stephanie Muravchik documents the influence of psychology on American Protestantism in the twentieth century in her book *American Protestantism in the Age of Psychology*.⁷ Psychology separated itself from philosophy to become a discipline in its own right in the late eighteenth century through the works of thinkers like William James and Sigmund Freud (1856–1939). Christians were just as divided over how the believer was to understand psychological findings in light of Christian beliefs as they were regarding modern science. Modernists and mainline Protestants were more

⁴Robert Jewett, *Mission and Menace: Four Centuries of American Religious Zeal* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008), 255.

⁵Axel R. Schäfer, *Countercultural Conservatives: American Evangelicalism from the Postwar Revival to the New Christian Right* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2011), 16–17.

⁶Hedstrom, *The Rise of Liberal Religion*, 174. Hedstrom suggests that the boom in church construction was not related entirely to the growth in congregations. Rather, it was driven in part by “pent-up construction demand from the Depression and war years, the rapid growth of suburbs, the baby boom, and cold war politics” (174).

⁷Stephanie Muravchik, *American Protestantism in the Age of Psychology* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 2011). Muravchik essentially argues that, contrary to popular Christian opinion, psychology in the United States has not displaced one’s need for God, but has helped foster that need by providing the ability for one to “link psyche and soul” (5). The popularization of psychology “allowed psychoreligious organizations to foster faith instead of disbelief, community in place of alienation, and ethical striving rather than self-indulgence” (14). Further, “the expansion of the therapeutic did not entail an expansion of introspection—with its presumed concomitant self-absorption and social isolation. It often meant citizens turned to prayer, fellowship groups, reading, God, recreation, and work” (15). She uses three case studies to illustrate her point: clinical pastoral education, the work of Alcoholics Anonymous, and the work of The Salvation Army. Matthew Hedstrom in *The Rise of Liberal Religion* also traces out the incorporation of psychology into religious beliefs and practice.

likely to find value in psychology than were conservatives (particularly Fundamentalists) as they made attempts in the early twentieth century to apply the findings of behavioral sciences to religion.⁸ Yet, these efforts did not gain solid footing because lay church members were suspicious of the atheistic conclusions made by the likes of Freud and his followers.⁹ Behavioral psychologists in the line of Freud “scorned religious explanations for human existence” and divorced the individual’s emotional healing from their spiritual beliefs. Psychologists eventually discredited all religious experience, leading ministers to worry that psychology would lead believers to “doubt and despair,”¹⁰ thus making it more difficult for one to connect psyche to soul.¹¹

Slowly, however, conservative ministers began to see the value of psychology as “the handmaiden to faith.”¹² Muravchik states, “In the face of the increasing challenges mounted against religion—and the growing importance attached to individual’s mental lives—the vitality of faith in the West depended increasingly on believers’ ability to link psyche and soul.”¹³ World War II served as the catalyst that propelled psychology—its knowledge and techniques—into popular practice among both conservative and liberal Protestant ministers. As the number of experts in the field of psychology grew, the number of psychologists with religious backgrounds grew as well in a field once dominated by atheists. Coupled with psychology’s improving relationship with religion was the wide dissemination of the ideas of behavioral sciences to the

⁸Muravchik, *American Protestantism in the Age of Psychology*, 2.

⁹*Ibid.*, 10.

¹⁰*Ibid.*

¹¹*Ibid.*, 10–11.

¹²*Ibid.*, 4.

¹³*Ibid.*, 5. Though “psyche” is a transliteration of “soul,” what the author suggests with the phrase “psyche and soul” is that ministers began to understand that one’s spiritual well-being (soul) entails one’s psychological well-being (psyche).

general public through mass media and popular books.¹⁴ Through its new mass appeal, psychology weaved itself into the fabric of American religion.

Matthew Hedstrom points to three books published in the 1940s that best illustrate the popularization of psychological ideas in a religious context: Harry Emerson Fosdick's *On Being a Real Person* (1943), Joshua Loth Liebman's *Piece of Mind* (1946), and Thomas Merton's *The Seven Storey Mountain* (1948).¹⁵ These three books embodied religious liberal ideas that had been "germinating" since the 1920s but finally

emerged after the war with renewed vigor and legitimacy. The dynamic interplay of modern psychology and ancient mysticism accelerated trends in American religious culture already moving toward an experience-based, instrumental, subject-focused spirituality...It was the wide cultural acceptance of liberal Protestant values and sensibilities in the 1940s...that opened many Americans to religious insight from beyond Protestantism.¹⁶

Once shunned by many Protestants, psychology quickly became a helpful resource for ministers as they shepherded their congregation. The wider acceptance of psychology's findings and practices also allowed parachurch ministries like the Salvation Army and Alcoholics Anonymous to "foster faith instead of disbelief, community in place of alienation, and ethical striving rather than self-indulgence."¹⁷ The marriage of psychology and American religion has birthed a number of Christian counselors such that, despite differences in theory and practice, churches have become more accepting of the need to minister to both psyche and soul.

America had endured the Great Depression throughout the long 1930s before World War II jolted the economy out of its doldrums. Economic prosperity continued after the war had ended, even with the nation coming out of a war economy. With this prosperity came changes to the demographic makeup of American society, particularly in

¹⁴Muravchik, *American Protestantism in the Age of Psychology*, 12–13.

¹⁵Hedstrom, *The Rise of Liberal Religion*, 175.

¹⁶Ibid., 175–76.

¹⁷Muravchik, *American Protestantism in the Age of Psychology*, 14.

the South. In his 1961 assessment of the “emerging” South, Thomas Clark observes that the church, more than any other institution in the South, “reflects conditions of regional life.”¹⁸ Referring to the modernist theology of the late nineteenth century and the early twentieth century, Clark maintains that despite the era of change in theology, “old South influences have retained a hold upon the modern southern church. In politics and society, the rugged domination of Protestantism has helped to color regional history.”¹⁹ While many mainline denominations, especially those in the North, were shaped by shifting social attitudes, Southern churches continued to be the “central force” in shaping society.²⁰ As the Second World War ended, however, at least two factors played a role in the South such that Clark could claim that “only in the last two decades [since the War] have there been discernible departures from the past.”²¹

One factor that led to a changing South is that of industrialization. Prior to the mid-1940s, the South was primarily an agrarian economy, but as economic prosperity continued after WWII, industries began moving into the South. As new industries relocated into Southern cities, they brought with them their industrial leaders and managers and Southern churches received into their folds a “new and aggressive type of church member.” Church congregations in the cities began to receive more uneducated and poor members as well. New factories also meant opportunities for better jobs and pay, thus leading to a migration of poor and uneducated rural people into the cities. Churches in the new South, particularly those in the cities, began to experience growing economic and social disparity within their congregations.²²

¹⁸Clark, *The Emerging South*, 248.

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰Ibid.

²¹Ibid.

²²Ibid., 253.

Coupled with the rural migration in the South was the suburban flight phenomenon in America. By 1950, nearly two-thirds of America's population lived in metropolitan areas while African Americans and other minorities moved into the inner cities. Soon the population of suburban areas was three times greater than the population of inner cities.²³ Southern churches were affected by such a drastic demographic change as older city neighborhoods were "disintegrated" when long-established churches uprooted and moved into developing suburban areas. Churches that remained in the city had to adjust to serving "new and different stratified social classes."²⁴

The post-war South also brought an emboldened African American populace that sought for social equity and freedom from the deeply-entrenched Jim Crow laws. As race riots broke out in cities across America, African American leaders arose to bring before the American people the reality of the race issue, with none more influential than Martin Luther King, Jr. (1929–1968). The American government became involved to force the hands of state governments in the South regarding the race issue through actions like the Supreme Court's ruling against the segregation of races in public schools in the *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954. As a result of the efforts of civil rights leaders and the passing down of Supreme Court decisions and federal legislation, coupled with industrialization and suburbanization of cities, Southern churches and society existed in a new, evolving South.

Amidst all of the change in the 1940s and 1950s, Protestantism, particularly in the South, was still split over modernism and fundamentalism. Rising out of the ever-growing divide was a new group of conservatives that sought to make fundamentalism relevant after decades of isolation from the culture.²⁵ Leaders of this movement included

²³Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People*, 951.

²⁴Clark, *The Emerging South*, 253.

²⁵Schäfer, *Countercultural Conservatives*, 42.

the likes of Billy Graham and Carl F. H. Henry. Through their platform of “cooperation without compromise,” they rejected the Fundamentalists isolation from culture while affirming its orthodox theology. These new conservative Protestants also rejected liberal theology while accepting its ecumenical spirit.²⁶ The movement that “unfolded within the context of profound changes in the American society”²⁷ would eventually become one of the most important influences in United States politics.²⁸

A Short Biography

Personal, academic, and professional. Among the four subjects chosen for this dissertation, Richard Cunningham has the least amount of biographical information published. Mullins, Newport, and Bush had articles written about them and their works in the journals of their respective seminaries as they neared the end of their career or after their passing. Cunningham, however, has not been given such an honor. Cunningham has provided, though, biographical clues in his works of those who had the greatest impact on his life and other significant events in his life.²⁹ In a telephone interview with the author on February 28, 2014, Cunningham provided additional background information that helps to fill in some gaps in his biography.³⁰

Richard Cunningham grew up in the home of Southern Baptist parents, Mr.

²⁶Schäfer, *Countercultural Conservatives*, 42-43.

²⁷Paul S. Boyer, “Back to the Future: Contemporary American Evangelicalism in Cultural and Historical Perspective,” in *American Evangelicals and the 1960s*, ed. Axel R. Schäfer (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2013), 19.

²⁸Schäfer, *Countercultural Conservatives*, 16, referencing George Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 63.

²⁹In an email dated January 14, 2014, Cunningham provided a copy of his curriculum vitae which contains valuable information regarding his career and ministry. I am greatly indebted to Dr. Cunningham’s correspondence and for sharing some of his unpublished material.

³⁰Richard Cunningham, telephone interview (Skype) by author, February 28, 2014.

and Mrs. Millard B. Cunningham,³¹ in Tulsa, Oklahoma.³² In fact, he attended church even when he was in his mother's womb. Cunningham states in his unpublished "Reflections on Theological Education" that

the first nine months as a fetus were important as I lay inside my mother sitting on the piano bench for each morning and evening worship on Sunday and for prayer meeting on Wednesday night. During those months, I heard the vibrations of the music of hymns like "Amazing Grace," sung at least once every two weeks. I heard the name of "Jesus" on a daily basis until I was born into the larger world on October 15, 1932.³³

Cunningham attended church with his parents three to five times per week throughout his childhood. He credits his conversion and growth in his Christian walk to his "parents, several pastors, wonderful Sunday School teachers in settings like worship, prayer meetings, evangelistic services, and the B.Y.P.U."³⁴ Cunningham continued to grow in his faith as he entered into his professional career where he maintained "participation in the full life of the church" which continues even up to today in his retirement.

Cunningham states, "Just this summer I have learned better how to minister within the restrictions of a Muslim state or to plant churches among the Iban tribe of Borneo. I have much yet to learn and miles to grow as a Christian and as a Christian minister."³⁵

Cunningham briefly attended Oklahoma State University as a freshman in the 1950–1951 academic year before transferring to Baylor University in Waco, Texas,

³¹Richard B. Cunningham, "The Christian Apologetic of C. S. Lewis" (Ph.D. diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1965), "Biographical Data Sheet."

³²Richard B. Cunningham, "Curriculum Vitae," (n.d.). Cunningham graciously provided a copy of his CV through email correspondence on January 14, 2014. The CV contains valuable insight into the level of his involvement in the seminary and in the life of the church.

³³Richard B. Cunningham, "Reflections on Theological Education" (lecture, Theological Education Workshop to The Faculty and Administrators, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, October 1997).

³⁴Ibid.

³⁵Ibid.

where he received his Bachelor of Arts in 1954.³⁶ He enrolled at Baylor in lieu of a call to ministry and during his sophomore year, he majored in religious studies as a recipient of a ministerial scholarship.³⁷ Toward the end of his sophomore year, Baylor administration changed the requirements for those with a ministerial scholarship, allowing them to major in other fields other than religious studies. Unsatisfied with the level of scholarship in the religious studies department, Cunningham began taking philosophy courses during his junior year—a year in which he began to catch on to how philosophy worked and developed a love of philosophy that continues event today.³⁸

Cunningham writes in the preface to *C. S. Lewis: Defender of the Faith* of a time during his days at Baylor when he struggled with “intellectual difficulties about the Christian faith.”³⁹ Around the same time, C. S. Lewis’ *The Screwtape Letters* had just been published. Cunningham bought a copy of the book, after which he purchased and read Lewis’ *Mere Christianity*. According to Cunningham, “both books helped me surmount some initial obstacles in my faith.”⁴⁰ Cunningham’s spiritual pilgrimage while at Baylor led him to be interested in apologetics, particularly in making the case for Christianity.⁴¹ Years later as a doctoral student at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Cunningham chose to study Lewis’ apologetic method for defending the

³⁶Richard Cunningham, “Curriculum Vitae.”

³⁷Cunningham, interview.

³⁸Ibid.

³⁹Richard Cunningham, *C. S. Lewis: Defender of the Faith* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1967), preface. In Cunningham’s interview with the author, he states that his spiritual struggle was not necessarily intellectual, but one of the absence of God’s presence—“it was as if God vanished” (Cunningham, interview). In Lewis’ *The Screwtape Letters*, the character Wormwood writes to Screwtape, advising him to not make much of the young Christian convert’s doubts for that is often what leads the convert to a fuller and more mature faith. According to Cunningham, Lewis book helped him to “relax” about his struggles, and at some point down the road (Cunningham does not specify how long his spiritual struggle lasted), he once again experienced the presence of God in his life (Cunningham, interview).

⁴⁰Cunningham, *C. S. Lewis*, preface.

⁴¹Cunningham, interview.

Christian faith as the topic of his dissertation.⁴²

Cunningham moved to Louisville, Kentucky, in the same year of graduating from Baylor to attend Southern Seminary for the Bachelor of Divinity. Philosophy was “in the air” at Southern Seminary, even in theological studies. Shortly upon arriving at the seminary, Cunningham came into contact with Eric Rust and was quickly attracted to his philosophy, which led him to take as many of Rust’s philosophy courses as possible.⁴³ Also during his first degree at Southern, Cunningham met his wife, Rebecca Roberts of Murray, Kentucky, and they married in 1957, after which they had three children.⁴⁴ Cunningham graduated from Southern Seminary with his B.D. in 1958.

Cunningham enrolled at Southern Seminary shortly after graduating with his B.D. to pursue a Ph.D. in philosophy. During his studies, he served as a Garrett Fellow for the Historical-Theological Division of the Department of Theology.⁴⁵ In the midst of his studies and beginning a new family, Cunningham also served as the pastor of First Baptist Church, Crothersville, Indiana, from 1960–1966.⁴⁶ Cunningham completed his doctoral work in 1966, earning a Doctor of Philosophy in Christian Philosophy and Theology.⁴⁷

⁴²Cunningham, *C. S. Lewis*, preface.

⁴³Cunningham, Interview.

⁴⁴Cunningham, “Curriculum Vitae.” Rebecca Cunningham is well-educated as well, having earned a B.S. at Murray State University in 1952, the M.R.E. at Carver School of Missions in 1957, and a M.A. at the University of Louisville in 1984 (“Curriculum Vitae”).

⁴⁵*Ibid.* The “Biographical Data Sheet” at the end of his dissertation states that he was a “Teaching Fellow in the Departments of Theology and Christian Philosophy.”

⁴⁶Cunningham, “The Christian Apologetic of C. S. Lewis,” “Biographical Data Sheet.” *Idem*, “Curriculum Vitae.” Neither source is clear as to when Cunningham began his Ph.D. work. There is a vague entry under the heading “Experience” on his “Biographical Data Sheet” that states “building business, two years.” If a Ph.D. required a maximum of six years to complete, and Cunningham graduated with his Ph.D. in 1966, then he could have possibly enrolled at Southern as a doctoral student in 1960, which has him sitting out of school from 1958 (the year he graduated with his B.D. at Southern) to 1960, the year in which he began pastoring and his Ph.D. work.

⁴⁷Cunningham, “Curriculum Vitae.”

