

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY

DEPLOYING SECULAR HISTORIAN'S RULES AS AN
APOLOGETIC METHOD TO PERSUADE SECULAR
NATURALISTS/HUMANISTS THAT
DEMONS EXIST

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BY

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APPROVAL SHEET

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CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE: DISSERTATION INTRODUCTION.....	1
Chapter Introduction.....	1
The Dissertation’s Presuppositional Bias.....	2
The presupposition that Bias is Inevitable.....	2
The presupposition that Circular Arguments are Logically Invalid.....	3
The presupposition that Facts Exist.....	3
The presupposition that Beliefs are not Coterminous with Facts.....	4
The presupposition that Worldviews Evolve.....	6
The presupposition that Epistemic Adequacy is Sufficient to Warrant Inquiry.....	6
The presupposition that Ancient Near East (ANE) Texts Remain Historical Documents.....	6
Research Questions and Thesis Statement.....	7
Need for Study.....	8
Seven Historian’s Rules.....	9
The Role of Historian’s Rules in Apologetics.....	9
The Role of Historian’s Rules in the Dissertation’s Apology.....	11
Research Method.....	13
Exploratory.....	14
Qualitative.....	14
Inductive.....	14
Chapter Conclusion.....	17

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW.....	19
Chapter Introduction.....	19
Literature regarding Why Secular Humanists/Naturalists Reject the Supernatural Generally, and Specifically, the Existence and Activity of Demons.....	19
Primary Sources.....	19
René Descartes, <i>Discourse on the Method of Rightly Conducting the Reason</i>	19
Descartes, <i>Meditations on First Philosophy</i>	19
Immanuel Kant, <i>Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics</i>	19
John Locke, <i>An Essay Concerning Human Understanding</i>	20
Secondary Sources.....	20
C. S. Lewis, <i>Miracles: A Preliminary Study</i>	20
Victor Reppert, <i>C. S. Lewis's Dangerous Idea: A Philosophical Defense of Lewis's Argument from Reason</i>	21
Lesslie Newbigin, <i>1984: Questions for the Churches</i>	21
Francis A. Schaeffer, <i>Escape from Reason</i>	22
Charles Taylor, <i>A Secular Age</i>	22
Literature regarding Why many Christians Read the Bible in Ways that Dismiss its Supernatural Elements, including the Existence and Activity of Demons.....	23
Primary Sources.....	23
Julius Wellhausen, <i>Prolegomena to the History of Ancient Israel</i>	23
Rudolph Bultmann, <i>New Testament Mythology</i>	23
Bultmann, <i>Jesus Christ and Mythology</i>	23
Martin Dibelius, <i>Jesus</i>	24
Dibelius, <i>Paul</i>	24

Dibelius, <i>The Book of Acts: Form Style and Theology</i>	24
Secondary Sources.....	25
Michael S. Heiser, <i>Demons: What the Bible Really Says about the Powers of Darkness</i>	25
Norman L. Geisler and Douglas E. Potter, <i>The Doctrine of Angels & Demons</i>	25
Francis A. Schaeffer, <i>The God Who is There: Speaking Historic Christianity into the Twentieth Century</i>	25
Millard J. Erickson, <i>Christian Theology</i>	26
Bernard Lonergan, <i>Method in Theology</i>	26
George Lindbeck, <i>The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Post-liberal Age</i>	26
Paul Allen, <i>Theological Method: A Guide for the Perplexed</i>	27
David K. Clark, <i>To Know and Love God: Method for Theology</i>	27
Carl F. H. Henry, <i>God, Revelation, and Authority. God Who Speaks and Shows, Vol. 1</i>	28
Literature regarding How Scholars can Refute Secularism, including Skepticism Regarding the Existence and Activity of Demons	28
Primary Sources.....	28
Barnabas, “The Epistle of Barnabas”.....	31
Evagrius of Pontus, <i>Talking Back: A Monastic Handbook for Combatting Demons</i>	31
Hippolytus “The Refutation of All Heresies”.....	31
Ignatius of Antioch, “The Epistle of Ignatius to the Smyrnæans”.....	31
Irenæus, “Against Heresies”.....	32
Mary of Cassobelæ, “The Epistle of Maria the Proselyte to Ignatius”.....	32

Tatian, “Oration to the Greek”	32
Tertullian, “The Apology”	33
Theodoret of Cyrus, “Ecclesiastical History of Theodoret”	33
Secondary Sources.....	34
D. A. Carson, <i>The Gagging of God: Christianity Confronts Pluralism</i>	34
Carson, <i>Christ and Culture Revisited</i>	34
Lesslie Newbigin, <i>Foolishness to the Greeks:</i> <i>The Gospel and Western Culture</i>	34
C. Fred Smith, <i>Developing a Biblical Worldview:</i> <i>Seeing Things God’s Way</i>	35
Kevin J. Vanhoozer, <i>The Cambridge Companion</i> <i>to Postmodern Theology</i>	35
Nancy Pearcey, <i>Saving Leonardo: A Call to Resist</i> <i>The Secular Assault on Mind, Morals, and Meaning</i>	35
Pearcey, <i>Finding Truth: 5 Principles for</i> <i>Unmasking Atheism, Secularism,</i> <i>and Other God Substitutes</i>	35
Walter Wink, <i>Naming the Powers: The Language of</i> <i>Power in the New Testament</i>	36
Chapter Conclusion.....	36

CHAPTER THREE: PHILOSOPHIES UNDERGIRDING PRESENT THOUGHT
REGARDING THE SUPERNATURAL FROM THE MEDIEVAL,
MODERN, AND POSTMODERN PERIODS.....

Chapter Introduction.....	37
Plato and the Non-material Nature of Ideas	38
The Medieval Period	40
Scholasticism.....	41

René Descartes (AD 1596–1650).....	44
Realism.....	47
Galileo di Vincenzo Bonaiuti de' Galilei (Galileo) (AD 1564–1642).....	49
Nominalism.....	50
John Duns Scotus (AD 1266–1308)	51
William of Ockham (AD c. 1280–1349)	52
Skepticism.....	54
Moral Skepticism.	55
Cognition.....	58
The Premodern Period	59
Blaise Pascal (AD 1623–1662).....	60
The Modern Period	62
Benedict (Baruch) De Spinoza (AD 1632–1677).....	62
Sir Isaac Newton (AD 1642–1727).....	64
Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (AD 1646–1716).....	65
John Locke (AD 1634–1703).....	66
Humanism and Modernity	68
Immanuel Kant (AD 1724–1804).....	69
Despair.....	73
David Hume (AD 1711–1776).....	73
Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (AD 1770–1831).....	75
Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche (AD 1844–1900).....	76
Martin Heidegger (AD 1889–1976).....	77

Living Below the Line of Despair.....	78
Why the Ontology of Thoughts is Pivotal to Epistemology and Epistemology is Critical to Worldview.....	80
Art and Worldview.....	80
Music and Worldview.....	83
Jean-Paul Charles Aymard Sartre (AD 1905–1980)	86
Thoughts and Knowledge.....	87
First Order Skepticism cf. Secular Humanism/Naturalism.....	88
Secularist Problems with Metaphysics.....	89
Secularist Problems with Metanarrative.....	92
Jacques Derrida (AD 1930–2004).....	94
Secularist Problems with <i>Metanoia</i>	96
A Corporeal and Material Life is Easier without the Existence of either Authority or Authoritative Figures.....	97
Chapter Conclusion.....	99
 CHAPTER FOUR: WHY MANY CHRISTIANS READ THE BIBLE IN WAYS THAT DISMISS ITS SUPERNATURAL ELEMENTS INCLUDING THE EXISTENCE AND ACTIVITY OF DEMONS.....	 100
Chapter Introduction.....	100
The Philosophical Roots underlying Christian Skepticism.....	100
Source Criticism.....	101
Julius Wellhausen (AD 1844-1918).....	102
Form Criticism.....	103
Heinrich August Wilhelm Meyer (AD 1800–1873).....	105