Upon receiving his doctorate, Cunningham and his family moved to Albuquerque, New Mexico, where he served as Professor of Chair of Bible and as the Baptist Campus Minister at the University of New Mexico until 1967.⁴⁸ Cunningham returned to the seminary setting in 1967 when he accepted the position of Associate Professor of Systematic Theology and Christian Philosophy at Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary, a position he held until 1976. While serving at Golden Gate, Cunningham traveled to Rüschlikon, Zürich, Switzerland, to serve as Visiting Professor of Systematic Theology and Philosophy of Religion at the International Baptist Theological Seminary (1973–1974).⁴⁹ The majority of Cunningham’s years as professor, though, were spent at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. Cunningham returned to Louisville, Kentucky, in 1976, this time as Professor of Christian Philosophy.

Cunningham’s tenure at Southern Seminary was one of faithful service to Southern Baptists and Baptists all over the world. As a professor, he taught numerous courses in Christian philosophy, apologetics, systematic theology, Old Testament theology, Christology, soteriology, eschatology, anthropology, and Paul’s theology. His Doctor of Philosophy seminars and colloquia included various themes in philosophy and important philosophers in modern Western history.⁵⁰ Cunningham was also involved in supervising doctoral students in the Doctor of Philosophy and Doctor of Ministry degrees.⁵¹ In the fall of 1995, he served as Visiting Professor of Christian Philosophy at Moscow Baptist Theological Seminary in Moscow, Russia.⁵²

⁴⁸Cunningham did post-doctoral studies at the Universities of Zürich, Basel, and Tübingen, Oxford University, and Cambridge University. He also did language study in 1973 at the Goethe Institute in Radolfzell, Germany (Cunningham, “Curriculum Vitae”).

⁴⁹Ibid.

⁵⁰Ibid.

⁵¹Ibid.

⁵²Ibid. Cunningham states under the heading “Academic Skills” that he has “four years plus other shorter terms of teaching in international settings” (“Curriculum Vitae”).

In addition to his teaching assignments, Cunningham chaired various committees that dealt with departmental issues, faculty-trustee matters, missions activities, and public events.⁵³ He also volunteered on numerous committees related to the mission and function of the seminary. Cunningham also served on the editorial board of *The Review and Expositor* and was a member of the American Academy of Religion, the American Philosophical Association, the Baptist Association of Philosophy Teachers, and the Baptist Professors of Religion.⁵⁴

After thirty-three years of service to the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Cunningham retired as Professor of Christian Philosophy in 1999. Afterwards, he moved to Hong Kong, China, where he was the Director of Graduate Studies and Professor of Theology and Philosophy at Hong Kong Baptist Theological Seminary from 1999–2001. Cunningham fully retired in 2001 and resides state-side with his wife of over fifty-seven years.⁵⁵

Intellectual influences. Though Cunningham provides only small glimpses into his life, when he does, Eric C. Rust emerges as a prominent figure of influence. Cunningham acknowledges the impact of “many teachers and thinkers” that he encountered throughout his education. Such men include Henlee Barnette (1911–2004), professor of Christian ethics (1951–1977);⁵⁶ Dale Moody (1915–1992), professor of theology (1948–1984); and Wayne Ward (1921–2012), professor of theology (1951–

⁵³Cunningham, “Curriculum Vitae.”

⁵⁴Ibid. Cunningham indicates that he served as the Editor of the Fall 1997 edition of *Review and Expositor* on “Theologizing in a Global Context.”

⁵⁵Richard Cunningham, e-mail message to author, January 6, 2014.

⁵⁶In Cunningham, *C. S. Lewis*, preface, Cunningham credits Barnette for pointing him to C. S. Lewis’ Christian apologetic as a potential dissertation topic, suggesting that Lewis “had perhaps been taken too lightly by many theologians.”

1991)—all of whom served on Cunningham’s Graduate Committee at SBTS.⁵⁷ Eric Rust, however, “had the greatest impact and shaping influence” on Cunningham’s thought.⁵⁸

Cunningham recounts,

For a number of years, in classes and seminars and countless conversations, I engaged great books and ideas under his provocative and creative tutelage...I have shared instinctively many of his own deepest commitments, particularly the commitment to bring historic Christianity and modernity into creative dialogue. Perhaps my greatest learning from him is at the point of methodology. Rust has always engaged problems with a carefully defined and disciplined philosophical and theological methodology.⁵⁹

Elsewhere, Cunningham claims that it was Rust who, “for good or ill, taught [him] more than any other.”⁶⁰ Because of the significant influence Rust had upon Cunningham’s thought, a brief biography of Rust is in order to best understand the context from which Cunningham’s thought developed.

The best resource for understanding Eric Rust’s shaping influences and thought is found in William Hardee’s 1985 Ph.D. dissertation, “The Christian Philosophy of Eric Charles Rust: A Critical Evaluation.”⁶¹ He provides an important discussion of Rust’s educational background and the intellectual influences of various thinkers he encountered throughout his studies and profession. More importantly, Hardee’s work includes the most comprehensive analysis of Rust’s philosophical thought and writings, including the various emphases that served as significant components in Rust’s overall theology.

Having grown up with a “strong interest in science,” Rust focused his high

⁵⁷Cunningham, *C. S. Lewis*, preface.

⁵⁸Rust was a professor of Christian philosophy at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary beginning in 1953; he retired in 1979.

⁵⁹Richard B. Cunningham, “The Concept of God in the Thought of Eric Rust,” in *Science, Faith, and Revelation: An Approach to Christian Philosophy*, ed. Bob E. Patterson (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1979), 199.

⁶⁰Cunningham, *C. S. Lewis*, preface.

⁶¹William L. Hardee, “The Christian Philosophy of Eric Charles Rust: A Critical Evaluation” (Ph.D. diss., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1985).

school studies on mathematics, physics and chemistry. He did so well on his examinations that he received a Royal Scholarship at the Royal College of Science.⁶² Here he earned his Bachelor of Science degree in mathematics and theoretical physics, after which he became an instructor of mathematics at his alma mater as well as beginning research on atomic theory.⁶³ During his time at Royal College, Rust “began having serious problems reconciling the fundamentalist and literalistic teachings of his church with the knowledge gained through his scientific education.”⁶⁴ He considered it “intellectual suicide” when some within the church divorced religion from science because science was seen as the “enemy.”

Rust eventually stumbled upon Harry Emerson Fosdick’s *Modern Use of the Bible* (1924), a book he credits as “giving him a major clue to solving his dilemma.”⁶⁵ Fosdick’s book helped Rust to see another way in which to approach Scripture—one that was different from what he had learned growing up in a Baptist church. In an interview with Hardee, Rust says of Fosdick’s work, “I began to realize that there was a new approach to the Bible quite possible without having to swallow it whole from cover to cover.” Thus began a journey that would serve as the thrust of his academic pursuits throughout his life—one in which he would serve the church as a “bridge builder between faith and science.”⁶⁶

After receiving his Master of Science from the University of London in 1932, Rust entered Oxford University to pursue a degree in theology in response to his call to the ministry. Here he sat under the teachings of Christian thinkers like R. G. Collingwood

⁶²Hardee, “The Christian Philosophy of Eric Charles Rust,” 3. Hardee describes the Royal College of Science as “the MIT of England” (3).

⁶³Ibid., 3–4.

⁶⁴Ibid., 4.

⁶⁵Ibid.

⁶⁶Ibid., 4. Hardee quotes Rust from an interview on August 6, 1983.

(1889–1943), R. H. Lightfoot (1883–1953), H. Wheeler Robinson (1872–1945), and T. W. Manson (1893–1953), men who shaped his thought in philosophy and theology throughout his entire career.⁶⁷ Of particular note was Wheeler’s emphasis on *Heilsgeschichte*, or salvation history, as well as Manson’s further development of *Heilsgeschichte* and his emphasis on the Jesus of history. According to Hardee, Rust built his philosophical and theological method upon these two ideas.⁶⁸ In regards to philosophical influence, Rust looked to Charles Raven’s (1885–1964) work on reconciling faith and science. According to Rust, he appreciated Raven’s view of evolution as a creative process.⁶⁹ The last thinker of note who had an influence in Rust’s philosophy was Karl Heim (1874–1958). Rust agreed with Heim’s diagnosis of what ailed contemporary science-faith dialogue—the “loss of transcendence as a meaningful category.” Heim’s thought challenged Rust to include science in his worldview.⁷⁰

Rust earned his Bachelor of Arts from Oxford in 1935, and his Master of Arts shortly thereafter. He entered the pastorate in 1935 when he began to pastor a church in Bath (1935–1939) and subsequently at Oxford Road Baptist Church in Birmingham,⁷¹ England (1939–1942).⁷² Rust’s passion for academic study did not fade while pastoring. When Rust was studying at Oxford, Emil Brunner was his “major mentor,” who “awakened Rust to a concern for Christology” and drew him to natural theology.⁷³ While

⁶⁷Hardee, “The Christian Philosophy of Eric Charles Rust,” 5.

⁶⁸Ibid., 6.

⁶⁹Ibid., 12.

⁷⁰Ibid.

⁷¹ According to William Dargue on his website *A History of Birmingham Places & Placenames...from A to Y*, Oxford Road Baptist Church is now a Calvary Church of God (William Dargue, “Moseley,” *A History of Birmingham Places and Placenames...from A to Y*, accessed April 13, 2014, <http://billdargue.jimdo.com/placenames-gazetteer-a-to-y/places-m/moseley/>).

⁷²Hardee, “The Christian Philosophy of Eric Charles Rust,” 8.

⁷³Ibid., 8.

pastoring at Oxford Road Baptist Church, Rust obtained the position of senior tutor at Rawdon College while working on a Bachelor of Divinity at Oxford (1946) in the area of the theology of history. Hardee states that Rust's time at Rawdon was significant as it was a period in which Rust solidified his worldview, one that would serve him for his philosophical and theological thought in years to come.⁷⁴ As his teaching duties expanded, Rust began to garner attention such that he gave a lecture on science and religion at the Seventh Baptist World Congress in 1947. Rust served as a visiting professor at Crozer Theological Seminary in the 1952–1953 academic year, during which he was elected to present the 1952 Norton Lectures at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. Rust joined the faculty of Southern Seminary in 1953, teaching primarily in the field of apologetics.⁷⁵

Rust's published works addresses various theological and philosophical themes. For example, *Nature and Man in Biblical Thought*⁷⁶ addresses the issues of "biblical authority, religious language, and the separate arenas of religious truth and scientific truth." For Rust, biblical science is not authoritative.⁷⁷ That is, those areas in Scripture that mention things scientific in nature are prone to error, such as Joshua's making the sun and moon stand still, or the idea that the sun sets and rises. Process theology and its applicability to the expression of the biblical faith is the focus of *Evolutionary Philosophies and Contemporary Theology*.⁷⁸ According to Rust, "it is the task of Christian philosophy to discover a new natural theology to serve as a bridge

⁷⁴Hardee, "The Christian Philosophy of Eric Charles Rust," 9. Hardee observes that Rust's major works exhibit "continuity and development in his thought. There are no major changes and few major shifts of emphasis within his theological concepts and philosophical method" (12).

⁷⁵Ibid., 9–10.

⁷⁶Eric C. Rust, *Nature and Man in Biblical Thought* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1953).

⁷⁷Ibid., 15–16.

⁷⁸Eric C. Rust, *Evolutionary Philosophies and Contemporary Theology* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1969).

between religion and culture.”⁷⁹ And in *Religion, Revelation, and Reason*,⁸⁰ Rust provides a response to Christian faith in the twentieth century and an encouragement to believers that a natural theology does exist—one which can “make sense of the world from a theistic standpoint.”⁸¹ Rust published several other works that touched upon the relationship between religion and science, the relationship between God and history, issues relating from secularism and secular theology, and a Christian’s response to ecological issues.⁸²

Cunningham’s works. Though many Southern Baptists are not familiar with Rust, for Richard Cunningham, Eric Rust was his “close friend, most influential teacher, and colleague in Christian philosophy for many years.” Rust shaped his “own way of doing theology and interpreting the Christian faith to the world.” Rust’s mentorship was coupled with the impact of Henlee Barnette, whose suggestion to study C. S. Lewis’ apologetic method provided for Cunningham “an ongoing interest in bridging the gap between professional theologians and the practical theological and apologetic ministry of the church.”⁸³ Throughout his teaching career, Cunningham operated from a “concern for an apologetic ministry in our contemporary world.”⁸⁴

Richard Cunningham’s published works consists of an eclectic mix of topics

⁷⁹Hardee, “The Christian Philosophy of Eric Charles Rust,” 19.

⁸⁰Eric C. Rust, *Religion, Revelation, and Reason* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1981).

⁸¹*Ibid.*, 23.

⁸²Eric C. Rust, *Towards a Theological Understanding of History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1963); *idem*, *The Christian Understanding of History* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1947); *idem*, *Positive Religion in a Revolutionary Time* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1970); *idem*, *Nature—Garden or Desert? An Essay in Environmental Theology* (Waco, TX: Word Books Publisher, 1971).

⁸³Richard B. Cunningham, *The Christian Faith and Its Contemporary Rivals* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1988), preface.

⁸⁴*Ibid.*

that exemplify his concern for an apologetic ministry to Southern Baptists. He wrote three books of substantive length, two of which were written in the area of apologetics.⁸⁵ His dissertation, “The Christian Apologetic of C. S. Lewis,” was published by Westminster Press in 1967 under the title *C. S. Lewis: Defender of the Faith*. Cunningham wrote another book on apologetics in 1988 titled *The Christian Faith and Its Contemporary Rivals*. In his 1988 title, Cunningham approaches Christian apologetics by analyzing contemporary worldviews in light of the Christian worldview, offering similarities competing views share with Christianity as well as a critique of their weaknesses. In addition to these books, Cunningham wrote numerous articles on issues in apologetics, Christianity and culture, and worldview analysis.

What is striking in the list of Cunningham’s published works are the number of articles and book chapters written on pastoral and church-life issues. His third substantive book also dealt with a church-related topic. *Creative Stewardship* (1979) is a book in which Cunningham provides a theological grounding for understanding Christian stewardship. The idea that stewardship refers primarily to how one handles their finances barely scratches the surface on how God intends his children to steward all that he has provided. In chapter one of *Creative Stewardship*, Cunningham grounds the doctrine of Christian stewardship in God’s creative act and the personal nature of the triune God. Mankind, God’s crowning achievement of creation, “embod[ies] personal life and are

⁸⁵ Cunningham defines apologetics in *The Christian Faith and Its Contemporary Rivals* as an effort “to understand the Christian faith and to advocate and defend it to people both inside and outside the church” (preface). Christian apologetics takes seriously the Christian’s doubt and struggle with unbelief and the inquiry about or challenges to the faith for non-Christians. Though apologetics is “necessarily an intellectual task,” it “involves profound spiritual sensitivity and interpersonal skills when it engages people in the flow of everyday life” (preface). Sustained and penetrating apologetical work is primarily done by Christian theologians or philosophers as they “grapple with the intricacies of numerous specific apologetical problems and the large-scale conceptual encounters of alternative worldviews,” but it is “imperative” that in today’s world where numerous worldviews and religions interact in such close proximity, the intellectual apologetical works be translated “into the actual arena of dialogue with ordinary people in everyday life” (preface).

capable of love and relationships with God and man.”⁸⁶ Stewardship, then, naturally flows from the relationship God has toward mankind, and the relationship between man and God and with each other.

After grounding stewardship in God’s creative act and his personal nature, Cunningham provides the interpretive lens through which one understands stewardship in light of the fallen world we live in. The Christian worldview is unique among all other worldviews in that it acknowledges the reality of sin and evil. The biblical worldview holds that the world in which one lives is “substantial and real, and its value as so great that it will be finally transformed into a new heavens and a new earth.” Finally, it uniquely affirms “the reality, value, and intrinsic goodness of the world.”⁸⁷ Only through viewing the world through the lens of Christianity does stewardship become a natural response on the part of the believer in regards to material possessions and ultimately in the context of the local church.

The doctrine of stewardship serves as a prominent theme throughout much of Cunningham’s writings. He wrote a short booklet on Christian stewardship titled *Rewards and Christian Stewardship: A Biblical Study of Rewards* (1976) and several book chapters devoted to stewardship as well.⁸⁸ Such a focus on an important but neglected aspect of the Christian life illustrates Cunningham’s pastoral heart that coincided with his academic studies. In addition to writing on stewardship,

⁸⁶Richard B. Cunningham, *Creative Stewardship* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1979), 36.

⁸⁷Cunningham, *Creative Stewardship*, 44.

⁸⁸Richard B. Cunningham, “Principles and Procedures of Responsible Giving,” in *Resource Unlimited*, ed. William L. Hendricks (Nashville: The Stewardship Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1972); idem, “Equipping in Self Sacrifice,” in *The Equipping of Disciples: Biblical Models of a Church’s Training Program*, ed. John Hendrix and Lloyd Householder, Chapter IX (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1977); idem, “Resources for Preaching on Stewardship,” in *The Minister’s Manual: 1991 Edition*, ed. James W. Cox, 276–86 (San Francisco: Harper, 1991); idem, “Stewardship,” in *Handbook of Themes for Preaching*, ed. James W. Cox (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1990); idem, “The Purpose of Stewardship,” in *Leadership and Administration. Vol. 3, Leadership Handbooks of Practical Theology* (Carol Stream, IL: Baker Book House and Christianity Today, 1994).

Cunningham's pastoral emphasis appears in his studies on spiritual conversion and growth, missions, sanctification, and preaching on difficult topics. Cunningham lived what he expressed in his writing by serving as interim pastor in numerous churches while at Southern.⁸⁹ The amount of time Cunningham devoted to pastoral issues is a testament to his calling not only as a professor, but as a minister to the body of Christ.

Cunningham's Metaphilosophy

Though Richard Cunningham's works touch on philosophical issues, most do not explicitly deal with the nature of philosophy. One can garner implicit references to metaphilosophical questions, but one needs to look elsewhere in order to develop his particular metaphilosophy. The closest account Cunningham provides regarding the nature of philosophy is found in his article titled "A Case for Christian Philosophy."⁹⁰ This article, though, deals specifically with Christian philosophy and not philosophy in general.⁹¹ As such, reference is made to three unpublished lecture outlines from Cunningham's masters-level "Christian Philosophy: An Introduction to Christian Thought" class from the Fall 1998 semester.⁹² These outlines provide valuable insight

⁸⁹Cunningham, "Curriculum Vitae."

⁹⁰Richard B. Cunningham, "A Case for Christian Philosophy," *Review and Expositor* 82, no. 4 (1985): 493–506.

⁹¹The importance of the distinction between philosophy and Christian philosophy is discussed below under the section heading "The Possibility of a Christian Philosophy."

⁹²Richard B. Cunningham, "What is Philosophy?" (classroom lecture notes, 28500—*Christian Philosophy: An Introduction to Christian Thought*, Fall 1998, photocopy): 1–7; Idem, "Christian Faith and Modern Science," (classroom lecture notes, 28500—*Christian Philosophy: An Introduction to Christian Thought*, Fall 1998, photocopy): 1–13; Idem, "The Historical Development of the Relation of Faith and Reason," (classroom lecture notes, 28500—*Christian Philosophy: An Introduction to Christian Thought*, Fall 1998, photocopy): 1–5.

I am grateful for the kindness of Jeff Elieff, Executive Associate Pastor at Ninth and O Baptist Church, Louisville, Kentucky, who provided his full set of classroom notes and handouts from Cunningham's Fall 1998 28500—Christian Philosophy: An Introduction to Christian Thought course. These notes have provided insight into not only Cunningham's view of philosophy, but also in the way he taught philosophy at the seminary level.

into Cunningham's view on metaphilosophical questions that allows one to compare and contrast it to his metaphilosophical view of Christian philosophy.

What is Philosophy?

Cunningham opened up his lectures for his Christian Philosophy course at Southern Seminary by providing three broad definitions that touch on the essence of philosophy. He first provides the etymological definition of philosophy—the “love of wisdom.” Staying in the realm of classical philosophy, he then quotes Plato's definition of philosophy as “the striving for cognition of Eternal Being in all things.” Finally, Cunningham provides Paul Tillich's view of philosophy: “that cognitive approach to reality in which reality as such is the object.”⁹³ These definitions broadly touch upon the subject and the activity of philosophy, yet seemingly fail to arrive at a satisfactory view as to what constitutes philosophy. To remedy this, Cunningham provides a more technical definition of philosophy: “Philosophy is a human being's deliberate and rational attempt to understand his experience, both as a whole and in its parts, both in its objective and in its subjective aspects, with a view to obtaining wisdom for effective living.”⁹⁴

Cunningham's definition presents philosophy as an activity of one's existence.

In *The Christian Faith and Its Contemporary Rivals*, he provides the following scenario:

The individual is thrown into existence without any explanation of his whence or whither. One did not ask to be born or choose the genetic code that creates the particular person one is. One simply finds oneself existing, without definition, in the world, born to a particular set of parents in a particular social setting... Humanity is characterized by a quest for ultimacy ... we are creatures of ultimate concern.... We opt for some chief way of valuing out of which various subsidiary values emerge.⁹⁵

Every individual seeks to understand the reason of and purpose for his existence. It is a “distinctive mark of human beings” that they build their lives around certain fundamental

⁹³Cunningham, “What is Philosophy?,” 1.

⁹⁴Ibid.

⁹⁵Cunningham, *The Christian Faith and Its Contemporary Rivals*, 13–14.

beliefs.⁹⁶ These beliefs that are based upon his foundational beliefs form his worldview.

According to Cunningham, a worldview is the lens through which one understands his existence. It is a conceptualization that is “inclusive of all dimensions of reality from the existing individual to the universe itself, and integrates every aspect of life into an intelligible whole.”⁹⁷ More specifically, worldviews “conceptualize” how individuals or particular groups of people experience reality.⁹⁸

Worldviews consist of the classic ultimate questions that philosophy and theology seek to answer, such as the nature of reality and existence, of truth, of value, and of beauty, all of which are “integrally bound up with the whole question of meaning within life.”⁹⁹ Nevertheless, Cunningham does not identify worldviews with philosophy as John Newport does. Rather, philosophy is the activity in which one deliberately reflects upon particular ultimate questions or beliefs in order that one may know in the end how they are to live.

The result of philosophical activity—“wisdom for effective living—forms a person’s particular worldview. If one applies Albert Wolters’ typology regarding the relationship between worldview and philosophy, Cunningham’s view represents the model of “worldview crowns philosophy.” As Cabal summarizes, “a worldview is to be the goal of all true philosophy. Philosophy must serve and explore the important questions which a worldview raises.”¹⁰⁰

How is Philosophy Done?

Philosophy arises from the questions of life, such as the question of identity,

⁹⁶Cunningham, *The Christian Faith and Its Contemporary Rivals*, 9.

⁹⁷*Ibid.*, 17.

⁹⁸*Ibid.*

⁹⁹*Ibid.*, 18–19.

¹⁰⁰Cabal, “Problems and Promise in a Biblical Worldview,” 52.

existence, truth, reality, morality, and more. It is philosophy's task to reflect upon these questions,¹⁰¹ a task which consists of two roles: analysis and synthesis.¹⁰² Analysis consists of studying "the nature of thought, the laws of logic and consistency, the relationship between our ideas and reality, the nature of truth, and ... the validity of the various methods we employ in attaining 'truth' or 'fact' or 'knowledge.'"¹⁰³ Philosophical analysis covers not only worldviews, but all disciplines as well. Philosophical synthesis "focuses on the anticipated result" instead of the method used, seeking the most "inclusive view" that factors in all of the ultimate questions.¹⁰⁴

Philosophy cannot prove "overwhelmingly" the truth of one worldview over another, nor can it establish conclusively the superiority of one worldview over another. Cunningham claims that such conclusiveness evades the philosopher because too many factors are involved when assessing a worldview such that the individual cannot assess it in the same way as the adherents of other worldviews.¹⁰⁵ Nevertheless, there are various tests that can help establish "some relative degree of credibility and adequacy for alternative worldviews": the test of coherence, correspondence with facts, comprehensiveness, applicability to life, and the universality of the worldview.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰¹Cunningham, "What is Philosophy?" 2–3.

¹⁰²Elsewhere, Cunningham labels the two tasks of philosophy as "critical" and "constructive." The critical task focuses on "the relationship of our thought and language to reality, truth, and fact as we analyze our intellectual tools and thinking process." The constructive task is "to integrate all our knowledge in an inclusive and comprehensive understanding of reality" (Cunningham, "A Case for Christian Philosophy," 495–96).

¹⁰³Cunningham, "What is Philosophy?" 1. Cunningham quotes from Hunter Mead, *Types and Problems of Philosophy: An Introduction* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1964), 11.

¹⁰⁴Cunningham, "What is Philosophy?" 2.

¹⁰⁵Cunningham, *The Christian Faith and Its Contemporary Rivals*, 21. Such factors include one's "inner self-mind, feelings, and will—the whole of life" (21).

¹⁰⁶*Ibid.*, 21–22. It should be noted that Cunningham is not saying that all worldviews are equal, including the Christian worldview, and the truthfulness of one over the other is relative to the individual. What Cunningham implies is that because of the subjective aspect of worldviews and the personal factors that are intricately intertwined in each one, one cannot prove the superiority of one worldview over another because such judgments involve too many subjective factors. One can, however, establish one worldview

Cunningham describes the process of philosophizing as “rather simple,” for it generally involves just three broad steps: understanding the problem, determining ways to answer the problem, and evaluating the pros and cons of various solutions before determining the answer that “best withstands critical probing and best answers the particular question or problem.”¹⁰⁷ More technical methods of philosophy include empirical observation (directly or indirectly), rational analysis (“to reason about experience”), intuition, dialectical reasoning, or a combination of any number of methods.¹⁰⁸ At its best, the philosophical method exhibits the following characteristics: it seeks truth; it is a demanding thinking process; it is inclusive; it is objective; it is critical; it is coherent; and it is tolerant.¹⁰⁹

Why Philosophy?

The answer to the final metaphilosophical question is found in Cunningham’s definition of philosophy: philosophy exists as a means for one to live effectively. The modern world is such that there are no isolated cultures anymore, resulting in the clash of worldviews.¹¹⁰ As one encounters competing worldviews, inconsistencies and gaps in their own worldview become apparent. Reflective thinking allows for one to account for and remedy those aspects of his worldview in order to better live his life in terms of meaning and purpose. Further, in the “new global community” of the modern world, it is becoming increasingly important for one to be able to enter “into dialogue with alternative points of view” and to understand them. For the Christian, “dialogue has become increasingly essential in the encounter between Christianity and its modern

as more cohesive and consistent than another. Cunningham, as will be shown below, does hold that the Christian worldview is the best worldview that interprets life’s ultimate questions.

¹⁰⁷Cunningham, “What is Philosophy?” 6.

¹⁰⁸Ibid., 6–7.

¹⁰⁹Ibid., 5–6.

¹¹⁰Cunningham, *The Christian Faith and Its Contemporary Rivals*, 10.

rivals.” The believer must be ready to give reasons for his faith and to understand those of different views.¹¹¹

Some Implications of Cunningham’s Metaphilosophy

The Relationship between Faith and Reason

Richard Cunningham’s lecture titled “The General Problem of Knowledge” outlines several possible views regarding the relationship between faith and reason. One approach is held by classic Greek philosophers like the Sophists, Democritus (460 BC–370 BC), and Lucretius (99 BC–55 BC), and modern philosophers such as David Hume and Bertrand Russell. According to the thinkers of this approach, reason is primary and excludes faith. When seeking to answer the question of life, one only employs human reason apart from revelation. Though this approach is still prevalent in modern science and other disciplines, it has not been prominent within the church.¹¹² Rather, much of Christian apologetics, particularly since the late-nineteenth century, has defended and argued for the appeal to revelation as a necessary source of knowledge.

An approach that has “a long tradition within the church” is that of natural theology, an approach that views reason as primary, but includes faith as well. According to this view, one can argue for the existence of God with the aid of human reason without appeal to revelation. Through reason, one is able to know God’s existence and his “major attributes,” but knowledge of God as he is (such as the doctrine of the Trinity) comes only through faith and divine revelation.¹¹³ Thomas Aquinas is a thinker that falls within the approach of natural theology, particularly with his Five Ways. In the modern church, one can find an emphasis on natural theology in Protestant churches like the

¹¹¹Cunningham, *The Christian Faith and Its Contemporary Rivals*, 10–12.

¹¹²Cunningham, “The Historical Development of the Relation of Faith and Reason,” 3–4.

¹¹³*Ibid.*, 4.

Anglican tradition, and “in various conservative churches and groups.”¹¹⁴

A third possibility regarding the relationship between faith and reason is the antithesis of the first option—“faith is primary and excludes reason.” Cunningham defines this approach as “a strange combination of skepticism and faith that is often called fideism.”¹¹⁵ The skepticism that Cunningham refers to is an “almost” uncritical “skept[ic]ism of the power of the intellect.” In place of any emphasis on reason, there is a “naïve confidence about the authority of revelation and faith.”¹¹⁶ An example of an extreme form of this approach is Tertullian. Other less-extreme examples include Martin Luther, Søren Kierkegaard, and Karl Barth.¹¹⁷

A fourth and final possible approach is that which emphasizes faith as primary while including reason. Thinkers who utilize this approach to faith and reason appeal to Augustine as the model of faith interacting with reason. As Cunningham claims, Augustine had a “comprehensive knowledge of philosophy and appreciation for the ancient wisdom of the pagan philosophers.” His approach viewed philosophy as “faith’s servant in helping faith express itself.” Another example of the Augustinian approach is Anselm, who expressed this approach as “faith seeking understanding.” Examples of modern theologians who utilize “faith seeking understanding” are William Temple (1881–1944), Emil Brunner, Reinhold Niebuhr (1892–1971), Richard Niebuhr (1894–1962), John Baillie (1886–1960), and Paul Tillich.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁴Cunningham, “The Historical Development of the Relation of Faith and Reason,” 4. Cunningham does not provide examples of any “conservative churches and groups” that appeal to natural theology.

¹¹⁵Ibid.

¹¹⁶Ibid.

¹¹⁷Ibid., 4–5. Cunningham’s claim that Kierkegaard is less extreme than Tertullian is debatable. Though he is famous for his question “What has Athens to do with Jerusalem?”, Tertullian was familiar with and utilized freely philosophy. The author explored Tertullian’s purpose for his question in a seminar paper titled “Tertullian: Athens and Jerusalem Reconsidered.”

¹¹⁸Cunningham, “The Historical Development of the Relation of Faith and Reason,” 5.

Cunningham does not indicate in his lecture on the relation of faith and reason what approach he views as the most appropriate response to this questions. His clearest admission is found in his lecture titled “Christian Faith and Modern Science.” Here Cunningham maintains that the Christian should “begin with faith as trust and commitment and go on to seek understanding through reason, attempting to express the faith in the best rational categories and submitting faith to rigorous and comprehensive examination and testing.”¹¹⁹ Christians value reason and its ability to solve life problems, and they value all forms of knowledge.¹²⁰ In doing so, however, they acknowledge the insufficiency of reason to give the whole of truth, for answers to the ultimate questions of life can only be “known and understood ... in the disclosing power of a personal relationship with the living God, not in objective factual science, philosophy, or even theological statements about being and existence.”¹²¹

The best illustration of Cunningham’s view on the relationship between faith and reason is found in his discussion on the issue of faith and modern science—a topic that often occupied his writings. The church today needs to “intelligently and critically relate its thought and life to modern science”; otherwise, it will “find itself consigned to obsolescence.”¹²² Tensions will remain between Christianity and modern science because they differ in purpose, method, and goal; nevertheless, scientific findings need to be critiqued and interpreted within a Christian worldview.¹²³

The best approach the believer can take regarding modern science is twofold. First, the believer contrasts science and the Christian faith by emphasizing the concerns

¹¹⁹Cunningham, “Christian Faith and Modern Science,” 12.

¹²⁰Richard Cunningham, “Christianity and Contemporary Humanism,” *Review & Expositor* 81, no. 2 (1984): 276.

¹²¹Cunningham, “Christian Faith and Modern Science,” 11.

¹²²*Ibid.*, 1.