Rudolph Bultmann (AD 1884–1976).....	106
Martin Dibelius (AD 1883–1947).....	107
Biblical Worldviews Splintered.....	108
Cartesianism Prevails in the Church.....	110
The Waning of Liberal Christianity and the Waxing of Progressive Christianity.....	111
William Barclay (AD 1907–1978).....	112
Herikus Berkhof (AD 1914–1995).....	114
Walter Wink (AD 1935–2012).....	116
John Nolland (AD 1947–).....	119
N. T. Wright (AD 1948–).....	120
Metanarrative for the Christian Secularist.....	121
Metaphysics for the Christian Secularist.....	122
<i>Metanoia</i> for the Christian Secularist.....	124
Modification of Traditional Biblical/Linguistic Definitions.....	125
Skeptical Academia to Theocracy.....	127
Doubt in the Face of Evidence.....	130
Beauty in the Eyes of the Beholder: The Difference between Revelation and Enlightenment.....	131
A Little Leaven Ruins the Entire Loaf.....	133
Chapter Conclusion.....	134
 CHAPTER FIVE: HOW SCHOLARS CAN REFUTE SECULARISM AND DEFEND THE SUPERNATURAL WORLDVIEW INCLUDING THE EXISTENCE AND ACTIVITIES OF DEMONS.....	 135
Chapter Introduction.....	135

Background.....	135
Matthew.....	136
The Dating of Matthew’s Gospel.....	137
Matthew’s Intended Audience.....	138
Literary Distinctives of Matthew’s Gospel.....	140
Theological Distinctives of Matthew’s Gospel.....	140
Mark.....	141
The Dating of Mark’s Gospel.....	142
Mark’s Intended Audience.....	143
Literary Distinctives of Mark’s Gospel.....	144
Theological Distinctives of Mark’s Gospel.....	145
Luke.....	146
The Dating of Luke’s Gospel.....	147
Luke’s Intended Audience.....	148
Literary Distinctives of Luke’s Gospel.....	149
Theological Distinctives of Luke’s Gospel.....	149
The Synoptic Accounts surrounding the Transfiguration Episode	
Exegeted by Traditional/Conservative Scholarship,	
Liberal Scholarship, and Historian’s Rules.....	150
Jesus’s Recitation of “Sayings”:	
Matthew 16:28, Mark 9:1 and Luke 9:27.....	150
The Conserve/Traditional View of the “Sayings”.....	151
The Liberal View of the “Sayings”.....	152

The View of the “Sayings” according to the Historian’s Rule of Coherence.....	154
Coherence.....	154
Beyond “Sayings” to a Physical and Spiritual Journey: Matthew 17:1, Mark 9:2, and Luke 9:28.....	156
The Conserve/Traditional View of the Journey.....	156
The Liberal View of the Journey.....	158
The View according to the Historian’s Rule of Dissimilarity	159
Dissimilarity.....	159
Jesus’s Transfiguration and Supernatural Visitation: Matthew 17:2, Mark 9:30, and Luke 9:4.....	162
The Conserve/Traditional View of a Supernatural Transfiguration.....	162
The Liberal View of the Transfiguration.....	163
The View according to the Historian’s Rules of Eyewitness Sources and Multiple Attestation.....	165
Eyewitness Sources.....	165
Multiple Attestation.....	166
Peter’s Plausible Violation of the Decalogue: Matthew 17:4, Mark 9:5, and Luke 9:32.....	168
The Conserve/Traditional View of Peter, James, and John’s Reaction to the Transfiguration.....	168
The Liberal View of Peter, James, and John’s Reaction to the Transfiguration.....	169
The View according to the Historian’s Rules of Embarrassment and Surprise Elements.....	170
Embarrasment.....	170
Surprise Elements.....	172

The Descent into a Crowd, and an Afflicted Son, Healed by Jesus: Matthew 17:14–19, Mark 9:14–29, and Luke 9:38–43.....	174
The Conservative/Traditional View of a Son’s Deliverance.....	174
The Liberal View of a Son’s Cure.....	175
The View of the Historian’s Rule of Discontinuity Evidencing the Exorcism.....	176
Discontinuity.....	176
The Disciples’ Fail to Cast out a Demon and Query Jesus: Matthew 17:16–21, Mark 9:18–29, and Luke 9:40–41.....	178
The Conservative/Traditional View of the Disciples Failure and their Query.....	178
The Liberal View of the Disciples Failure and their Query.....	179
View of the Disciples Failure and Query from Historian’s Rules.....	180
Additional Evidence Liberals Must either Debunk or Disregard to Maintain an Antisupernaturalist Worldview.....	181
Demons Exist and Remain Active in the Epistles, Apocalyptic, and Apocrypha.....	181
Deliverance Authority or Exorcism of Demons Exists in the Synoptics, Acts, Patristic, and later Writings.....	183
There are Contemporary Examples of Demonic Affliction.....	185
A Teenage Girl Receives Contemporary Psychological Diagnosis off Affliction by a Spirit and Consequent Relegation of her Treatment to Spiritual Healers.....	185
A Baptized (christened) Woman in the Roman Catholic Church Sought Medical Attention for Anemia and Low Blood Pressure and Culture Decides if it is Demonic.....	187
Exorcism is Performed in Europe, the Philippines, and the Americas Today....	189

Roman Catholicism holds to a Scriptural approach to the Demonic while many Protestant Denominations are influenced by Secularism.....	190
There is a Multi-Cultural Connection between Trauma and Demonic Affliction.....	191
Chapter Conclusion.....	192
Dissertation Conclusion.....	192
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	196

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Ultimately, I dedicate this work to God as I have not the words to thank Him for blessing me with the most abundantly wonderfully and fearfully created wife a man could ever ask or think. I love you, Laurie May Ragsdale!

It really is more natural to believe a preternatural story, that deals with things we don't understand, than a natural story that contradicts things we do understand. Tell me that the great Mr. Gladstone, in his last hours, was haunted by the ghost of Parnell, and I will be agnostic about it. But tell me that Mr. Gladstone, when first presented to Queen Victoria, wore his hat in her drawing-room and slapped her on the back and offered her a cigar, and I am not agnostic at all. That is not impossible; it's only incredible.¹

— G. K. Chesterton, *The Penguin Complete Father Brown*

¹ G. K. Chesterton, *The Penguin Complete Father Brown* (Hamondsworth, U.K.: Penguin, 1981), 402; cited in D. A. Carson, *The Gagging of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), 156.

ABSTRACT

Secular Humanists/Naturalists presuppose *a priori* that the existence and activity of non-material, incorporeal, spirit beings are not possible. Like a First Order Skeptic argues that one cannot be sure of anything beyond perception, the Secularist accepts existence of all that is material while rejecting any spiritual realm. The dissertation qualitatively ties together themes arguing that the same standards secularists apply to vetting any commonly accepted historical event whatever also inductively supports the existence and activity of demons.

CHAPTER ONE: DISSERTATION INTRODUCTION

Chapter Introduction

This introductory chapter explains why the dissertation explores historical justification for the existence and activities of demons. Moreover, there is a standard set of objective principles that both Theists and non-Theists should apply to determine the truth or falsity of claims regarding historical events. Namely, this chapter argues the marked difference between belief and fact. An *a priori* conclusion that these words are synonymous wrecks honest vetting of historical assertions. The chapter defends a historical facts theorem in that there is some rational basis for believing in what has happened.²

First, the dissertation presupposes that Secularists' methodology to vet the historicity of any event, such as wars, inventions, and political claims, is also fit for inductively proving the existence and activity of demons. Second, while the Bible is the arbiter of sound Christian doctrine, supplemental sources such as Ancient Near East (ANE) texts, Patristic writings, and secondary source commentary remain superior to exegete Scripture than those elements of belief emanating from lay theology. Third, the same rules applied to know that gas prices just rose or fell apply to the historicity of presupposed theological or religious events. Finally, the chapter's Thesis is that reality transcends one's experience or worldview. Nonetheless, the dissertation proceeds by first admitting its own bias.