¹²³*Ibid.*, 2.

of science and those of theology, each operating within its own realm of investigation. Second, the believer also views science and theology as complimentary, for they both seek truth and knowledge. Despite the fact that they are autonomous in their own realm of investigation, “their insights are complementary and mesh into a harmonious whole.”¹²⁴ In short, both disciplines have “legitimate, distinctive, and complementary roles within a holistic and unified understanding of God, world, and human life.”¹²⁵ As such, the Christian ought to understand the nature of science and not ask more of it than it is capable of doing.¹²⁶ Science can only investigate that which is observable and describe what is found; therefore, it provides a “fragmented” view of the world.¹²⁷ With a proper understanding of science—its abilities and limitations—the Christian can utilize science along with other disciplines of knowledge in the pursuit of truth.

The Possibility of a Christian Philosophy

In the introduction of his article “A Case for Christian Philosophy,” Richard Cunningham paints a bleak picture that depicts the reasons why philosophy has been ill-received among many Protestant churches. According to Cunningham, there has been a “long tradition of antipathy toward philosophy” among churches “birthed in the Reformation.” This antipathy only increased and gained strength through the work of Karl Barth in the twentieth century.¹²⁸

Many within the church view theology as “the heartbeat of the body of divinity.” The Christian philosopher thus finds himself having to justify the philosophical task in the thought and life of the church. Some say that the use of the qualifier

¹²⁴Cunningham, “Christian Faith and Modern Science,” 4–5.

¹²⁵Ibid., 6.

¹²⁶Ibid., 6–7.

¹²⁷Ibid., 9–10.

¹²⁸Cunningham, “A Case for Christian Philosophy,” 493.

“Christian” with “philosophy” is improper.¹²⁹ Others, such as John Smith of Yale University, doubt the possibility of a Christian philosophy because there is no uniquely Christian approach to the central questions of philosophical investigation.¹³⁰ Despite the deeply-entrenched skepticism toward the use of philosophy in Christian thought, a “revitalization” in the interest in philosophy of religion and Christian philosophy began in the last quarter of the twentieth century¹³¹—a movement that has continued to garner widespread acceptance among many Christian thinkers.

Cunningham agrees with John Smith in that the qualifier “Christian” is not significant for all areas of philosophy.¹³² But it is not the case that the Christian worldview does not have anything to offer philosophy. The perennial questions of philosophy can be illuminated by Christian thought developed from revelation. Further, “at the most basic level, Christian philosophy can probe foundational philosophical questions and develop metaphysical worldviews that reflect and are made philosophically persuasive by key concepts of the Christian faith.”¹³³ Understood in this light, qualifying philosophy with “Christian” does not differ from labeling other philosophic approaches as analytic, naturalistic, etc.¹³⁴

Christian philosophy is more than a Christian doing philosophy. Rather, it is when a believer is thinking philosophically about the questions of philosophy and does not “divorce himself from his deepest encounter with truth.” The Christian philosopher aims for “critical objectivity” in his philosophical investigations, all the while taking

¹²⁹Cunningham, “A Case for Christian Philosophy,” 493.

¹³⁰Ibid., 498.

¹³¹Ibid., 494.

¹³²Ibid., 498.

¹³³Ibid., 499.

¹³⁴Ibid.

seriously his faith commitment to the truth of Scripture, the Christian context within which he lives, and “the most philosophically pregnant ideas of the Christian revelation.”¹³⁵

Christian philosophy, then, is philosophy. Like other philosophies, it concerns itself with the perennial philosophical questions—those of life, being, meaning, value, and destiny, among others.¹³⁶ The believing philosopher “finds certain critical ideas within the revelation to be philosophically valuable, ideas that allow one to deal constructively with various philosophical concerns.” Further, the Christian philosopher must utilize revelation and philosophical ideas that arise from it, justifying them for his “philosophical power.” Christian philosophy must be critiqued, then, on its own merits and weaknesses.¹³⁷

After developing a case for Christian philosophy, Cunningham provides a summary form of a Christian metaphilosophy. First, it necessitates a Christian philosopher whose “philosophical thinking is believing thinking.” Second, the Christian philosopher not only serves the philosophical community at large, but the Christian church as well. Third, insights from Scripture will be utilized when appropriate. Finally, the believing philosophers must be able to exhibit a mastery of philosophical methodology and discipline.¹³⁸ That is,

[t]he truth of one’s ideas ... must be demonstrated in terms of their philosophical explanatory power by generally accepted philosophical criteria [such as] simplicity, inner coherence, correspondence to general facts, comprehensiveness, existential relevance, pragmatic value, and ontological and metaphysical fit.¹³⁹

The tasks of a Christian philosopher do not vary widely from those of a secular

¹³⁵Cunningham, “A Case for Christian Philosophy,” 496.

¹³⁶*Ibid.*, 495.

¹³⁷*Ibid.*, 501.

¹³⁸*Ibid.*, 501–2.

¹³⁹Cunningham, “A Case for Christian Philosophy,” 502.

philosopher; rather, there is much overlap. The key difference between the two, however, lies in the Christian's employment of revelation as a source of insight for philosophical questions and as a source of philosophical questioning. Otherwise, just as other philosophers operate in a "wide field of concerns," the Christian philosopher operates within the field of philosophy according to his interests. They deal with the same perennial questions that other philosophers do and critically analyze these matters on top of questions raised within philosophy of religion. The believing philosopher interprets the Christian faith to the philosophy community and seeks to develop a worldview that is a "holistic view of reality...that embraces the existential and the ontological, the human and the cosmos, time and eternity, God and the world."¹⁴⁰ Finally, the Christian philosopher serves the church by interacting philosophically with other contemporary worldviews, providing interpretations, critiques, and analyzes these worldviews in light of the Christian worldview.¹⁴¹

The Role of Philosophy in the Life of the Believer

Richard Cunningham often stressed in his writings the new global world Christians live in today—a world that is now smaller because of advances in technology and transportation. Many corporations and stock markets are international in scope, while the internet has now made global commerce and cultural interaction possible with the click of a button.¹⁴² Further, numerous cultures have immigrated to America and have assimilated into American culture, leading to the "rediscovery of the diversity of cultures and of religions as well as to cross-cultural fertilization."¹⁴³

¹⁴⁰Ibid., 502–4.

¹⁴¹Cunningham, "Christianity and Contemporary Humanism," 274.

¹⁴²Richard B. Cunningham, "Theologizing in a Global Context: Changing Contours," *Review and Expositor* 94, no. 3 (1997): 354.

¹⁴³Cunningham, "Theologizing in a Global Context: Changing Contours," 356.

The new global community places Christians in close contact with other worldviews, philosophies, and beliefs which have a greater impact on how Christians understand their own faith and mission. For the believer who is not a philosopher by trade, then, philosophy has significant apologetic value. According to Cunningham, it is becoming “increasingly important” for the believer to dialogue with those of competing worldviews. The Christian needs to be able to give reasons for his faith and to understand those of differing views.¹⁴⁴ A defense of Christianity requires that one have “a clear understanding of rival outlooks and worldviews as well as the core of one’s own faith.”¹⁴⁵ In order to be an effective witness and defender of the Christian faith, one must be a “modest student” of Christian theology and the foundational issues that make up the Christian worldview.¹⁴⁶

Conclusion

Summary

Philosophy is one’s deliberate attempt to understand the whole of human experience—its purpose and meaning. Through the philosophical tasks of analysis and synthesis, philosophy investigates the foundational questions of life regarding identity, existence, morality, and value—the questions of one’s worldview. Though philosophy cannot prove absolutely the superiority of one worldview over another, it can lead one to determine which worldview is more cohesive and consistent. In the end, philosophy leads one to live more effectively and consistently.

Cunningham was motivated by his desire to see the Christian faith interact with the contemporary culture. His case for a Christian philosophy serves as a call for

¹⁴⁴Cunningham, *The Christian Faith and Its Contemporary Rivals*, 11–12.

¹⁴⁵*Ibid.*, 24.

¹⁴⁶*Ibid.*, 203.

believers to boldly engage the secular world in dialogue, seeking to do so not only as a means of learning, but also as a means of winning lost souls to the gospel of Jesus Christ. Amongst the competing worldviews today, Christians ought to be bold in their witness, for it is only the Christian worldview that provides “a more philosophically coherent interpretive framework for human values and a more dynamic motivating and sustaining power for a program of action.”¹⁴⁷

Closing Thoughts

By the time Cunningham began teaching Christian philosophy at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, philosophy of religion had begun its revitalization among the philosophy of religion community. The number of Christian philosophers and apologists began to rise as believers increasingly engaged the culture in defense of traditional Christian beliefs. Cunningham’s metaphilosophy reflected the apologetic bent of many Christian thinkers as he sought to operate from a “concern for an apologetic ministry in our contemporary world.”¹⁴⁸

Though Cunningham shares the same concern about worldviews as John Newport, he does not equate philosophy with worldview. Rather, one’s worldview results from their philosophy. Cunningham’s metaphilosophy largely mirrors that of E. Y. Mullins (of whom he has read widely and respects greatly)¹⁴⁹ in that philosophy investigates the entirety of human experience as well as the claims and ideas of the various disciplines of knowledge. Likewise, Cunningham distinguishes between the roles and methods of science, philosophy, and religion; however, he does not emphasize the autonomy of each discipline as Mullins does. Cunningham presents philosophy in such a

¹⁴⁷Cunningham, “Christianity and Contemporary Humanism,” 282.

¹⁴⁸Cunningham, *The Christian Faith and Its Contemporary Rivals*, preface.

¹⁴⁹Richard Cunningham, e-mail message to author, January 14, 2014.

way that there is a natural flow from the first-order disciplines into philosophy—that is, the first-order disciplines describe the facts of human experience, leaving philosophy to explain these facts and to present them in a unified whole. Then, the limits of philosophy are overcome by religious experience and truth (particularly Christian truth), which best presents the ultimate truths of the universe.

Like Mullins, Cunningham stresses religious experience as data of philosophical investigation and that Christian religious experience only is grounded in the historical fact of God's revelation of himself through his Word and, most importantly, through his Son Jesus Christ. It is only through one's experience of encountering God through Jesus Christ that one can truly understand the meaning and purpose of this world and of human experience. Apart from Jesus Christ and God's revealed Word, one cannot truly know ultimate truth.

Despite Cunningham's stress upon Christian experience and the biblical worldview as the only sufficient means to fully grasping truth, he does not emphasize sufficiently the role in which the Bible is to play as an epistemological source in one's philosophy.¹⁵⁰ Cunningham rightly holds that the Christian worldview is the most sufficient worldview among the many various worldviews, but it is so because of its coherence and comprehensiveness, and because of its employment of philosophically relevant biblical ideas.

Yet, exactly how one is to understand the nature of Scripture and how to utilize it in philosophy is left unclear by Cunningham. Beyond asserting that Scripture plays a key role in the Christian philosopher's thought, Cunningham does little to develop an epistemology that relies significantly upon Scripture. Without such discussion, Cunningham's claim that the Christian worldview is the most adequate of all worldviews

¹⁵⁰While this may be the case in regard to philosophy, it is not so when Cunningham deals with a theological issue. For instance, as stated earlier, Cunningham spent the first two chapters in *Creative Stewardship* building a theological case from Scripture for a robust view of Christian stewardship.

loses its objective nature, becoming instead subjective—relative to one’s acceptance of or denial of the Bible.

Richard Cunningham presents the most thorough and comprehensive view of metaphilosophy compared to that of his colleagues John Newport and L. Russ Bush. Like them, though, Cunningham’s primary concern in his works was apologetical in nature as he sought to defend and proclaim the Christian worldview to a world that was increasingly becoming more secular and pluralistic. As such, Cunningham sought to present philosophy to Christians as a tool in service to the Christian faith.

CHAPTER 5

THE METAPHILOSOPHY OF L. RUSS BUSH

Background

Context Prior to Bush

Though World War II ended “a period of great wars,”¹ it ushered in a new phase of American military action in international affairs. The Allied victory in 1945 ended Nazi and Japanese aggression, but the rise of communism emerged as the new enemy of American interests and way of life. The Red Scare that gripped Americans after the Russian Revolution in 1917 only intensified throughout the mid-twentieth century. Russia became America’s archenemy and the antithesis of American democracy. Yet, the United States and Russia never engaged on the battlefield; instead, America confronted the advance of communism through “police actions” in Korea (1950–1953) and Vietnam (1959–1975). Despite the lack of direct military engagement, America and Russia waged the Cold War through much of the latter half of the twentieth century, which effectively ended in 1989 when the Berlin Wall fell.

The Cold War coincided with an America faced with growing unrest over social issues such as racial equality, sexual equality, and the ever-growing voice of opposition to American military action in Vietnam. If there was any decade that encapsulated the collision of the old way of life and a new reality, it was the 1960s. The clash of various ideologies was met with violence more often than not throughout the decade. Race riots escalated in American cities, especially in the South, as African

¹John Lukacs, *The Legacy of the Second World War* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010), 16.

Americans fought for racial equality. Coupled with the race issue was the feminist movement as women sought for sexual equality and against sexual discrimination. The passing of the Civil Rights Act in 1964 helped forge the way to these ends.

Cultural turbulence spilled over into the political arena as America lost its first president to an assassination since William McKinley (1901). John F. Kennedy was assassinated in November of 1963 by Lee Harvey Oswald who allegedly had ties to communist Russia. As America became further entrenched in Vietnam and anti-war unrest escalated, Americans lost two more national leaders to assassinations in 1968: Martin Luther King, Jr. and Robert F. Kennedy (1925–1968). Violence spilled over onto college campuses as well; in the 1969–1970 academic year alone, there were 174 campus bombings and bombing attempts.²

As the nation struggled, seismic shifts occurred in cultural identity and ideology while American Protestantism witnessed disparity in church growth. Mainline denominations “experienced either an absolute or a net loss” in the 1960s through the 1990s, while evangelical and Fundamentalist churches made “considerable” gains in membership.³ Also on the rise was the “number of self-described secularists, ranging from atheists and agnostics to those not affiliated with any organized religion.”⁴ The division among Modernist and Fundamentalists lines that defined American Protestantism throughout the twentieth century became a “broader partisan conflict and changed the religious composition of the political parties.” By the late twentieth century, the makeup of a political party was based upon “moral values, lifestyles, and levels of

²Derek Leebaert, *The Fifty-Year Wound: How America's Cold War Victory Shapes Our World* (Boston: Back Bay Books, 2002), 359.

³Axel R. Schäfer, *Countercultural Conservatives: American Evangelicalism from the Postwar Revival to the New Christian Right* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2011), 17.

⁴Ibid.

religious orthodoxy” which replaced “class, race, ethnicity, region, and denomination.”⁵ The Christian Right rose up in the 1970s in reaction to various federal decisions regarding freedom of religion in the public square (for example, *Engle v. Vitale* in 1962 which did away with prescribed prayer in public schools and *Roe v. Wade* in 1973). This group of politically active religious conservatives would come to play a significant role in the elections of Ronald Reagan in the 1980s as well as in subsequent political races and issues in the late-twentieth century into the twenty-first century.

Just as unrest and turbulent change characterized the United States in the 1960s and 1970s, so was it the case for the Southern Baptist Convention. For the better part of eight decades, the convention had maintained unity despite the division between Modernists and Fundamentalists. Battles over progressive theological ideas were waged during this period in the SBC, but the Convention managed to work around divisive issues. Eventually, though, signs of a coming eruption appeared as Southern Baptists in the 1950s began to voice concern over the liberalism found in the convention’s schools.⁶ SBC president Ramsey Pollard insisted at the 1960 SBC Convention that Southern Baptist colleges and seminaries “should purge themselves” of liberal professors.⁷ The controversy finally erupted in 1962 over Ralph Elliott’s firing from Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary because of his commentary on Genesis, *The Message of Genesis* (1961).⁸ In his book, Elliott

argued that Moses did not write Genesis, that the first eleven chapters are parables, that the flood was local, that Melchizedek was a priest of Baal, that God did not command Moses to sacrifice his son Isaac, that Jacob did not wrestle with the angel,

⁵Schäfer, *Countercultural Conservatives*, 22.

⁶Jerry Sutton, *A Matter of Conviction: A History of Southern Baptist Engagement with the Culture* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishing, 2008), 162.

⁷Gregory A. Wills, “Who Are the True Baptists?” *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 9, no. 1 (2005): 20.