² Dean B. Deppe, *All Roads Lead to the Text: Eight Methods of Inquiry into the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2011), 269–270; Deppe writes, “Scholars and an increasing number of educated laypeople are studying the extrabiblical literature such as the *Gospel of Thomas* or the *Protoevangelium Jacobus*. There is a tendency in our postmodern world toward evaluating all literature alike. Whereas tolerance used to mean offering an attitude of respect to everyone's belief claims, our ‘modern’ conception of tolerance now states that one person's religious ideology is as correct as another's. Everyone's opinion is equally valid, so that truth is completely relative to one's cultural experience.”

The Dissertation's Presuppositional Bias

The presupposition that Bias is Inevitable

Partiality is present in both theological arguments and academic writing. V. G. Shillington writes, “No one is without bias. We come by our biases honestly: from home and school, church and culture. Biases are not something we can take or leave, like eating ice cream or refraining from eating it. They are deep-seated beliefs that govern how we think and live. I live in a scientific environment and am biased in that direction.”³ Consequently, bias exists in every supposition.

Namely, a valid conclusion requires a truthful supposition.⁴ Nonetheless, the supposition is powerful when applied to logical argument, particularly in conflating belief with terms such as fact, often used conterminously as matters of gnosis. As an example, Edward Clodd writes, “So far as the beginnings of life on the earth are concerned, the doctrine of abiogenesis is generally accepted by biologists. For, in its passage from the nebulous to the more or less solid state, our globe reached a temperature and general conditions which made possible the evolution of the organic from the inorganic.”⁵ Consequently, since nobody was there at Creation to provide a first-person witness of this possible event, Secularists have no confession, no testimony, no witness who “heard it from a friend who saw it,” yet, claim to wield a weapon sufficient to murder Theism. Theists are then, too, in kind reduced to philosophies proffered by circular, contradictory, and hypothetical means.

³ V. G. Shillington, *Reading the Sacred Text: An Introduction to Biblical Studies* (New York, NY: T&T Clark, 2002), 178.

⁴ Fredrick J. Long, *Kairos: A Beginning Greek Grammar* (Mishawaka, IN: Fredrick J. Long, 2005), 237.

⁵ Edward Clodd, *Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics*, ed. James Hastings, John A. Selbie, and Louis H. Gray (New York, NY: Scribner, 1908–1926), s.v. “Abiogenesis (I.),”.

The presupposition that Circular Arguments are Logically Invalid

By deductive (conditionally definitive) logical necessity, any *a priori* denial that absolute truth exists reflects a belief only possible within the logical conundrum of circularity.⁶ For example, “no truth is absolute” or “all truth is relative” remain absolute claims.

The presupposition that Facts Exist

Rules of Fact for everyone exist. In effect, every historian is entitled to his or her beliefs, not facts. Several versions of a particular species of the quotation exist that the dissertation finds useful. Namely, “Everyone is entitled to his own opinion, not facts.” “Facts do not cease to exist because they are ignored.” “When the facts change, I change my mind. What do you do, sir?”⁷ The dissertation persists with a presupposition that facts are public. Facts are facts for everyone. No one is entitled to their facts.

Instead, facts are objective and exist outside of one’s perspective, one’s mind. Louis of Poissy wrote that a fact “should not be opposed to the fact which it is intended to explain...It should be such as to explain all the facts for which it has been made...An [sic] hypothesis supported by certain facts should be preferred to one not supported by any fact... From among the hypotheses presented we should choose the simplest. It is evident that if a hypothesis conflicts with a truth known as certain, it is, by the fact, proved false.”

⁶ Douglas Groothuis, *Truth Decay: Defending Christianity against the Challenges of Postmodernism* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000), Kindle.

⁷ “The Scientific Method,” accessed May 28, 2020, <https://www.physics.smu.edu/pseudo/SciMeth/TheScientificMethod.pdf>; attributed to Daniel Patrick Moynihan, former United States Senator from New York; Aldous Huxley, twentieth-century British Buddhist, Hindu, pacifist philosopher; attributed to John Maynard Keynes, British economist who developed what became known as Keynesian economics, a novel approach to the theory and practice of macroeconomics.

On the one hand, folk ontology claims that handling toads cause warts in humans. On the other hand, herpetological science refutes such claim.⁸ According to logic, both beliefs cannot be simultaneously factual.

The presupposition that Beliefs are not Coterminous with Facts

The terms are not interchangeable despite the philosophical (especially postmodern) conflation of beliefs with facts. Douglas Groothuis asserts, “Facts don’t need statements in order to exist, but statements need facts in order to be true...the facts make a statement true, or alternately, the lack of correspondence to fact makes a statement false. Even subjective or person-relative statements, such as ‘I feel a pain in my right knee,’ depend on facts for their truth or falsity.”⁹ Otherwise, beliefs remain either true factually or remain mere speculation.

D. A. Carson places this subject in the context of what truth of beliefs constitute Christianity in this postmodern age. He writes:

The problem [that] remains acute in many parts of North America is exemplified by a debate, recently held in Michigan, between a well-known “emerging church” leader and a more “traditional” Christian thinker. As part of the structure of the debate, each party was allowed to ask the other some questions. The more “traditional” Christian actually submitted his questions two months in advance. One of them was this: Can you list any beliefs that are *necessary* to genuine Christianity? If so, what are they? The “emerging church” leader hemmed and hawed and eventually provided a list of several things demanded by *orthopraxy*—but not one demanded truth or belief. This reluctance to speak of truth is notoriously distant from the biblical writers [*italics Carson’s*].¹⁰

Especially in the case of the Christian apologist seeking to argue against Secularism, the truth of truth becomes pivotal. Beliefs, no matter their factual or fallacious basis, involve the

⁸ Terry Tomasek and Catherine E. Matthews, “Toads Give You Warts—Not!” *Science Activities*, 44 no. 4 [2008]: 129–32.

⁹ Groothuis, *Truth Decay*, locs 874–881.

¹⁰ D. A. Carson, *Christ and Culture Revisited* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008), 93.

systematic cancellation of potential competing thought until the individual is satisfied with the result.¹¹

While Secular Humanist/Naturalists argue that thoughts are material things (since there is “no-thing” that is non-material)¹², then deductively, all thoughts regarding the supernatural are also material.¹³ Carl F. H. Henry asserted that materialists conflate the term belief with fact.¹⁴ However, Cornelius Van Til proposed, “If it [Christianity] is true, then this truth does as a matter of fact exist for the unbeliever [Secular Humanist/Naturalist] as well as for the believer.”¹⁵ Beliefs require either entirely factual material (as being either true or untrue, like toads cause warts categorically dispelled by medical experts cf. folk ontology) or become speculative. Groothuis writes, “beliefs concern propositions and the relation of those propositions to reality.”¹⁶ Nonetheless, the outcome of any belief may be logically rational or irrational, illogically circular or valid.

¹¹ Craig S. Keener, *Miracles: The Credibility of the New Testament Accounts*, Vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2011), 193.

¹² Carlo Filice, “On the Autonomy of the Divine,” *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion*, 55 no. 2 [2004]: 83–108.

¹³ See Ch. 3. In Secularist’s and latter Skeptics’ nomenclature, “immaterial” is argued as being coterminous with “irrelevant.” Conversely, “non-material” is synonymous with “incorporeal,” “bodiless” or “intangible,” reflecting Physicalism.

¹⁴ Carl F. H. Henry, *God, Revelation, and Authority*, Vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1999), 283; Henry wrote, “Kant deprived religious experience of any grounding in the *a priori* constituents of theoretical knowledge. This is plain from his assignment of supernatural concerns to the practical sphere. Further, Kant denied to religion any grounding in the *a priori* constituents of practical knowledge, fundamentally concerned as this was with the moral realm. Kant located the only *a priori* factor related to religious experience in the moral life, and recognized no distinctive *a priori* element in the religious life.”

¹⁵ Cornelius Van Til, *Essays on Christian Education* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1979), 199.

¹⁶ Groothuis, *Truth Decay*, loc 874.

The presupposition that Worldviews Evolve

Each significant period of church/cultural history reflects an evolving worldview of what constitutes material, non-material, and epistemically knowable reality. For example, during perspectives regarding the supernatural industrialized over time, Modernism denied any existent supernatural realm following the Enlightenment period.

The presupposition that Epistemic Adequacy is Sufficient to Warrant Inquiry

Epistemic adequacy remains an absolute presupposition to accept the validity of sound inductive (most probable) conclusions. John T. Kearns writes, “Deductively, the best kind of argument is not a sound argument, it is an epistemically adequate argument for which the arguer has good grounds for accepting the premises.”¹⁷ Any event, whether natural, supernormal, or supernatural, may be proven inductively as most probably having occurred or not.¹⁸

The presupposition that Ancient Near East (ANE) Texts Remain Historical Documents

The Bible is an ANE text. Thus, Scripture is no less viable for non-theistic historical study than any other source document. For example, Exodus 18:11 reads, “Now I know that the LORD is greater than all *other gods*, for he did this to those who had treated Israel arrogantly”¹⁹ Implications employing rudimentary logic are that: a) the Bible makes claims regarding non-material entities, b) the Bible makes claims that there is a God (Creator), c) the Bible makes

¹⁷ John T. Kearns, “Propositional Logic of Supposition and Assertion,” *Notre Dame Journal of Formal Logic*, 38 no. 3 [Summer 1997]: 325–49.

¹⁸ Gary R. Habermas, “History, Philosophy, and Christian Apologetics,” accessed November 19, 2018, <http://www.garyhabermas.com>; Gary R. Habermas, “Recent Perspectives on the Reliability of the Gospels,” accessed April 4, 2019. http://www.garyhabermas.com/articles/crj_recentperspectives/crj_recentperspectives.htm.

¹⁹ Unless otherwise specifically noted, all Bible references are from the New International Version (NIV).

claims that God (Creator) acts punitively, and d) the Bible makes claims that there is more than one “other” god.

However, given the segregation between facts and beliefs, sometimes postulating, the Bible historically *a priori* reveals only that certain beliefs exist with provenance. Any alternate view would be coterminous with claiming that one’s contemporary possession of a primitive Musket in the Twenty-first Century proves the American Revolutionary War occurred. Instead, if a contemporaneously written document referenced the use of Muskets in The Colonists’ battles with Britain, the American Revolution more probably occurred.²⁰ The probability of occurrence inductively increases if the historian has evidence of multiple contemporaneous sources reporting similar events. Questions must be asked of the text and answered.

Research Questions and Thesis Statement

Overall, this dissertation answers how Christian scholars generally defend the supernatural, particularly demons’ existence and activity, to a Secular Naturalist/Humanist audience. The Secularist view that demons never existed or acted is inductively refutable through questions and answers. The primary goal hereunder is to provide a more robust supernatural worldview among Christians, thereby equipping those to answer Secular Humanist/Naturalist truth claims.

The heart of the apology persists within three research questions. First, why does the Secular Humanist/Naturalist world reject the supernatural generally, and specifically, the existence and activity of demons? Second, why do many Christians read the Bible in ways that dismiss its supernatural elements, including the existence and activity of demons? Third, how

²⁰ J. Lloyd Durham, “Outfitting an American Revolutionary Soldier,” accessed December 5, 2021, <https://www.ncpedia.org/history/usrevolution/soldiers>.

can scholars refute Secularism, including Skepticism about demons? The dissertation's Thesis is that the historical existence and activity of demons are inductively provable by non-circular arguments remaining superior to the circular arguments that Secularists launch to *a priori* justify Materialism,²¹ Physicalism,²² and Reductionism.²³

Need for Study

Since Christian theology primarily does its Thesis between God's creation and providence, the topic of angelic beings takes a theological back seat to proposed matters of higher importance, such as Creation and control.²⁴ Conversely, Millard J. Erickson writes, "The teaching of Scripture is that he [God] has created these spiritual beings and has chosen to carry out many of his acts through them. Therefore, if we are to be faithful students of the Bible, we have no choice but to speak of these beings."²⁵ Erickson's Christian imperative does not segregate between doctrinal preferences or personal tastes. Instead, Christians need to study the subject of the Bible's supernatural elements and convey them within guardrails defining defensible historicity. The dissertation presents seven Historian's Rules to meet this challenge.

²¹ Nancy Pearcey, *Saving Leonardo: A Call to Resist the Secular Assault on Mind, Morals, and Meaning* (Nashville, TN: B&H, 2010), 59; Pearcey writes, "Today many scientists embrace the philosophy of naturalism or materialism, which reduces humans to material products of their genes."

²² Jesse Clayton, accessed February 19, 2022, <https://www.rit.edu/cla/philosophy/quine/physicalism.html>; Clayton writes, "Physicalism simply states that everything in this world is physical...Physicalism implies that everything is made up of matter and therefore takes up space. Physicalism directly leads you to ask questions like: What are pain, fear, and happiness? Are these made of matter too?" s.v. "Physicalism,".

²³ Kenneth D'Amica, accessed February 19, 2022, https://www.rit.edu/cla/philosophy/quine/intertheoretic_reduction.html; D'Amica writes, "something of a certain kind can be reduced to a set of simpler things. This is not only for the laws of science, but also for all ideas and objects. A common example of this is the fact that all material things are made up of an assortment of atoms and molecules...that all knowledge, theories, and objects can be diminished into more elementary components." s.v. "Intertheoretic Reduction,".

²⁴ R. C. Sproul, *Does God Control Everything?*, Vol. 14 (Orlando, FL: Reformation, 2012), 13–15.

²⁵ Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2013), 404.

Seven Historian's Rules

The seven Historian's Rules applied herein for vetting the veracity of any historical event or character involve the presence of one or more essentials to historicity: Coherence, Dissimilarity, Eyewitness Sources, Multiple Attestation, Embarrassment, Surprise Elements, and Discontinuity. Chapter Five explains these in greater detail, with accompanying scriptural and some secular examples of each.

For now, Historian's Rules remove the need for faith in its proofs, dispensing with various secular belief systems (including those operating inside the church), engaging only scholarly pursuits to proffer its analysis. D. A. Carson and John D. Woodbridge write, "What is required is a dispassionate, even-handed, and comprehensive analysis of the primary sources."²⁶ Historian's Rules evaluate historicity, thus remaining useful for Christian apologists, particularly for those employing an Evidential Method.