⁸Jesse C. Fletcher, *The Southern Baptist Convention: A Sesquicentennial History* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 206.

and that by Joseph's natural abilities he interpreted natural dreams. Most Southern Baptists found such interpretations objectionable.⁹

Elliott's firing illustrated "the growing distrust of the Convention's agencies, especially the seminaries, by rank-and-file Southern Baptists."

The conservatives' distrust of the liberal seminaries and Southern Baptist agencies eventually led to the formation of the Baptist Faith and Message Fellowship by a North Carolina pastor named M. O. Owens, Jr. The purpose of the fellowship was to "be a strong advocate of the doctrinal and theological positions stated in the *Baptist Faith and Message*." It was to also serve as a "rallying point for men of conservative thought and feeling."¹⁰ The fruits of this fellowship led to the organization of and implementation of a conservative resurgence in the SBC in order to rid convention agencies and schools of liberalism. The first step taken in its implementation was Adrian Rogers' (1931–2005) election as president of the SBC in 1979, followed by other conservative appointments in the convention's leadership and the trustee boards of SBC schools. By the mid-1990s, the conservative resurgence was essentially complete.

A Short Biography

Luther Russell Bush III was born in Alexandria, Louisiana, in 1944, and shortly thereafter his family moved to El Paso, Texas. The family eventually moved to Columbia, Mississippi, where his father established a "life-long" dental practice.¹¹ Bush's mother Sara—a lover of the arts and books¹²—opened up a Christian bookstore in town and instilled in him a love for books and learning, "two affections that grew

⁹Gregory A. Wills, "Progressive Theology and Southern Baptist Controversies of the 1950s and 1960s," *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 7, no. 1 (2003): 20.

¹⁰Jerry Sutton, *The Baptist Reformation: The Conservative Resurgence in the Southern Baptist Convention* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2000), 62. Sutton quoted from the 1973 SBC Convention issue of the *Southern Baptist Journal* (M. O. Owens, "Let's Not Play Games," *Southern Baptist Journal* (Special Convention Issue 1973): 2.

¹¹Richard M. Daniels, "L. Russ Bush III: A Biography," *Faith & Mission* 19, no. 3 (2002): 57.

¹²*Ibid.*, 57.

exponentially the remainder of his life.”¹³ Bush spent the better part of his formative years in Columbia, a small town of which he had fond memories. In his article titled “John Newport: A Man for All Seasons,” Bush describes a small town as “

a great place to grow up. Formative years form the years. Our roots make us who we are, and small town roots are strong, life–sustaining roots. Bible believing mothers who mold us and then never leave us even when we move away from home are also a blessing from God.¹⁴

Indeed, Bush’s years in Columbia shaped him into the man he was to become.

In addition to his exposure as a young lad to the arts and the love of books, Bush also was able to observe Southern Baptist church life and denominational activity. Bush and his family attended the First Baptist Church of Columbia, Mississippi, and were very active in the church’s ministry and in the SBC, attending both state and national convention meetings.¹⁵ More importantly, the Bush family’s regular church attendance placed Bush under consistent, “solid gospel preaching.” At the age of twelve, one night after church, he was led to salvation in Jesus Christ by a family friend.¹⁶

Bush attended Mississippi College in his hometown of Columbia. He had developed a strong interest in science and when he enrolled in college pursued a degree in chemistry.¹⁷ The summer between his sophomore and junior years of college, however, changed the course of his life. After serving on staff at the SBC conference center in Ridgecrest, North Carolina, Bush surrendered his life to the gospel ministry.¹⁸ Upon

¹³Jason G. Duesing, “Luther Russell Bush, 1944–2008,” *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 50 no. 1 (2007): 6.

¹⁴L. Russ Bush, “John Paul Newport: A Man for All Seasons,” *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 29, no. 3 (1987): 5. Jason G. Duesing quotes this passage in his biography of Bush in the context of relating Bush’s years growing up in Columbia, Mississippi (Duesing, “Luther Russell Bush,” 7).

¹⁵Daniels, “L. Russ Bush III,” 57. See also Duesing, “Luther Russell Bush,” 7.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 57.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸Duesing, “Luther Russ Bush,” 7.

returning to Mississippi College for the Fall 1965 session, he changed his major from chemistry to philosophy because he believed that in order to be an effective minister of the gospel, he must be able to “answer the ‘first’ questions, the timeless ‘why’ questions addressed by philosophy.” Once he changed his major, Bush would remain in the field of philosophy for the remainder of his life. At Bush’s memorial service in 2008, his father said that the younger Bush’s love for philosophy “grew from a deep foundation and advocacy for the classical truths of historic Christianity rooted in Scripture.”¹⁹

The year 1967 was an eventful year for Bush. In lieu of his call to serve in ministry, Bush was ordained as a gospel minister by his home church, FBC Columbia. That same year he met his wife, Cynthia Ellen McGraw, whom he would marry just a year later in 1968.²⁰ Bush also met another significant person before he graduated in 1967, a person with whom he would later play a significant role in the Southern Baptist controversy—Thomas J. Nettles.²¹

After graduating with his bachelor degree, Bush sought to enroll in seminary to prepare for the ministry. Though he had changed his undergraduate work from the study of chemistry to the study of philosophy, Bush’s love for science never faded. Rather, his passion for science “evolved into a heightened ‘interest in the relationship between science and religion.’”²² Bush chose to attend Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary for his Masters of Divinity degree. Typically, seminary students base their decision of where to attend seminary on such factors like location or doctrinal beliefs. For Bush, however, his decision was based upon the number of philosophy courses offered

¹⁹Duesing, “Luther Russell Bush,” 9, quoted from L. Russ Bush Jr., *Memorial Service for L. Russ Bush III* (Wake Forrest, NC, 27 January 2008), DVD.

²⁰Duesing, “Luther Russell Bush,” 8.

²¹Daniels, “L. Russ Bush III,” 58.

²²Ibid. Daniels quoted Bush from his personal interview with Bush, January 28, 2002, Wake Forrest, North Carolina.

by the seminary. He desired to take every philosophy course offered in the seminary's course catalog. Bush graduated from Southwestern Seminary in 1970 and pursued further studies in philosophy in the research doctoral program at Southwestern.²³

Bush's abilities as a philosopher garnered attention from the Southwestern faculty, and he was enlisted as a teaching assistant for Milton Ferguson (1956–1973) in the philosophy of religion department. After Ferguson was elected president at the Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, John Newport became Bush's doctoral supervisor. Ferguson's absence from the Southwestern staff provided the opportunity for Bush to teach philosophy, and from 1973–1975, he taught full-time until he earned his degree. Bush continued teaching full-time at Southwestern after graduating in 1975 as an elected member of the faculty.²⁴

Just as Russ Bush entered into his profession as a seminary professor, the decades-long battle within the Southern Baptist Convention was finally coming to a head. Ralph Elliott's 1961 *The Message of Genesis* exemplified conservative Southern Baptists' concern about the liberalization of the convention's seminaries. The battle lines were drawn with more clarity as the 1960s gave way to the 1970s with the issue between Modernists and Fundamentalists boiling down to the inerrancy of Scripture. Shortly after Adrian Rogers's election as president of the SBC in 1979 and the beginning of the conservative resurgence, Bush co-authored a book with Tom Nettles titled *Baptists and the Bible* (1980). Their work would be "their most famous and significant literary contribution" to the SBC. *Baptists and the Bible* argued that the doctrines of inerrancy and the authority of Scripture have a long tradition in Baptist history.²⁵ According to Jason Duesing, this book "virtually ended the historical perspective of the question at

²³Daniels, "L. Russ Bush III," 58.

²⁴Duesing, "Luther Russell Bush," 9.

²⁵*Ibid.*, 9–10.

hand.”²⁶ Bush’s case for the inerrancy and the authority of the Bible in the face of liberal trends within the convention affirmed his view of the role of philosophy—to serve the church in the defense of orthodox Christianity.

Though Bush desired to teach at Southwestern Seminary until he retired,²⁷ his ministry eventually led him to Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, North Carolina. Bush took a sabbatical in Washington, DC (1988–1989), where he served as interim pastor of the Capitol Hill Baptist Church and worked on his second book, *A Handbook of Christian Philosophy*. In late 1988, Lewis Drummond (1927–2004)—the new president of Southeastern Seminary—approached Bush and asked him to take over as the Academic Vice-President and as the Dean of the Faculty.²⁸

The situation Bush entered into at Southeastern was volatile. The trustees of the seminary had just gone through an intense battle with the seminary’s faculty and administration over whether the school “would remain accountable to the denomination and the school’s confession of faith.”²⁹ When Southeastern Seminary was founded in 1951, the board of trustees determined that the school would hold to the same articles of faith as those in the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary’s Abstract of Principles. All faculty were bound to teach in accordance to the Abstract, and all new faculty members were required by Southeastern’s second president to publicly sign the Abstract of Principles at their first convocation.³⁰

Nevertheless, despite the seminary’s adoption of the Abstract of Principles,

²⁶Jason G. Duesing, “The Reclamation of Theological Integrity: L. Russ Bush III and Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1989–1992,” *Christian Higher Education* 9, no. 3 (2010): 187.

²⁷L. Russ Bush and Tom J. Nettles, *Baptists and the Bible*, rev. and exp. (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1999), xix.

²⁸Duesing, “The Reclamation of Theological Integrity,” 187–88; James A. Borland, “Luther Russell Bush III, 1944–2008,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 52 (2009): 210.

²⁹*Ibid.*, 188.

³⁰*Ibid.*, 189.

controversy arose over the authenticity of Scripture in only the second decade of Southeastern's existence. The seminary slid further into liberalism under the watch of the institution's third president, Randall Lolley (1974–1987). Lolley's administration appointed faculty that promoted process theology, neo-orthodoxy, and liberation theology.³¹ As the conservative resurgence gathered steam in the 1980s, conservatives gained a majority on Southeastern Seminary's board of trustees midway through the decade. By this point, Southeastern had gained the reputation as the most liberal Southern Baptist seminary. Reports of the seminary's liberal teachings were reported to the convention. These reports, coupled with the board of trustees revision of the faculty selection process, led to Lolley's resignation. Lolley vowed to "exert every ounce of his energy toward the future demise of the school."³² Faculty members rallied behind Lolley by forming their own chapter of the American Association of University Professors, thus creating a power play among three groups at the seminary: the board of trustees, the post-Lolley administration, and the faculty.³³

After Lewis Drummond was appointed Southeastern's fourth president, the school's accrediting body sent a Special Fact-Finding Committee to visit the campus. The accreditation visit was a clear indication that the seminary's future was in jeopardy.³⁴ As a result of the findings, Drummond had to quickly fill the vacant dean of the faculty position. Disregarding the faculty's suggestions, Drummond presented the faculty his own list of candidates for the position—a list that included L. Russ Bush, who was eventually elected as vice president for academic affairs and dean of the faculty. The support for Bush was significantly underwhelming; only seventy-three percent of the

³¹Duesing, "The Reclamation of Theological Integrity," 190.

³²Ibid., 192.

³³Ibid., 191–92.

³⁴Ibid., 192–93.

board of trustees supported Bush while the entire faculty opposed him.³⁵ Nevertheless, Bush began his new job in May 1989.

The first several years at Southeastern were difficult for Bush. After only two weeks on the job, his theology was called into question by a certain Gordon James who asked that the Convention investigate Bush's beliefs.³⁶ The faculty further "entrenched" themselves against the administration when the national organization for the AAUP censored Southeastern.³⁷ Despite the turbulent times, Bush began to see progress when the seminary amended its bylaws to require all faculty candidates to affirm the Baptist Faith and Message (1963) and affirmed the Abstract of Principles as the institution's "sole doctrinal statement."³⁸ Through various other measures, the seminary regained its theological footing as moderate professors resigned or retired, allowing the seminary to elect faculty who faithfully held to the inerrancy and authority of Scripture.³⁹ As significant as Bush's *Baptists and the Bible* was (and is) in affirming traditional Southern Baptist belief in the nature of Scripture, Jason Duesing suggests that Bush's "greatest contribution to the SBC [is] the role he played as the confessional standard-bearer" during Southeastern's turbulent years.⁴⁰

In addition to being a well-known Southern Baptist apologist, Bush will be remembered for years to come for the role he played in the inerrancy battles of the SBC. Times of intense controversy and opposition usually define a person by bringing out their true character. Russ Bush is no different. Duesing labels Bush as a "gentleman-

³⁵Duesing, "The Reclamation of Theological Integrity," 193–94.

³⁶*Ibid.*, 195.

³⁷*Ibid.*

³⁸*Ibid.*, 197.

³⁹*Ibid.*, 201.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, 188.

theologian,” a “throwback to our nineteenth century Baptist forefathers.” He was “known around the world for how he treated all those with whom he agreed and disagreed with gentleness and respect.”⁴¹ An example that best illustrates this character trait of Bush is found in his book review of Ralph Elliott’s book *The “Genesis Controversy” and Continuity in Southern Baptist Chaos: A Eulogy for a Great Tradition*.⁴² As discussed earlier, Elliott’s book *The Message of Genesis* is generally viewed as the harbinger of the Southern Baptist controversy over the Bible. Bush spends more time in the book review affirming Elliott than he does reviewing the book. Though Elliott is seen as an “enemy” by some conservatives in the SBC, Bush states that “Elliott’s Christian charity is actually remarkable” towards conservative leaders like Paul Pressler.⁴³

Bush extends Christian charity toward Elliott as well; rather than attacking Elliott or his book for presenting a view Bush opposes, he calls Elliott’s book “honest, straightforward, and ... quite moving. He was unwilling to practice the ‘doublespeak’ of some of his colleagues.”⁴⁴ Though Bush disagreed with Elliott’s position, he affirms “Dr. Elliott for his integrity, for his willingness to seek a Christian compromise, and for his honesty in withdrawing when that possibility became impossible.”⁴⁵ Bush contrasts the Elliott controversy with that of Crawford H. Toy—the Old Testament professor who resigned from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary (1879) because his teachings about the Old Testament were contrary to the seminary’s confession of faith. Unlike Toy, who “went off into universalism and unitarianism” after his resignation, Elliott “only with

⁴¹Duesing, “Luther Russell Bush,” 6.

⁴²L. Russ Bush III, review of *The “Genesis Controversy” and Continuity in Southern Baptist Chaos: A Eulogy for a Great Tradition*, by Ralph H. Elliott, *Faith and Mission* 12, no. 1 (1994): 112–13.

⁴³*Ibid.*, 112.

⁴⁴*Ibid.*

⁴⁵*Ibid.*

great reluctance left Southern Baptists, and then only due to continuing pressure from those who questioned not only his critical stance but seemingly also his basic faith and commitment to Christ.”⁴⁶ While explicitly repudiating Elliott’s view, Bush goes out of his way to affirm Elliott for his honesty and Christian faith. He closes the review by commending Elliott’s book: “Elliott has done all of us a great service by producing this book, however, and I, for one, wish him well.”⁴⁷ Indeed, if this review is any indication, L. Russ Bush was a gentleman theologian—an example worthy to emulate.

In Peter’s epistle to the Diaspora in Asia Minor, he commands the saints of the Lord to always be ready to give a reason for their faith:

but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, having a good conscious, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame (1 Pet 3:15–16 ESV).

In his ministry, Bush taught others to give a defense of the faith through Christian philosophy and apologetics. In his temperament, he treated others—friend and foe—with “gentleness and respect.” This passage in First Peter served as Bush’s life verse and was a “fitting summary” of his ministry and temperament, shaping and guiding his work as he sought to instill in others the truth of 1 Peter 3:15–16.⁴⁸

Bush’s Metaphilosophy

Bush’s love for philosophy and science manifested itself in his interest in four distinct areas: the Bible and inerrancy, Christianity and science, Christian apologetics,⁴⁹

⁴⁶Bush, review of *The “Genesis Controversy,”* 113.

⁴⁷Ibid.

⁴⁸Duesing, “Luther Russell Bush,” 6.

⁴⁹According to Daniels, Bush defended the Christian faith against “its two most significant challenges: naturalism and New Age thought” (Daniels, “L. Russ Bush III,” 65).

and faith and culture.⁵⁰ The bulk of Bush's works exemplify his apologetic concern and his familiarity with contemporary Western culture. Each work is founded upon his view of the nature of philosophy and its value to the defense of the Christian faith, a view that is explicitly set forth in his second book, *A Handbook for Christian Philosophy*.⁵¹

What is Philosophy?