The Role of Historian's Rules in Apologetics

Surprising to many self-identifying as Christian, the Bible is a historical source document that affirms the existence and activities of deities (gods) other than God Creator. This historical fact opens a treasure trove of opportunities for Christian Apologists to accept history as it is written, following a fair vetting of historical accounts. Through historical study, the Bible warrants a seat at the table of discourse, particularly regarding supernatural agents. The

²⁶ D. A. Carson and John D. Woodbridge, *Scripture and Truth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1992), 10.

dissertation proceeds with the attitude that Scripture deserves at least the same Positivism Secularists afford to non-scriptural texts.²⁷

Thereunder, the same standard of validating historicity is expected of secular historians whether vetting non-Theistic or Theistic claims. Deuteronomy 17:2–5 reads, “If a man or woman living among you...has worshiped other gods...stone that person to death.” In Deuteronomy 20:11:7–18, the Bible commands, “Completely destroy them—the Hittites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites—as the LORD your God has commanded you. Otherwise, they will teach you to follow all the detestable things they do in worshiping their gods.” Some Scripture, including scriptural accounts of capital punishment and culture annihilation, is more challenging for Judeo-Christians to defend than others.

Nevertheless, the Israelites either historically obeyed the law killing lawbreakers, or they did not. Current difficulty with defending contemporaneous morality neither denies the historicity of an event nor provides a pass to overlook its potential historicity. Instead, as Chapter Five demonstrates, Surprise or Embarrassing Elements embedded within historical accounts increase the likelihood of genuine historicity. Regardless, secular historians and those concentrating on theological historicity held to equal standards in validating data. Theology is deemed irrational in many historical Secularist circles. Historian’s Rules provide an even playing field when adequately applied to all sides of the argument.

²⁷ John Miley, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. 1 (New York, NY: Hunt & Eaton, 1892), 121–122; C. Stephen Evans, *Pocket Dictionary of Apologetics & Philosophy of Religion* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2002), 94; Miley wrote, “Positivism is openly and avowedly antitheistic. It was purposely constructed without God. In the low plane of its principles there is no need of God, and no proof of his existence. If knowledge is limited to external phenomena, there can be no knowledge of God, for he is not such a phenomenon.”; Evans writes, “[Positivism is an] Empiricist philosophy...based on the evidence of the senses. Positivists therefore tend to be skeptical of what cannot be directly observed.”

The Role of Historian's Rules in the Dissertation's Apology

The dissertation operates under the application of Secular Historian's Rules that both Secularists and Theists use to establish a high level of probability that something has or has not occurred. For the dissertation, Historian's Rules are applied to inductively prove the existence and activity of demons and argue that the Church needs recovery from the damage done by Enlightenment Secularism.

In so doing, Historian's Rules addresses the wild dichotomy of theology present within modern Christianity by employing reason. Christians cannot be simultaneously so diverse with respect to the veracity of supernatural matters and simultaneously correct. The dissertation logically provides whether there is inductive absolute truth to the existence and activity of demons or there is not.

Both truths cannot logically be simultaneously correct. Regard for one's personal feelings, wishes, or intuitions concerning specific impacts of historical decisions or agendas does not transcend reality. Former Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld made a useful point about developing the dissertation's method in this respect. Rumsfeld said,

Reports that say that something hasn't happened are always interesting to me, because as we know, there are known knowns; there are things we know we know. We also know there are known unknowns; that is to say we know there are some things we do not know. But there are also unknown unknowns—the ones we don't know we don't know...And so people who have the omniscience that they can say with high certainty that something has not happened or is not being tried, have capabilities that are—what was the word you used, Pam, earlier? Q: Free associate? (laughs) Rumsfeld: Yeah. They can—(chuckles)—they can do things I can't do. (laughter).²⁸

Instead, precise conclusions regarding an established issue of evidencing the existence and activity of demons must be settled. Philosophy absent of theology says, "There is an

²⁸ "News Transcript. Presenter: Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld February 12, 2002, 11:30 AM EDT," accessed May 22, 2020, <https://archive.defense.gov/Transcripts/Transcript.aspx?TranscriptID=2636>.

objective reality which is the same for everyone... These laws can be discovered (not invented)... We cannot prove to you that these statements are true. But we can justify them.”²⁹ Thus the dissertation while being unable to deductively prove its thesis with logical certainty, can draw the most probable conclusions from qualitative historical evidence vetted via secular standards of what constitutes historicity.³⁰

First, the Bible and other ANE documents come to us in subjective human form. Therefore, Scripture remains subject to human criticism no more or less stringent than other historical writings.³¹ Second, Sidney Greidanus writes, “[that analysis involves Textual Criticism], which is exercising judgment about a text to determine the most original wording. Biblical scholars engage in this discipline, as do scholars in the broader field of literature.”³² Third, Wendy Widder writes, “[Textual Criticism] is a science because specific rules govern the evaluation of various types of copyist errors and readings, but it is also an art because these rules

²⁹ “Objectivism vs. Relativism,” accessed, May 17, 2020, <https://www.physics.smu.edu/pseudo/SciMeth/TheScientificMethod.pdf>.

³⁰ Benjamin C. E. Shaw, “Philosophy of History, Historical Jesus Studies, and Miracles: Three Roadblocks to Resurrection, Research,” (PhD diss., Liberty University, Lynchburg, 2020), 83; Gary R. Habermas, Email Correspondence Inquiry Sent: Saturday, May 9, 2020 8:52 AM To: Habermas, Gary (School of Divinity Instruction) <ghabermas@liberty.edu> Cc: Smith, C. (School of Divinity Instruction) <cfsmith@liberty.edu> Subject: Historian's Rules; “Dear Dr. Habermas, In your Philosophy of History, Miracles, and the Resurrection of Jesus p. 26 you use eight historian’s rules that I intend to apply to my diss. I originally thought you got these from Dr. Graham Twelftree. I went so far as to contact him on social media and purchase one of his books. I do not think the rules came from him. Did they in fact come from you? If you could point me to whomever I may cite, both friendly and enemy attested, I can do a better job on the diss.” Reply: Sat. May 9, 2020 11:30 AM: “Right—on the one hand I compiled those, but on the other hand, they are simply a numbering of very well-known criteria that many use in deciding which passages are useful in deciding which passages/events/may be considered to be historical. So you can cite that list in a footnote, but I’d make the point that they are not unique, since lists like them are found in more than one place.”

³¹ Sidney Greidanus, *The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text: Interpreting and Preaching Biblical Literature* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1988), 43.

³² Wendy Widder, *Textual Criticism*, ed. Douglas Mangum (Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2013), 6.

cannot be rigidly applied in every situation.”³³ Therefore, both textual and literary criticism must be applied equitably.

From a literary perspective, the author’s intent over the reader’s interpretation is key. Lanier Burns writes, “The [better] alternative for historical study is to form accurate conclusions based upon specific criteria and general principles of literary intent.”³⁴ Lydia McGrew adds, “If we want to ask about the epistemic impact of some evidence, we need to have clearly in view the proposition for which (or against which) it is supposed to be evidence.”³⁵ Historian’s Rules is explained in more detail in Chapter Five. For now, a brief review of the dissertation’s research method is customary.

Research Method

Valid research method includes the investigation of truths non-subjectively. Subjectivism breeds Relativism. For example, a proposition that people shared only the perception of a giant oak living in front of the Church until sharing the perception of a tornado destroying it reduces the reality of perception to group hallucination (a proposition science argues troublesome to prove).³⁶ Therefore, reasons that events involving the incorporeal most probably occurred or

³³ P. D. Wegner, *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Wisdom, Poetry & Writings*, ed. Tremper Longman III and Peter Enns (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2008), s.v. “Text, Textual Criticism,”.

³⁴ J. Lanier Burns, *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*, ed. John D. Barry et al., (Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2016), s.v. “Jesus Christ,”.

³⁵ Lydia McGrew, “Finessing Independent Attestation: A Study in Interdisciplinary Biblical Criticism,” *Themelios*, 44 no. 1 [2019]: 99.

³⁶ Enrique Baca-Garcia et. al, “Diagnostic Stability of Psychiatric Disorders in Clinical Practice,” *British Journal of Psychiatry*, 190 no. 3 [March 2007]: 210–16; P. K. Dalal and T. Sivakumar, “Moving towards ICD-11 and DSM-V: Concept and Evolution of Psychiatric Classification,” *Indian Journal of Psychiatry*, 51 no. 4 [October 2009]: 310–19; Markus Donix, “The New Crisis of Confidence in Psychiatric Diagnosis,” *Annals of Internal Medicine*, 159 no. 10 [November 2013]: 720. Robert Kendell and Assen Jablensky, “Distinguishing between the Validity and Utility of Psychiatric Diagnoses,” *American Journal of Psychiatry*, 160 no. 1 [January 2003]: 4–12.

most probably did not occur. Any *a priori* deductive conclusion that a historical event did not occur because the incorporeal does not exist offers only an invalid circular argument.

Exploratory

The dissertation explores the existence and activity of demons by vetting primary sources such as the Bible, Apocryphal and Ugaritic text, and other historically contemporaneous accounts such as the Patristic writings that both agree with and differ from one another. The research also employs secondary sources such as academic commentators to provide the reader with a field of perspectives leading to sound inductive conclusions.

Qualitative

Qualitative research does not engage in statistics or analysis of quantities of scholars that believe one conclusion over another. As an illustration, using climate change, the research will not claim that specific quantities of scientists or meteorologists believe *x* or *y* but that the qualitative likelihood of *x* is more inductively probable than *y*. A research method employing Historian's Rules best serves this qualitative historical purpose than statistics of belief.

Inductive

The dissertation intends to convey historical data within the confines of what is most historically probable, regardless of whatever theological or doctrinal bias may be applied to the study's determinative conclusion. This means what is found is discovered by way of the most-probable historical fact through the most credible sources.³⁷ What is deemed a most probable

³⁷ Michael R. Licona, *The Resurrection of Jesus: A New Historiographical Approach* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2010), 175–176.

historical truth or otherwise is judged by the same rules the reader might adjudicate the historicity of the existence and activities of Alexander the Great or George Washington.

Theology aside, there is enough evidence to support historicity despite no reader of this dissertation being present during their lifetimes. Nonetheless, deductive logic plays a part in developing inductive conclusions. Alternatively, logical processes may easily be conflated whereby one errantly turns inductive (most-probable) evidence to adduce deductive certainty.³⁸

As a deductive example, if there is no Satan, then there is also neither need for God nor His providence, including His provision of protection from Satan. This is a deductive conclusion. Alternatively, from an inductive standpoint, the rational mind, in exchange for divine providence from God, could talk its way into virtually anything as being factual with adequate individual justification to do so. That, being itself an inductive conclusion (adduction), argues human sufficiency by default only if all thought is materially derived (materialism, physicalism, reductionism).

Erickson deductively concludes that the continuation of sin yields an insensitivity to God's warnings. He writes, "In time, even pharisaic condition whereby despite witnessing Jesus doing miracles by the Holy Spirit, insisted His works to be of 'Beelzebub,' the prince of the demons (Mt 12:24)."³⁹ Erickson argues inductively from Scripture with his presupposition of the premises of God, Beelzebub, and sin being real things connected to spiritual matters. Neither Theists nor non-Theists can honestly dismiss Erickson as a loon. Even if the materialist believes evil is born out of a material construct of thought, there are universal judgments of what

³⁸ Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, *New International Greek Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 43.

³⁹ Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 563.

constitutes evil. The Holocaust provides an inductive example of the historical record of evil. There are myriad examples of evil behavior in history. The record does not require quantification as justification.

Germane to the dissertation, by qualitative inductive analysis, a plethora of primary sources writing regarding demons during the Patristic era dwindles by the Postmodern era.⁴⁰ As shown in the dissertation, the Modern Enlightenment period focused almost exclusively on math, science, and culture to glean truth. The result includes the diminishing of theologians doing Satanology, demonology, and angelology. Therefore, demonology generally lives within the confines of lay theology, residing outside the academic realm inside Antisupernaturalism.

Some vetting methods either confirm or debunk truth claims beyond democratic conjecture. For example, a claim made absent of Historian's Rules occurred on January 21, 2017, when then-President Donald J. Trump made a speculative assertion. Thereunder, Trump's newly appointed Press Secretary Sean Spicer proclaimed (then later recanted) that Trump's Inauguration Day ceremony had drawn, he said, "the largest audience to ever witness an inauguration, period, both in person and around the globe."⁴¹ The declaration may have been based upon wishful thinking or sincere belief. However, Historian's Rules demand valid qualitative audit whenever a quantified tally remains either unavailable or unreliable.

Thereby, Spicer's pronouncement cannot be, in any way, factually defended on quantitative data. The incident remains a good illustration of Secularist conclusive calculations of

⁴⁰ Charlotte-Rose Millar, "Being Bewitched: A True Tale of Madness, Witchcraft, and Property Development Gone Wrong by Kirsten C. Uszkalo," *Preternature: Critical and Historical Studies on the Preternatural*, 8 no. 2 [2019]: 286.

⁴¹ Olivia Beavers, "Trump Admitted He Was Wrong over Inauguration Crowd Size," *The Hill*, accessed May 8, 2021, <https://thehill.com/homenews/administration/370214-trump-regretted-fighting-media-over-inauguration-crowd-size-book>.

“I desire it to be so. Thus, it is that way. I am Umpire [mine].” Just like physical, quantifiable assertions may be levied *ad hominem*, so may qualitative spiritual claims be tried in the court of democratic consensus or Secular opinion falling outside due judicial survey of fact. Deductively, facts are facts, and feelings are feelings when it comes to validating historicity judicially. One neither needs to support nor deny the immorality of the Holocaust to acknowledge its historicity.

Instead, historicity remains neither slave to the current unavailability of time travel nor subject to the morality of lions eating a gazelle nor innate feelings subject to culturally influenced thereto. Since the preponderance of the audience hearing or reading a tome was not present as a contemporaneous witness, and whenever *Wild Kingdom* footage either remains extant or undisclosed by powers, historians must rely solely upon evidence that either strengthen or weaken the veracity of the proposed historical event. Thus, most history is based on a greater or lesser probability of occurrence. Absent of viewing actual footage of the lion’s kill, if the gazelle’s carcass lies at the feet of the lion, it is more inductively probable she killed it.

Logic over Theism is all that is required to defend this dissertation. The same method that Secularists find sufficient to evaluate the occurrence of any natural event in history remains unequivocally adequate to inductively prove the supernatural existence and activity of demons.

Chapter Conclusion

First, findings stand upon the shoulders of theological, apologetic, and academic giants. It is not to name and argue every scriptural verse or passage that relates to demons. Instead, all argument endeavors to tie together themes that most Secular Humanists/Naturalists use to vet any commonly accepted occurrence in history. Second, the dissertation applies the same logical method to inductively vet the existence and activity of demons to draw a most probable

conclusion.⁴² The chapter's Thesis is that reality transcends one's own singular personal experience or worldview. The dissertation's argument proposes that a high level of inductive probability an event historically occurred may be established using the vehicle of reason. Moreover, as in any historical investigation, that reason must transcend the historian's ability to necessarily be present at the time of occurrence. Testimony by others must be evaluated, lest historical studies would be non-existent. Historian's Rules bridge that gap. In the following Literature Review, it will become more apparent that both primary and secondary sources convey historicity to investigate historical beliefs.

⁴² Michael Cohenin, *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy*, ed. Ted Honderich (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1995), 405–6; Cohen writes, "It is a basic principle of logic that inductive methods only achieve a high level of probability for the conclusion. Induction does not lead to certainty and conclusions arrived at in this way may only be said to be 'rendered plausible.,"' s.v. "Induction,".