In an article on the issue of biblical inerrancy, Bush makes a humble claim about himself as a philosopher, and in doing so, he provides what he believes to be the essence of philosophy:

I make no claim to being a good philosopher, much less a profound one, but philosophical thinking is at its best simply clear thinking, logical thinking, thinking that searches out the implications of alternative ideas and tries to develop ideas that are intellectually strong.⁵²

Unlike his doctoral supervisor John Newport, who viewed philosophy as a way of being (its end is effective living), Bush's definition of philosophy is a methodological one. He admits the difficulty in defining philosophy because it is not a "self-contained discipline" like chemistry, mathematics, or economics. Rather, it is "more a method of thinking than a specific thing being thought. It is [more] a way of thinking than it is a specific idea."⁵³

Generally, philosophy is attached to another field of study like history, science, or economics, and within these disciplines, the philosopher asks questions that are "more foundational" and "more basic" than the questions asked by the practitioners of that particular field. Bush uses the field of history as an example. The philosopher of history would ask questions such as the following: What historical events are considered

⁵⁰David S. Dockery, "Foreword," in *Defending the Faith: Engaging the Culture: Essays Honoring L. Russ Bush*, ed. Bruce A. Little and Mark D. Liedbach (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2011), ix.

⁵¹L. Russ Bush, *A Handbook for Christian Philosophy* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1991).

⁵²L. Russ Bush, "Understanding Biblical Inerrancy," *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 50, no. 1 (2007): 47.

⁵³Bush, *A Handbook for Christian Philosophy*, 22.

important or unimportant? How is one to properly explain historical events? Do historical events cause other events in the same manner as “scientific events” are caused?⁵⁴ The questions a philosopher asks penetrate the practice and theory of human knowledge for a clearer, more thorough understanding of the nature of a particular discipline. Philosophy, then, according to Bush, is a “discipline that asks very basic questions, that seeks to clarify the underlying assumptions of various fields of study.” Underlying the numerous questions that a philosopher can ask are “fundamental questions” common to all disciplines; these questions define the “philosophic enterprise.”⁵⁵

Bush’s definition of philosophy does not imply that philosophy is just a means without an end. Throughout history, humans have sought to explain the experiences of “ordinary life”⁵⁶ for meaning and purpose. The questions philosophers, and ultimately all people, ask are those that search for ideas that explain the world one lives in. Man’s tendency to ask question is a part of his nature, for God created him with the capability of gaining knowledge, and he created a world to be known by man. “The mind is humanity’s greatest resource. To know is humanity’s greatest challenge.”⁵⁷ Ideas, the result of philosophical questions, are the end to the means.⁵⁸ Ultimately, ideas form the structure of one’s worldview.

Before concluding this section, it should be noted that Bush does not identify philosophy with worldview, nor does he view worldview as the crown of philosophy.

⁵⁴Bush, *A Handbook for Christian Philosophy*, 22.

⁵⁵Ibid., 23.

⁵⁶L. Russ Bush, “Christ in the New Age,” in *Passionate Conviction*, ed. Paul Copan and William Lane Craig (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2007), 172.

⁵⁷Bush, *A Handbook for Christian Philosophy*, 10.

⁵⁸Ibid., 48. Here Bush states: “The destination of philosophical thinking is the answer to some genuine questions” (48).

Rather, worldview happens to be a result of philosophical questioning. Bush defines worldview as “the philosophical framework that makes it possible to think at all.”⁵⁹ Further, it is “that basic set of assumptions that gives meaning to one’s thoughts.”⁶⁰ These assumptions deal with “the way things are, about *what* things are, about *why* things are.”⁶¹

Some do not articulate their worldview, but everyone has one whether they know it or not.⁶² It is one’s worldview that affects his lifestyle by: what he chooses for work and play; what he thinks about television programs and commercials; how he performs on a job and his career satisfaction; and a myriad of other “mundane” life choices.⁶³ One’s worldview also guides how he answers the grand questions of meaning and value, and how these answers play out in areas ranging from his entertainment choices to business ethics. The fundamental questions of a worldview are significant “in every area of human life.”⁶⁴

Ideas—the result of philosophical questions—impact lives on the individual level and on a global scale. In short, “ideas shape history and culture.”⁶⁵ Such a view of philosophy destroys the myth that philosophy and philosophers are abstract and out of touch with reality.⁶⁶ Philosophers insist that “all [beliefs] should be subjected to intensive

⁵⁹Bush, *A Handbook for Christian Philosophy*, 70.

⁶⁰Ibid.

⁶¹Ibid. Emphasis original.

⁶²Ibid.

⁶³Ibid., 76.

⁶⁴Ibid. The fundamental questions of a worldview include: “What is the nature of reality; what is actually there?”; “How do I know?”; “What ought one to do?”; “Is there any meaning or purposes for life or for history?”; and “What defines human nature?” (71–75).

⁶⁵L. Russ Bush, *The Advancement: Keeping the Faith in an Evolutionary Age* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2003).

⁶⁶Ibid., 23.

analysis.”⁶⁷ They want to know the best answer to the questions set forth before them, and these answers only come after “thoughtful consideration.”⁶⁸ Philosophy, therefore, is more than just the study of philosophical essays written by thinkers of ages past; rather, it consists of those who ask certain types of questions and seek to understand reality “at various levels.” Philosophers raise controversial questions, demand proof, seek better theories, and never hesitate to ask questions or find answers. No domain of knowledge is off limits to philosophical questions,⁶⁹ and no one is exempt from philosophical questions.

How is Philosophy Done?

Bush’s understanding of philosophy’s methodology is part and parcel of his definition of philosophy; at its most basic level, philosophy is asking questions. As it was stated above, no questions are off limits to philosophical inquiry. Yet, just as philosophical questions are not asked aimlessly, neither is philosophical questioning random. According to Bush, philosophy is characterized by basic, analytical questions that inquire about the method used to arrive at a belief and how one can evaluate what kind of questions to ask.⁷⁰

In addition to focusing on the fundamental questions of life, philosophy also focuses on the basic presuppositions that undergird all thought. Regardless which domain of knowledge philosophy investigates, it uses the same “standards, rigid demands, and careful logical procedures.”⁷¹ It operates according to laws of logic which serve as a “guide to the various methods by which reasons or statements of evidence are properly

⁶⁷Bush, *The Advancement*, 24.

⁶⁸Bush, *A Handbook for Christian Philosophy*, 25.

⁶⁹*Ibid.*, 26–28.

⁷⁰*Ibid.*, 14.

⁷¹*Ibid.*, 30.

related to conclusions.”⁷² Driven methodologically by the “why” question, the primary process of philosophy—evaluation—provides the basis upon which decisions are made and actions performed.⁷³

Why Philosophy?

L. Russ Bush wrote *A Handbook for Christian Philosophy* for beginning philosophy students.⁷⁴ Written in a nontechnical style, Bush based his book upon his lectures from philosophy of religion courses he taught while at Southwestern Seminary. Bush found that the majority of the students who took philosophy of religion were “bewildered” by the terminology used in the course, so he developed the handbook to provide students some background in philosophy.⁷⁵ Thus, when Bush provides the answer to the question “Why philosophy?,” he does so with seminary students in mind. One can, however, extend his answer to apply to the unbeliever as well since philosophy is valuable to every human being.

In the opening chapter of the *Handbook*, Bush specifically answers the questions most seminary students ask when they take philosophy, “Why?” In keeping with his methodological definition of philosophy, Bush answers by asserting that philosophy has “instrumental value.” Philosophy is not a “set of answers” to various questions; rather, it is a “tool” that helps one to gain a better understanding of the world.⁷⁶ Though philosophy does not answer all of life’s questions, it does seek to answer those that are fundamental to all of humanity—metaphysical, moral, and epistemological

⁷²Bush, *A Handbook for Christian Philosophy*, 45–46.

⁷³*Ibid.*, 36.

⁷⁴Daniels, “L. Rush Bush III,” 61.

⁷⁵Paul E. Robertson, “Forum,” *The Theological Educator* 46 (Fall 1992): 41.

⁷⁶Bush, *A Handbook for Christian Philosophy*, 29.

questions.⁷⁷ Philosophers over the centuries have provided answers to these questions—answers that have influenced countless others whether they knew it or not. To know that philosophy has had such an impact on human thought illustrates its value. Philosophy’s value is for everyone—especially those not in professional philosophy—to be at the very least cognizant of those ideas influencing the world in which they live.⁷⁸

Another answer to the “Why” question is that it makes one use their “God-given mind.” It forces one to clarify his ideas and viewpoints, and to know the questions that others are asking.⁷⁹ When one is aware of the questions being asked, he is able to better “perceive the issues” of life. Ultimately, one is “more informed about the nature of truth, as [he] clarify[ies] the “why” questions of life.”⁸⁰ In short, philosophy allows one to “express [his] God-created uniqueness.”⁸¹

Bush’s claim that philosophy allows one to express his “God-created uniqueness” exhibits his belief that human reason is the “essence of the *imago dei*.”⁸² Man’s ability to reason means that man is “somehow similar to God.” Man is not a duplicate of God, “yet some basic and fundamental similarity exists” such that man is separated from the animals.⁸³ Because all humanity is created in God’s image, all are “rational and spiritual beings, capable of moral discernment, able to communicate and

⁷⁷Bush, *A Handbook for Christian Philosophy*, 29.

⁷⁸Ibid.

⁷⁹Ibid. Bush specifically refers to Christians when he says: “in order to help us know what the questions are to which Christ is the answer.” A general principle can be drawn from this that philosophy helps any one in general to understand the questions that are being asked. The unbeliever may never find the final answers to these questions, but the Christian knows that Christ is the answer to all questions that are asked, for “all truth is God’s truth” (29).

⁸⁰Ibid., 30.

⁸¹Ibid.

⁸²Bush, “Knowing the Truth,” 10. See also Bush and Nettles, *Baptists and the Bible*, 410.

⁸³Bush, *A Handbook for Christian Philosophy*, 35.

able to understand.”⁸⁴ Man’s communication can “engage in extremely complex communication at the literal level as well as in a vast network of figurative levels.”⁸⁵ Philosophy, then, is a part of what makes a person human—the ability to reason, understand, and communicate about the world in which one lives.

Some Implications of Bush’s Metaphilosophy

The Relationship between Faith and Reason

L. Russ Bush’s view that reason is the essence of *imago dei* informs how he understands the relationship between faith and reason. He discusses the issue of faith and reason in the context of revelation and reason, for it is through God’s revealed Word that one comes to know God. It is one’s response in faith upon hearing the gospel. One cannot have true faith—gospel faith—without God’s self-revelation in the Bible.

In *Baptists and the Bible*, Bush asserts that “reason and revelation are sisters; the one God is their father.”⁸⁶ Human reason is a part of creation—it is contingent “upon the rational nature” of God as much as “any other created reality.”⁸⁷ Just as faith is an expression of one’s dependence upon God, reason is also dependent upon God. Bush’s argument for the existence of God provides some insight into his view on the “sisterhood” of faith and reason.

Classic arguments for God’s existence are, according to Bush, “hindered by their own reliance upon perception.”⁸⁸ In contrast, Bush seeks to demonstrate God’s existence by appealing to a “true starting point, an undeniable piece of common ground

⁸⁴Bush, *The Advancement*, 1.

⁸⁵Bush, *A Handbook for Christian Philosophy*, 35.

⁸⁶Bush and Nettles, *Baptists and the Bible*, 410.

⁸⁷*Ibid.*

⁸⁸Bush, “Knowing the Truth,” 10.

between believers and unbelievers.”⁸⁹ This starting point common to all mankind is “life itself.”

By virtue of “unavoidable and undeniable experience, perception, and reason,” Bush asserts that life “does not exist by necessity.” Though life gives life, all living things will die. Life “could become extinct. It has no inherent right to exist.”⁹⁰ Second, despite the incredible advancements in science, such as mapping the human genome, understanding more the makeup of far reaching galaxies, “and everything in between,” life cannot be explained by science alone. Each living thing is so complex that it is against reason that “such an information-filled and cognitively capable system [arose] spontaneously from inorganic simplicity.” Life is not self-explanatory; it requires that a “nonnatural source of life” exists.⁹¹ If there is no non-natural source of life, then “inorganic simplicity [is] the source of organic complexity.” Impersonality would be the source of personality, and “nonrational chemistry the ... source of rationality and purpose.”⁹² Life, then, can only come from original life, which must be rational and personal. God, therefore, is the essential reality.⁹³

Because man is contingent upon God, his reason by necessity is contingent upon God as well. Thus, truth that is the result of rational investigation in the various disciplines of knowledge comes from God. Any attempt to employ reason in the search of truth is to act in a way that conforms to how God created man.

Not only is reason contingent upon God, truth depends upon God as well. God is truth; if God did not always speak truth, then man would “fall into uncertainty and

⁸⁹Bush, “Knowing the Truth,” 10.

⁹⁰Ibid.

⁹¹Ibid., 11.

⁹²Ibid.

⁹³Ibid.

skepticism.”⁹⁴ Further, knowledge would be unstable, “truth could fluctuate into error and back again.”⁹⁵ Without God, truth would just be “relative subjectivism,” a matter of personal opinion and individual choice. God alone, then, is the source of absolute truth. Because man is created in God’s image, he is the foundational basis for comprehending truth.⁹⁶

In addition to reason—that by which man can understand those truths available to all men—God has also given mankind his divine revelation in Scripture. God’s Word is his “gracious gift to men to teach them, to correct them, to convey truth to them. Scripture is the truthful norm by which human thought is to be tested.”⁹⁷ Truth that is obtainable through reason and truth given to man by God (to which reason conforms) are unified for they “follow directly from the unity and the necessity of God’s being.”⁹⁸ There is no dichotomy, therefore, between reason and revelation, faith and reason. “All truth is God’s truth.”⁹⁹

The Possibility of a Christian Philosophy

Bush does not specifically address the possibility of a Christian philosophy, at least in the manner of Mullins, Newport, and Cunningham. The title of his *Handbook of Christian Philosophy* provides one clue as to how Bush views this issue. One can also derive Bush’s view based upon how he defines philosophy and the relationship between faith and reason. If Christianity alone understands truth in its proper sense (as finding its source in God, not as a result of reason alone), then Christianity does bring something to

⁹⁴Bush, “Understanding Biblical Inerrancy,” 50.

⁹⁵Ibid.

⁹⁶Ibid., 52

⁹⁷Bush and Nettles, *Baptists and the Bible*, 410.

⁹⁸Ibid.

⁹⁹Ibid.

philosophy that distinguishes the believer's philosophy from that of the unbeliever.

Philosophy is a way of thinking through the foundational questions of life. How one answers these questions serve as the structure of their worldview. One need not be a Christian to think philosophically. Their answers, however, though employing the God-given ability to reason, is not grounded in God's revealed truth. As such, the worldview of the unbeliever does not adequately answer life's questions, nor provide the true meaning and purpose of life and this world.

In the biblical worldview, "human knowledge ultimately depends on divine revelation." The Christian is able to "base reason in reality," to know the real truth, and have the "rational potential to interpret the world correctly."¹⁰⁰ Though the method by which the Christian philosophizes does not differ from that of the unbeliever, the presuppositions differ such that the biblical worldview more adequately answers life's fundamental questions.

The Role of Philosophy in the Life of the Believer

Though Christians have criticized the discipline of philosophy more than any other, Bush maintains that philosophy has great value for the believer.¹⁰¹ In the preface of his *Handbook*, Bush points to the value of philosophy for the believer by observing that the most significant changes that have occurred in history have come from those who view the world "in the greatest context—as a purposeful creation of holy, divine, infinite-personal intelligence"¹⁰² who gives purpose to human life. As these Christian thinkers have exemplified, the Christian is responsible to have "extensive cross-disciplinary

¹⁰⁰Bush, "Understanding Biblical Inerrancy," 50.

¹⁰¹Bush, *A Handbook for Christian Philosophy*, 21–22.