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Literature regarding Why Secular Humanists/Naturalists Reject the Supernatural Generally, and Specifically, the Existence and Activity of Demons

Primary Sources

René Descartes affirms his epistemic method in *Discourse on the Method of Rightly Conducting Reason*. Accordantly, first doubt, then dissect the doubt, then debate the matter until there is sufficient evidence to doubt the doubt.⁴³ Secular Historian's Rules employ Cartesian logic by inductively vetting historicity.

In *Meditations on First Philosophy*, Descartes conveys that he is a thing that thinks, feels, contends, and argues via his soul.⁴⁴ Descartes cannot deny he is the doubter doing the doubting. Secular Humanists/Naturalists reject the supernatural generally and expressly, the existence and activity of demons due to their *a priori* rejection of the supernatural, preempting a fair Cartesian inductive trial.

Immanuel Kant, in *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*,⁴⁵ offered an introduction to the prior, contemporaneous philosophy he developed in his *Critique of Pure Reason*.⁴⁶ In *Critique*, Kant argues that space and time are purely phenomena speaking only to our present noumenal limitations of understanding them. Thereunder, matters of present intuitive faith remain only an ordering of ideas, not things in themselves extending indefinitely.

⁴³ René Descartes, *Discourse on Method* (New York, NY: Philosophical Library/Open Road, 2015).

⁴⁴ René Descartes, *The Method, Meditations and Philosophy of Descartes*, trans. John Vietch (London, England: M. Walter Dunne, 1901).

⁴⁵ Immanuel Kant, *Kant's Prolegomena, and Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science* (Charleston, SC: Nabu, 2010).

⁴⁶ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, ed. Marcus Weigel (London, England: Penguin, 2003).

The Prolegomena historically proceeds (epistemically precedes) with reliable knowledge of space, time, and natural science, transcending personal experience. The dissertation learns that Kant departed from Cartesian logic (things are knowable from most-probable conclusions derived from processing doubt) and proceeded into doubting epistemically that anything, besides time, space, and natural science, is noumenally knowable whatever.

In *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, John Locke argued that reason is the final arbiter of faith.⁴⁷ However, for Locke, the reason is personally individualized. Accordingly, Locke expressed less primary concern for presenting his audience with evidence supporting faith than how human beings should respond to their intrinsic leanings towards faith. Unlike Descartes' drawing upon most-probable conclusions and Kant's restrictions upon what is epistemically noumenal, Locke thought knowledge builds upon immediate intuition, self-evident propositions, and evidential deductions. Moreover, at any point of conflict between conclusions drawn by faith amidst any uncertainty of evidence presented by natural science, faith trumps probable opinion. Notwithstanding, faith is underservant of acquiescence by science because its probabilities are lower. Since science can neither prove nor disprove the existence of the incorporeal, Lockean reasoning is part of the dissertation's conversation.

Secondary Sources

In *Miracles: A Preliminary Study*, C. S. Lewis attacked Scientific Naturalism's arguments against supernatural miracles.⁴⁸ Namely, a pantheistic "Christian" worldview sees

⁴⁷ John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Alexander Campbell Fraser, Vol. 2 (London, England: Clarendon, 1894).

⁴⁸ C. S. Lewis, *Miracles: A Preliminary Study* (London, U.K.: MacLehose, 1947). Kindle.

God as “a universal medium.”⁴⁹ Thereunder, Secular Humanists/Naturalists reject the premise that any metaphysical entity oversees the Universe. The dissertation asserts that first, history exists. Second, history could not exist without universal Historian’s Rules. Therefore, Historian’s Rules exist.

In *C. S. Lewis’s Dangerous Idea: A Philosophical Defense of Lewis’s Argument from Reason*, Victor Reppert argues that a Secularist material apologetic for the existence of reason circularly nullifies the scientific foundation for Naturalism.⁵⁰ Thus, Secular Humanists/Naturalists reject the supernatural because their circular reasoning method prevents them from acknowledging the supernatural. Circular logic is not a valid defense method, thus nullifying any propositional argument that the non-material cannot deductively exist.

In his work *1984: Questions for the Churches*, Lesslie Newbigin argued that nouveaux Skepticism surpassed democratic promises of a bright future supplied by science and technology.⁵¹ Thereunder, Secular Humanists/Naturalists reject the Supernatural because the cynicism of human government pervades any unseen supernatural governance over humanity. The dissertation argues that if there is no supernatural governance, then Historian’s Rules could not apply to reason. Deductively, since all reason would be subject to individualized, non-collective standards, all ideals would exist between the boundaries of haphazard and null.

⁴⁹ Pantheism ignores the idea of God being an “original thing,” never mind the “only thing” of “concrete fact” as Creator. As an example, one need look no further than online social media profiles to see many participants who self-identify as “Catholic-Buddhist” in processing truth. For Lewis, God would not equip humans for thinking if one is unable to know the truth in absolute terms.

⁵⁰ Victor Reppert, *C. S. Lewis’s Dangerous Idea: A Philosophical Defense of Lewis’s Argument from Reason* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2003). Kindle.

⁵¹ Lesslie Newbigin, *The Other Side of 1984: Questions for the Churches*, accessed June 24, 2020, www.Newbiginresources.org/1983-questions-for-the-churches-with-poscript-by-s-wesley-ariaraj.

Francis A. Schaeffer in *Escape from Reason* ascribed the genesis of Modernism to a far earlier date than the Enlightenment period.⁵² Thereunder, Secular Humanists/Naturalists reject the supernatural existence and activity of demons due to Secularist's flawed circular model of deductive (not inductive) logic. Flaws in reasoning lead Naturalists to escape truth via "the both-and" of conflicting circular ideas (e.g., Hegelian "thesis-antithesis").⁵³ Historian's Rules could not exist if individualized standards of logic were arbitrary. Logic is not arbitrary. Instead, logic is universal. Historians' Rules exist as an example.

Charles Taylor, in *A Secular Age*, describes the historical development of Modernist spirituality "above the line" via a "social imaginary" belief system coinciding with cultural ends.⁵⁴ Thereunder, Secular Humanists/Naturalists reject the existence and activity of demons because definitionally, a "fulfilled life," cf. "final goals," reject a personal God while deferring to the collectivism of norms. Historians' Rules conflict with the presupposition that rules cannot be universal. Instead, rules such as covering one's mouth when coughing or sneezing are universal prescriptions.

⁵² Francis A. Schaeffer, *Escape from Reason* (Westmont, IL: InterVarsity, 2014).

⁵³ Norman L. Geisler, *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1999), s.v. "Buber, Martin"; Søren Aabye Kierkegaard (AD 1813–1855) reflected a new pessimism via ameliorating any connectivity between blind faith "above the line" of reason and reasoned thought "below the line." The result is division between Secular Existentialism and Religious Existentialism whereby absolute truth swims in a sea of relativistic despair latter reflected by Karl Barth's neo-orthodoxy. Accordingly, the Bible contains mistakes, but we are to believe it anyway via a "leap of faith." The result is Secular necessity of placing all hope in a non-rational "upstairs."

⁵⁴ Charles A. Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 2018). Kindle.

**Literature regarding Why many Christians Read the Bible in Ways
that Dismiss its Supernatural Elements, including
the Existence and Activity of Demons**

Primary Sources

In *Prolegomena to the History of Ancient Israel*, Julius Wellhausen condensed decades of source criticism of the Torah.⁵⁵ Thereunder, Wellhausen claimed priestly texts and laws within the Pentateuch are post-exilic revisions yielding only a patchwork of latter ideological narratives. Accordingly, Wellhausen argued that historical texts have culminated in deceitful liberal rabbinic theological historicity. In Wellhausen's thesis, whatever is added in the post-exilic age remains provocative and transient agendas that drive Protestantism. The impact of the dissertation is modernity's introduction of bias into Christendom by questioning the validity of Christianity's underlying historical Judaism.