¹⁰²*Ibid.*, 9.

knowledge and insight” as a way to exercise responsibly dominion over creation.¹⁰³ Ideas are important; therefore, philosophy is important—even more so for the believer.¹⁰⁴

Philosophy is of value for the believer because of its apologetic value when one studies the questions of philosophy, better perceives the issues of their day, and “clarifies the ‘why’ questions of life.” The believer through the study of philosophy prepares himself to fulfill the commission in 1 Peter 3:15–16 to be prepared to give a defense of the Christian faith.¹⁰⁵ Bush asserts that the best approach to sharing the gospel is

one that practices sound thinking. Critical thinking ... is essential for the development of the strongest case for faith ... The apologist is wise to study worldviews and to use this conceptual framework to organize the proper analysis of alternative views and to test and verify the true views.¹⁰⁶

The study of philosophy is more important today for the believer because the Christian worldview is under attack.¹⁰⁷ Secularism has grown stronger in its influence upon the culture while Christianity has “grown intellectually weaker” as “experienced-centered” religion has become “massively dominant” in the West.¹⁰⁸ In light of the changing culture, the defense of the Christian faith is “as much a holy calling as are witnessing and preaching.”¹⁰⁹

¹⁰³Bush, *A Handbook for Christian Philosophy*, 10.

¹⁰⁴*Ibid.*, 15.

¹⁰⁵*Ibid.*, 29–30.

¹⁰⁶L. Russ Bush, “Biblical Apologetics: A 10-Step Methodology,” in *Defending the Faith, Engaging the Culture: Essays Honoring L. Russ Bush*, ed. Bruce A. Little and Mark D. Liederbach (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2011), 81.

¹⁰⁷Daniels, “L. Russ Bush,” 61.

¹⁰⁸Bush, “Biblical Apologetics, 274

¹⁰⁹Daniels, “L. Russ Bush,” 61.

Conclusion

Summary

L. Russ Bush understood philosophy in a methodological sense—to think clearly in order to discover the implications of ideas, to analyze the presuppositions behind answers to life’s questions, and to serve as the means by which one constructs their worldview. Philosophy tends to be a method of thinking employed by the various disciplines of knowledge as opposed to being a distinct discipline.¹¹⁰ Through the use of the laws of logic, it analyzes the fundamental questions of life and the presuppositions that undergird worldviews in order to arrive at truth. The value of philosophy is found in its use as a tool to gain an understanding of the world in which one lives.¹¹¹

Though philosophy relies primarily upon reason as opposed to revelation, the Christian need not shun philosophical thinking. Faith and reason are not antithetical to one another, nor does reason negate the need of divine revelation. Rather, faith and reason (specifically, revelation and reason) are “sisters; the one God is their father.”¹¹² The Christian brings to reason God’s revealed truth that sheds light on the fundamental questions of life. The believer, then, ought to be familiar with philosophical thought in order to understand and respond to the numerous competing worldviews. For the believer to obey the Lord’s command in 1 Peter 3:15–16, they must think about their faith critically. Then, and only, then will they be effective witnesses to the gospel in a secular world.

Closing Thoughts

Though Bush was a Christian philosopher, he was deeply involved in the theological controversies faced by the Southern Baptist Convention in the 1970s, 1980s,

¹¹⁰See Bush, *A Handbook for Christian Philosophy*, 22.

¹¹¹Bush, *A Handbook for Christian Philosophy*, 29.

¹¹²Bush and Nettles, *Baptists and the Bible*, 410.

and 1990s. In a day when Christian philosophers became more involved in epistemological and metaphysical problems and questions, Bush's concern was located in the issue of biblical inerrancy. Much of his time was spent on defending traditional Christian belief in light of contemporary secular culture and the sufficiency of Scripture in a modern, scientific culture. In light of his metaphilosophy, Bush consistently employed philosophy in his argumentation for Christian belief.

While Bush favorably employed philosophical methodology, his metaphilosophy lacked a robust view of what consisted of philosophy, its role and data, and its value. Compared to Mullins, Newport, and Cunningham, Bush's methodological view of philosophy mirrored the Analytical approach to philosophy as opposed to the classical view. Philosophy does not necessarily advance knowledge; instead, it clarifies ideas and analyzes arguments for strengths and weaknesses. Indeed, these tasks are valuable to the Christian, but such a view significantly minimizes the nature of philosophy, thus devaluing the role it can serve Christianity regarding the perennial philosophical problems of epistemology, metaphysics and axiology.

Further, despite Bush's apologetical bent in his writings, his metaphilosophy ultimately leaves the Christian somewhat detached from mainstream philosophical thought (Christian or not). That is, philosophy is more than the clarification and analysis of ideas; it also includes the development of solutions for questions such as the mind/body problem, the epistemological role of testimony, and the nature of reason and its role in regards to personal faith. In order to better defend orthodox Christian belief, the believer ought not to be concerned with only the defense of truth, but the advancement of truth as well through philosophical investigation and development. Nevertheless, L. Russ Bush's passion for Scripture and the defense of Christian faith shines forth throughout his works, serving as a call to Southern Baptists to reflect deeply upon their Christian beliefs and to boldly defend the faith in a secular world.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION: A CRITICAL ASSESSMENT

Introduction

For nearly two millennia, philosophers generally viewed the nature of philosophy to be the love of wisdom and the pursuit of truth. Despite the rise and fall of various philosophical systems, philosophers exhibited a confidence in philosophy to attain truth about the meaning and purpose of the world. With the advent of modern Western philosophy, however, skepticism set in regarding the purpose and value of philosophy. Progress in natural science grew rapidly while progress in philosophy lagged significantly or, to some, was nonexistent.

Thinkers in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries sought to conform philosophic methodology to the inductive scientific method in hopes that philosophy would once again contribute to the pursuit of knowledge. Yet, as the twentieth century dawned, many philosophers identified philosophy with science or viewed it as subservient to science. With the rise of Analytic philosophy, the role of philosophy was reduced to the analysis of language and ideas; no longer were the perennial questions of philosophy relevant to philosophy's investigation. Continental philosophy, which had mixed influence in the States, continued to answer the classic questions of philosophy, particularly in the area of metaphysics, yet it was skeptical toward any attempt to build philosophical systems like those of the past. In general, Western philosophy in the twentieth century did not enjoy the prominence it once had in centuries prior.

Despite the growing skepticism regarding the nature and purpose of philosophy in the twentieth century, the metaphilosophy of prevailing philosophers was not shared by everyone. The preceding analysis of E. Y. Mullins, John Newport, Richard

Cunningham, and L. Russ Bush illustrates that a positive view of the nature of philosophy remained despite prevalent pessimism toward philosophy, particularly among some Christian thinkers regarding philosophy's value in the service of theology and apologetics. Though the influence Alvin Plantinga and Nicholas Wolterstorff has helped to bring philosophy to a greater level of respectability among evangelical Christian thinkers, their work was preceded by the likes of E. Y. Mullins, Eric Rust, and John Newport of the SBC, and other evangelicals like Carl F. H. Henry and Gordon H. Clark. As secular philosophers generally sought to justify the purpose and validity of their profession, Christian philosophers sought to redeem philosophy for the advancement and defense of the Christian faith.

Strengths and Weaknesses

Strengths

A common theme runs throughout the thought of Mullins, Newport, Cunningham, and Bush—a theme that emphasizes a classical understanding of philosophy. That is, philosophy was not just about the analysis and clarification of words and ideas. Rather, philosophy was this and much more. An element missing in Analytic philosophy which dominated much of American philosophy in the twentieth century was the task of synthesizing the truths of all aspects of human existence into a cohesive whole. In other words, each subject of this dissertation emphasized philosophy's role as either informing or comprising one's worldview. Contra Analytic philosophers, philosophy went beyond the analysis and clarification of language (though it certainly included these tasks). Philosophy included the investigation of metaphysical questions, questions of purpose and meaning, the interpretation of experience and of the findings from the various disciplines of knowledge. For Mullins, Newport, Cunningham, and Bush, philosophy understood in its classical sense was just as valid in the twentieth century as it was in the days of Plato and Aristotle.

Because philosophy entailed the investigation of life's ultimate questions, it was goal-oriented in its approach. That is, philosophy was not an end in itself; rather, philosophy entailed Plato's view that it was "the striving for cognition of Eternal Being in all things."¹ For Mullins, Newport, Cunningham, and Bush, though, the end was not the cognition of Plato's "Eternal Being," but of God as revealed in Scripture. A direct benefit of such striving is the unity it brings to one's thought and life,² which leads to more effective living.³ For these four Baptist thinkers, philosophy served the greater purpose of one's seeking truth, which finds its source in God. Like the early church fathers and Medieval theologians, philosophy served the theology of the church in the pursuit of and in the defense of truth.

To view, then, philosophy as the investigation of life's ultimate questions, which entails all of human experience, is of great value to the believer. The Christian worldview illuminates the answers provided by philosophy, bringing to philosophy answers to those questions that fall out of philosophy's reach. Further, among all worldviews, the biblical worldview is the most adequate, comprehensive, and coherent worldview. The Christian, therefore, need not fear nor shun philosophy; rather, he should familiarize himself with prevailing thought in order to understand the ideas of competing worldviews and to answer better the critics of Christianity. Philosophy, then, is of great apologetic value for the Christian.

Weaknesses and Critique

Despite the impact Mullins, Newport, Cunningham, and Bush made in SBC circles, particularly in their metaphilosophy and their application of philosophy to

¹Richard Cunningham, "What is Philosophy?" (classroom lecture notes, 28500—*Christian Philosophy: An Introduction to Christian Thought*, Fall 1998, photocopy): 1.

²John Newport, *What is Christian Doctrine?* Layman's Library of Christian Doctrine (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1984), 10.

³Ibid.

theological issues, there are at least two areas in which their metaphilosophy can be strengthened. The first issue lies in the epistemology of a Christian philosophy. All four thinkers emphasize the importance of Scripture in one's philosophy, particularly the insights it brings regarding life's ultimate questions, and the authority it has in the life of the believer. However, there is little in the way of discussion on exactly how Scripture informs the believer's philosophy. Mention is made that the Christian philosopher utilizes the key categories found in Scripture (Newport), and that he utilizes concepts found in Scripture that are philosophical in nature (Cunningham), but how does the Bible operate specifically as a source of knowledge in one's philosophy? What is the nature of Scripture's authority in one's philosophy? If all truth is God's truth, and the Bible plays a crucial and necessary role in one's philosophy, then a Baptist view of metaphilosophy will need to develop more explicitly how Scripture informs one's philosophical thought.

Another area that deserved more attention in the philosophy of Mullins, Newport, Cunningham and Bush is the development of foundational philosophical issues in light of the Christian worldview. These four thinkers rightly devoted time to apologetical issues such as the defense of Christianity against competing worldviews, or the clarifying of Christian beliefs in light of contemporary prevalent thought. Further, they encountered cultural issues with the Christian worldview. Yet, such approaches fall under applied philosophy as opposed to pure philosophy. There was little attempt to tackle philosophical issues head on—issues such as the mind/body problem, the nature of time, the epistemological role and value of testimony, and many more.

In a related issue, because the four subjects of this dissertation focused primarily on applied philosophy, the audience of their works was limited to Southern Baptists and evangelical Christians. Much of their work was directed toward the Christian lay person or to their peers in Southern Baptist and evangelical academia. Little, if any, work was done to advance work in abstract philosophy to advance

knowledge in philosophical topics that had bearing upon the Christian faith. The reason for such limited interaction with the broader philosophy community is perhaps best explained by Richard Cunningham.

In an email correspondence on February 21, 2014, Cunningham addressed the question raised above in Chapter 1—why is it that Southern Baptist institutions, despite their rich theological heritage, historically lack influence in Christian philosophy? Cunningham answers this question by addressing the purpose and mission of Southern Baptist seminaries. The seminary is “committed to the making of ministers for the churches and other ministries.”⁴ Philosophy, therefore, could not be studied as an end in itself. Rather, the study of philosophy at the SBC seminary level included those philosophical questions that intersected with “the questions, concerns, and practices of religion and more narrowly the Christian faith.”⁵ Other areas of philosophy, such as “esoteric areas of symbolic logic, or rarefied linguistic studies, or abstract exploration of phenomenology,” among many other areas, are worthy of philosophical investigation but do not fit within the purpose and mission of theological education and the education of ministers.⁶

Indeed, Cunningham is correct regarding the mission of SBC seminaries, but the scope of this mission is too narrow. That is, do seminaries train only “ministers for the church and other ministries”? For the most part, this is true, but it fails to consider another task for the seminaries—that of training future Southern Baptist academicians.

⁴Richard Cunningham, e-mail message to author, February 21, 2014. In his email, Cunningham qualifies this statement by referring to the mission of SBC seminaries during his time as a student and professor. This is not to imply that the seminaries no longer operate as such any longer; rather, Cunningham does not seek to speak for SBC seminaries today as he is no longer actively involved as professor or administrator. A helpful look into Cunningham’s thoughts on theological education is found in Richard B. Cunningham, “Reflections on Theological Education” (lecture, Theological Education Workshop to The Faculty and Administrators, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, October 1997).

⁵Ibid.

⁶Ibid.

Granted, this task is secondary to the task of educating ministers, but this does not diminish its importance. SBC seminaries rely upon, in part, recruiting new professors and administrators from within their own ranks. Further, SBC colleges and universities also rely upon seminary-trained professors to serve as professors and administrators. Thus, in light of the purpose of this dissertation, to limit the study of philosophy to only those questions that immediately intersect with theological issues and matters of the Christian faith is to inadequately prepare future philosophy professors for the interaction with the larger philosophy community. Indeed, the study of philosophical questions that have direct bearing upon the Christian faith are of utmost importance to theological education, but to study only these philosophical questions assumes lack of import that other philosophical questions have for the Christian faith.

Though Western philosophers today are skeptical of building grand philosophical systems that seek to provide the answer to and guide for the world in which one lives, philosophical ideas still make their way from the theoretical realm of academia to the practical realm of popular thought. By the time philosophical ideas reach the general public, these ideas become intertwined into their lives and worldviews—the very lives of people Christians interact with and minister. As such, all philosophical questions have some bearing upon the Christian faith—in its ministry of the Word, evangelization of the lost, and apologetic task of defending the faith. To produce effective philosophers and theologians, seminaries ought to be at the forefront in philosophical investigation and education while maintaining its emphasis on applying the philosophy in its apologetic task.

Additional Critique

E. Y. Mullins. While it is true that E. Y. Mullins discussed pragmatism and personalism, he did not develop these philosophies in such a way as to formulate a

uniquely Christian pragmatism or personalism. Rather, he discussed where these philosophies were inadequate for the Christian faith (without recourse to philosophical argument) and utilized those areas amenable to Christian belief. Further, Mullins assumed the truthfulness of Christianity and the inadequacy of competing philosophical viewpoints and religious worldviews. When one's audience is primarily other Christians, such an approach is warranted, but if the Christian philosopher seeks to address the wider philosophical community, to take this approach would commit the fallacy of begging the question. If one is to be ready to give a defense for his faith (1 Pet 3:15), this entails that he be able to demonstrate the sufficiency of the Christian faith contra competing worldviews.

The Christian philosopher ought to demonstrate philosophically what value any philosophy has for the Christian faith (if any) while appealing to Scripture as a source of knowledge that informs their philosophical arguments. A Christian metaphilosophy, therefore, should delve deeper than the applied aspects of philosophy into the very foundational philosophical questions that intersect with the truths of Scripture (as Mullins attempted to do). This requires that Southern Baptist philosophers master the philosophical issues of the day and familiarize themselves with the prevalent philosophers in those areas; to do so allows them to address more effectively those areas of the Christian faith that are philosophical in nature.

John Newport. Newport's philosophy addressed a weakness in Analytic philosophy that was prevalent in many American universities at the time—the reduction of philosophy to the analysis and clarification of language. As discussed above, Newport's metaphilosophy included the ultimate questions of life—those that dealt with the ultimate meaning and purpose of the world in which one lives—as part of the data of philosophical investigation. Yet, though his emphasis of life's ultimate questions closely mirrored that of classical philosophy, Newport did not explicitly address philosophy's

classical categories. Instead, he sought to develop a philosophy based upon categories of thought as found in Scripture, particularly in the Old Testament. That is, Newport's biblical philosophy utilized what was, in his day, a popular means of doing theology—biblical theology.

The biblical theology movement contrasted Hebrew thought from ancient Greek thought. That is, in order for one to fully appreciate the New Testament, one ought to understand the Israelite mind.⁷ There is a unity that underlies the Old and New Testaments, a “general underlying point of view which informs the whole in its variety, and which is usually connected with the given and essential Hebraic background.”⁸ This unity is expressed in theologically-rich words, but the problem lies in the fact that the words of the New Testament are written in Greek. Therefore, a lexical study of New Testament words is necessary in order to “bring out their coherence with Hebraic thought.”⁹

The underlying assumption of the biblical theology movement was that “Christianity is essentially Jewish.”¹⁰ In order for one to understand the Hebraic elements in the Christian faith as presented in the New Testament, one has to first contrast between Hebraic thought and Greek thought to best bring out Christianity's Jewish heritage.¹¹ According to James Barr, the motivation behind biblical theology was varied. For some, they sought to “delineate Jewish culture as the one truly religious culture.”¹² Others sought to emphasize the uniqueness of Christianity. Finally, the contrast of Greek and

5. ⁷James Barr, *The Semantics of Biblical Language* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967), 4–

⁸Ibid., 5.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Ibid., 8.

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Ibid.

Hebrew was thought to emphasize the unity of Scripture—a unity found in “a common way of thinking, a common cast of mind and mould of expression, which operates throughout the Bible and which is more noticeable and influential than the variations which it of course undergoes in the minds of individual authors and traditions.”¹³

According to Barr, however, at least two specific circumstances gave rise to the biblical theology movement. First, it was a reaction against the “predominantly analytic and divisive techniques of literary criticism.”¹⁴ In particular, the reaction was against a Hellenized interpretation of a large part of the New Testament “with its emphasis on the Greek environment, on the normal *koine* character of the NT language, and on the influence on the Gentile church of mystery religions, of Hellenic philosophy, and of the more emphatically Hellenized forms of Judaism.”¹⁵ Another circumstance that gave rise to the biblical theology movement was the tendency of theologians post-WWI to borrow from natural theology or philosophy as little as possible because they are not founded upon special revelation. Rather, natural theology and philosophy were equated with the Greek way of thinking, whereas Hebraic thought occupied “a position of independence analogous to that of a theology conscious of its unwillingness to lean on the Western philosophic tradition.”¹⁶

The biblical theology movement noted at least three points of contrast. The first involved the difference between the static and the dynamic—the Greeks emphasized contemplation while the Hebrews emphasized action.¹⁷ The second point of contrast involved the difference between the abstract and the concrete—Greek thought worked

¹³Barr, *The Semantics of Biblical Language*, 9.

¹⁴*Ibid.*

¹⁵*Ibid.*

¹⁶*Ibid.*, 10.

¹⁷*Ibid.*

with abstractions while Hebrew thought was always “related to the actual object or situation.”¹⁸ Finally, the contrast was between “the divisive, distinction-forming, analytic type of Greek thought and the totality type of Hebrew thought.”¹⁹

Barr notes two problems associated with the stark contrast made between the Greek and Hebrew forms of thought as posited by the biblical theology movement. First, the biblical theology movement focused only on the contrast between the Greek and Hebrew languages but neglected to broaden their investigation into related languages (the Greek with other Indo-European languages and the Hebrew with other Semitic languages). That is, what is characteristic of Greek thought as expressed in language is not necessarily universal to other Indo-European languages. Thus, where Greek and Hebrew differ, there may be similarities between Hebrew and other Indo-European languages. Likewise, where Hebrew thought differs from Greek thought, there may be similarities between Greek and other Semitic languages.²⁰ To neglect the investigation into related languages highlights the “unsystematic and haphazard approach” taken by the theologians of the biblical theology movement.²¹ Another problem with the biblical theology movement involves the value of the Old Testament. The contrast between Greek and Hebrew ways of thinking has its value in the New Testament because of their interaction during the life and ministry of Jesus and the rise of the early church. Yet, the Old Testament was largely untouched by Greek thinking, thus the contrast between Greek and Hebrew is unhelpful in that the emphasis on the New Testament and its Hebraic heritage can “obscure any special place the Old Testament may have.”²²

¹⁸Barr, *The Symantics of Biblical Language*, 10–11.

¹⁹Ibid., 13.

²⁰Ibid., 17–18.

²¹Ibid., 18.

²²Barr, *The Semantics of Biblical Language*, 19.

John Newport's development of his biblical philosophy based upon biblical categories is not without warrant. Unique to Scripture is God's acting within history and the covenant he made with his people; as such, Newport sought to develop a philosophy that emphasized the "centrality of history and covenant."²³ According to Newport, such an approach dealt with life's ultimate questions "in the order in which they were faced by the people of the biblical community as they moved through history...preserv[ing] the durational, history-centered, and narrative nature of the biblical worldview."²⁴ Such an approach to philosophy, however, downplayed the classical categories of Western philosophy, isolating Newport's philosophy within the walls of Christendom. That is, while he dealt with questions faced by all humanity, his philosophy does not explicitly address the philosophical questions of his day, thus failing to bring his work to bear upon contemporary philosophical issues. This is not to say that Newport needed to conform to contemporary methods and questions; rather, his approach limited his effectiveness to reach a broader philosophical audience.

Richard Cunningham. Along with E. Y. Mullins, Cunningham provides the most comprehensive metaphilosophy, particularly regarding its purpose and method. Where his metaphilosophy lacks is in scope in relation to the believer. More specifically, the seminary—whose purpose is the training of ministers—only teaches on those philosophical issues directly related to the Christian faith. However, as discussed earlier in this chapter, such a view is too narrow when considering the fact that training a minister involves more than those going into the pastorate or other church-related ministries. Southern Baptist institutions also train future academicians who will interact

²³Frank L. Mauldin, "John Paul Newport," in *The Legacy of Southwestern: Writings That Shaped a Tradition*, ed. James L. Garrett, Jr. (North Richland Hills, TX: Smithfield Press, 2002), 210.

²⁴John P. Newport, *Life's Ultimate Questions: A Contemporary Philosophy of Religion* (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1989), 32.

with the leading thinkers of their day, seeking to answer prevalent ideas that run contrary to the Christian faith. The Southern Baptist institution, then, ought to better prepare future ministers and academicians on how to think philosophically about not only issues directly related to the Christian faith, but also those issues that have an indirect impact.

L. Russ Bush. It goes without saying that Bush has a prominent place within the history of the Southern Baptist Convention. His role as professor and administrator impacted the lives of many Southern Baptists in a great way. In particular to his role as a professor of philosophy, Bush's passion for philosophy and his desire to defend the Christian faith was passed on through this teaching. In practice, however, as evidenced in his work, Bush's metaphilosophy focused primarily on applied philosophy, particularly the apologetic task of defending Christianity. This is not to imply that the apologetic task is unimportant or secondary to abstract philosophy, for Christian philosophy ought to result in the defense of the Christian faith. Rather, the weakness of Bush's metaphilosophy is found in its lack of a comprehensive view on the role and purpose of philosophy.

As stated earlier in Chapter 5, Bush's metaphilosophy is best understood as a methodological view of the nature of philosophy. That is, for Bush, philosophy deals with the analysis of and clarification of ideas and questions. Indeed this is a vital aspect of philosophy, but it tends to downplay or neglect the role of philosophy in seeking to answer and define the questions of epistemology, metaphysics, and ethics. This latter role of philosophy employs the Christian philosopher in issues not only directly related to the Christian faith (those issues addressed by one's worldview), but also those questions that indirectly impact the believer. Ultimately, all philosophical questions impact the worldview of an individual or an entire culture; understanding these issues better informs the believer how to effectively defend the Christian faith in a secular world and how to better reach the lost.

The State of Philosophy in the SBC

Despite the works of Mullins, Newport, Cunningham, Bush, and many other Southern Baptist philosophers over the years, philosophy still remains a discipline of study with which most Southern Baptists know not what to do. The six SBC seminaries do offer philosophy courses, but only four seminaries have departments of philosophy.²⁵ Even in the seminaries that house a philosophy department, not all of them require students to take philosophy courses, offering them only as electives instead. The level of importance given to philosophy in Baptist circles is determined more by the individual believer than by leading Baptist thinkers.

The general attitude toward philosophy in the SBC seminaries seems to reflect that of Southern Baptists in general. For some, they do not know what to do with philosophy because they do not understand what philosophy is, nor do they understand its role in the life of the believer. Others view philosophy with skepticism, claiming that it has lost its value for the Christian faith ever since the Enlightenment. Such skepticism is a result of uncertain and unclear metaphysical views as well.

The reasons for the ambivalence towards philosophy today remain the same as those given by Newport and Cunningham in the latter half of the twentieth century. The experiential aspect of religious experience that dominated nineteenth-century revivals and early Southern Baptist life continues to dominate Southern Baptist life today. Philosophy is viewed as a secular force that seeks to destroy the faith as opposed to viewing it as a discipline that can be redeemed to serve the faith. Though much ground has been gained by Christian philosophy towards respectability in the philosophy community, much work remains to be done within the Southern Baptist Convention.

Mullins, Newport, and Cunningham worked in a day where Christian philosophy was viewed by many secular philosophers as irrelevant. Times have changed

²⁵See chap. 1n9.

significantly since then as religious experience and knowledge are gaining a wider audience within present-day philosophy. If Gregory Alan Thornbury of King's College in New York City is correct, Christians, particularly Baptists, have a unique opportunity to boldly claim the Christian faith in light of modern philosophy with even more relevance and applicability. In his 2013 Norton Lecture series,²⁶ Thornbury discussed three contemporary Continental philosophers—Slavoj Žižek, Peter Sloterdijk, and Quentin Meillassoux—who appeal to particular Christian beliefs as better options to philosophical questions. In Thornbury's words, they are “paraphrasing” certain Christian ideas in an attempt to develop a philosophy that meets today's needs. Philosophy serves the Christian today as “pre-evangelism”²⁷—one studies contemporary philosophical ideas in order to understand the times and to present more effectively the Christian faith to a lost world.

The opportunity for the believer, however, is much broader than pre-evangelism. The Christian has the ability to present a philosophy that provides hope to a world drowning in a sea of hopeless philosophies. The Christian has the opportunity to provide a comprehensive and coherent philosophy in response to inconsistent and fragmented secular philosophies. To do so, the Christian philosopher needs to see his purpose as more than apologetics (applied philosophy), but to be a pure (or abstract) philosopher as well. There is still a great need for believers who are abstract philosophers, and Southern Baptists can answer this call if a change occurs in how they understand the nature of philosophy.

One way in which Southern Baptist institutions can strengthen their philosophy

²⁶The title of Thornbury's lecture is “If You Can't Beat Them, Paraphrase Them: Contemporary Philosophy Imitates Christian Theology” and is available at <http://www.sbts.edu/resources>.

²⁷Gregory Alan Thornbury, “If you Can't Beat Them, Paraphrase Them: Contemporary Philosophy Imitates Christian Theology,” Lecture 1(video recording of 2013 Norton Lectures, Louisville, Kentucky, November 5, 2013), accessed February 4, 2014, <http://www.sbts.edu/resources/norton/lecture-1>.

departments is to set forth how they understand the nature of philosophy, particularly in relation to the institution's theological mission. How does the institution view the role of philosophy in light of its mission to train future ministers, leaders, and academicians? Because the number of philosophical questions is quite expansive due to the specialized nature of philosophy, what philosophical questions does the institution deem as necessary to their mission, and what questions are secondary in nature, but still significant enough to warrant their attention? Lastly, what is the proper value to place upon philosophy? That is, the Word of God is the ultimate authority in the life of the believer; nothing else takes precedence over it. Also, the study of theology is necessary for anyone training to serve in the church or in a denominational institution. In light of these two factors, how much value is placed upon philosophy and the role it can (and should) play in serving theology and in the proclamation of God's Word? To answer these questions can help an institution to know how to better approach philosophy and how to employ it in a way that provides proper parameters for the use of philosophy by the believer.

Another way in which Southern Baptist institutions can strengthen their philosophy departments is by the very work of its philosophy professors. With few exceptions, most Southern Baptist philosophers, especially in the twentieth century, limited their published work to deal with issues of applied philosophy only addressed to the general Christian audience. Very little work was done on a scholarly level that sought to address contemporary philosophical questions. Much work is being done by Christian philosophers today in abstract areas of epistemology and metaphysics (one need only look at the Evangelical Philosophical Society's *Philosophia Christi* and The Society of Christian Philosophers' *Faith and Reason* for the wide range of topics covered). The field is ready for Southern Baptists to be influential in philosophy.

The purpose of this critique is not to downplay the role Southern Baptist philosophers have played in the life of the SBC; rather, it is to point to the groundwork

that has been laid by these thinkers—a groundwork that ought to serve as the basis upon which Southern Baptist philosophers can build upon. The work of Mullins, Newport, Cunningham, and Bush, among many others, ought to spur Southern Baptist thinkers and philosophers to become a force in Christian philosophy and the wider philosophical community today for the defense of and proclamation of the truth—the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

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ABSTRACT

TOWARD A BAPTIST VIEW OF METAPHILOSOPHY: AN ANALYSIS OF E. Y. MULLINS, JOHN NEWPORT, RICHARD CUNNINGHAM, AND L. RUSS BUSH

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The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, May 2014

Chair: Dr. Theodore J. Cabal

The purpose of this dissertation is to analyze how four Southern Baptist scholars: E.Y. Mullins, John Newport, Richard Cunningham, and L. Russ Bush, understood—whether explicitly or implicitly—the nature of philosophy. Three issues will be explored as a result of their metaphilosophical views. First, what is the relationship between faith and reason? Second, is a Christian philosophy possible? And third, what role does philosophy serve in the life of the believer?

Chapter 1 sets the historical context regarding the issue of metaphilosophy. Philosophy has been traditionally understood as the love of wisdom. However, since the Enlightenment and the dawning of modern Western philosophy, how thinkers understood the nature of philosophy changed dramatically. As the natural sciences progressed rapidly in the advancement of knowledge, thinkers increasingly viewed philosophy as being in need of change regarding its method and purpose. By the time of the twentieth century, philosophy's identity was in a state of confusion and uncertainty.

Chapter 2 analyzes the metaphilosophy of E. Y. Mullins. For Mullins, philosophy investigated the foundational questions of human existence and operated autonomously from science and religion. The data of philosophy included all of life, including the findings of the various fields of knowledge, and sought to unify all truth into a cohesive unit. The value of philosophy is found in its ability to go beyond the descriptions of science in order to interpret the world in which one lives.

Chapter 3 analyzes the metaphilosophy of John Newport. According to Newport, philosophy is identified with worldview—the structure of one’s beliefs about the world. One’s worldview affects how one lives and operates within the world. Philosophy includes not only the analytic task of critiquing and clarifying ideas and beliefs, but also the synthetic task of incorporating beliefs into a coherent structure. Philosophy also involves analyzing the key-principles that underlie one’s belief structure—those principles that are basic to an individual. Philosophy, or worldview, is valuable to the individual by helping one to make sense of life and to avoid bad decisions.

Chapter 4 focuses on the metaphilosophy of Richard Cunningham. Cunningham views philosophy as one’s attempt to understand his experience in all its facets. It is a deliberate action on the part of the individual, one that leads to the development of his worldview. Philosophy involves the traditional tasks of analysis and synthesis, and its value is found in its ability to afford one to live more effectively.

Chapter 5 presents the metaphilosophy of L. Russ Bush. Bush’s definition of philosophy is methodological in nature as he views philosophy more as an activity than as a way of life. One employs the laws of logic and other philosophical tasks when analyzing one’s own or competing worldviews in order to judge between their similarities or differences, and their strengths or weaknesses. In a day and age where many individuals lazily accept their beliefs without deep reflection, philosophy helps one to hold to beliefs that are more consistent and it helps one to better dialogue with others of differing worldviews.

Chapter 6 concludes the dissertation by highlighting the strengths and weaknesses of the four thinkers presented in the preceding chapters. Suggestions are provided on how to strengthen a Baptist view of metaphilosophy in light of the weaknesses provided. Finally, the current state of philosophy in the Southern Baptist Convention is provided.

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PUBLICATIONS

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Financial Services & Registrar, Daymar College Louisville, 2004–2006
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