Rudolph Bultmann, in *New Testament Mythology*, argued that the New Testament (NT) puerile presupposition of a literal Old Testament (OT) is merely employed to support the fallacious idea that man needs redemption.⁵⁶ Instead, Bultmann argued that an enlightened human understanding of natural laws renders the possibility of good and evil spirits incomprehensible. Moreover, mankind is a mere collection of individuals solely responsible for personal existential outcomes, including enjoyment of God's world, instead of man rejecting the world, as the NT asserts.

In *Jesus Christ and Mythology*, Bultmann further explored mythology from his modern method, including the Christian message and the modern worldview, modern biblical

⁵⁵ Julius Wellhausen, *Prolegomena to the History of Ancient Israel* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2003).

⁵⁶ Rudolph Bultmann, *New Testament and Mythology* accessed January 6, 2022, <http://www.religion.emory.edu/faculty/robbins/Pdfs/BultmannNTMyth.pdf>.

interpretation within the lens of Existentialist philosophy, and the meaning of God as acting contemporaneously.⁵⁷ Bultmann read the Bible into his metaphorical view instead of within a traditional Judeo-Christian historical reality. Moreover, possible literal historical interpretations drown in Bultmann's deductive conclusions regarding the text when viewed through the lens of his presupposition of Scripture as a metaphor.

Similarly, Martin Dibelius argued in his work *Jesus* that sources and form criticism evidence an NT based on early Christian preaching material.⁵⁸ Dibelius thought Jesus did not proclaim a present kingdom but signaled the coming kingdom through His signs of healing and speaking in Messianic terms. Dibelius held that the Son of Man is bound with Jesus as ontologically both the present and the future Son of Man. This perspective contrasts Bultmann's criticism, however.⁵⁹

In *Paul*, Dibelius questioned Paul's assessment of his ability to keep the Rabbinic Law and its religiosity of righteousness. Moreover, Dibelius thought Paul viewed righteousness in the Rabbinic tradition as a religion of righteousness cf. Christianity is the religion of the sinner.⁶⁰

Dibelius, in *The Book of Acts: Form Style and Theology*, argued his analysis that the Gospel-writer Luke had access to the written records of Paul. It is also historically probable that

⁵⁷ Rudolph Bultmann, *Jesus Christ and Mythology* (New York, NY: Scribner, 1958).

⁵⁸ Martin Dibelius, *Jesus*, trans. Charles B. Hedrick and Frederick C. Grant (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, 1949).

⁵⁹ James D. Dvorak, "Martin Dibelius and Rudolf Bultmann," in *Pillars in the History of Biblical Interpretation*, Vol. 1: *Prevailing Methods Before 1980* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2016), accessed February 7, 2022, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/328201590_Martin_Dibelius_and_Rudolf_Bultmann.

⁶⁰ Martin Dibelius, *Paul*, ed. Werner Georg Kümmel, trans. Frank Clarke (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, 1966).

Luke may have been Paul's companion in Dibelius' view.⁶¹ These theologians reveal shifts in Christian doctrine leading to supernatural worldview shifts within the Church.

Secondary Sources

Michael S. Heiser, in his work *Demons: What the Bible Says about the Powers of Darkness*, argued that Christians lack the linguistic and methodological tools in their toolbox (contemporaneously, culturally, and linguistically) for the proper exegesis of OT metanarrative and NT narrative.⁶² Therefore, Christians read the Bible in ways that dismiss supernatural elements, including the existence and activity of demons, due to poor biblical education. Historian's Rules advance a series of tenets whereby secular standards can vet the supernatural.

Norman L. Geisler and Douglas E. Potter, in *The Doctrine of Angels & Demons*, reflect Heiser's point regarding academic misfires.⁶³ Geisler and Potter errantly claim demons cannot (cf. could not or will not be able to) operate in the manner Heiser exegetically asserted. Therefore, the authors linguistically fit the text into denominational doctrine, accentuating the need for a vehicle such as Historian's Rules to clarify variegated predispositions.

Schaeffer argued in *The God Who is There: Speaking Historic Christianity into the Twentieth Century* that the crucial years of the American philosophical and theological revolution occurred between AD 1913 and 1940. A shift from discussing right and wrong in

⁶¹ Martin Dibelius, *The Book of Acts: Form, Style, and Theology*, ed. K. C. Hanson (Minneapolis: MN: Fortress, 2004).

⁶² Michael S. Heiser, *Demons: What the Bible Really Says about the Powers of Darkness* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2020).

⁶³ Norman L. Geisler and Douglas E. Potter, *The Doctrine of Angels & Demons* (Matthews, NC: Bastion, 2016). Kindle.

absolute terms of true and false occurred (both within epistemology and methodology).⁶⁴

Therefore, many Christians read the Bible via a post-enlightened dismissal of the supernatural.

Erickson, in *Christian Theology*, provides theological method from his self-identified Baptist/mildly Calvinistic doctrine via scriptural citations with commentary. Nonetheless, Erickson sees counter-productivity in polemic alienation.⁶⁵ Therefore, many Christians read the Bible in ways that dismiss its supernatural elements such as Antisupernaturalists in Christianity by digressing with the text. Deployment of Historian's Rules alleviates sensitivity of cultural beliefs.

Bernard Lonergan in *Method in Theology* prescribes a logical series of psychological steps in data collection that form a personalized, individualized truth.⁶⁶ For Lonergan, the method of data collection arriving at subjective outcomes remains more critical than the facts contemplated. Likewise, Historian's Rules avoids subjectivity of qualitative data collection by defining the guardrails for validating data, then following those guidelines to a most-probable conclusion.

George Lindbeck, in *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Post-liberal Age* pursued his "rule theory" that proposed reconciliation with myriad divergent belief-holders. This process is confessional and conversational engagement driven by his method of "anti-foundationalism."⁶⁷ Therein, Christians read the Bible in ways that dismiss Supernatural

⁶⁴ Francis A. Schaeffer, *The God Who Is There: Speaking Historic Christianity into the Twentieth Century* (Chicago: InterVarsity, 1968). Kindle.

⁶⁵ Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 680.

⁶⁶ Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 2nd ed. (Toronto, Canada: University of Toronto Press, 1990). Kindle.

⁶⁷ George Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Post-liberal Age*, 25th Anniversary ed. (Louisville, KY: John Knox, 2009). Kindle.

elements because scholars like Lindbeck construct arguments to accommodate Pluralists and Secular Naturalists/Humanists non-foundationally. If, as within Historian's Rules, the same standards apply to both Secular and Theistic historians, commonality lies within universal non-arbitrary criteria.

In *Theological Method: A Guide for the Perplexed*, Paul Allen offers a recap of the developments in theological methods throughout history leading up to his preferred Roman Catholic Church Liberation Theology.⁶⁸ Allen measures natural theology against the *sola scriptura* theological methods employed by Calvin and Luther. Allen accuses Luther of developing "a canon about the canon." Likewise, Allen is critical of Calvin's method for rearranging doctrine to address his soteriological preferences. Therefore, Christians read the Bible in ways that dismiss its supernatural elements because non-foundational, Secularist theology has infiltrated the church.

David K. Clark, in *To Know and Love God: Method for Theology*, presents his work to explore and describe the nature and task of theology throughout history.⁶⁹ Clark's method advocates juxtaposition of, never less than *Scientia*, with *Sapientia*. Therefore, many Christians read the Bible in ways that dismiss its supernatural elements because *Scientia* remains subservient to preferred doctrines. Clark is a discussion partner in the dissertation because the way (method) one does theology leads to either accepting or rejecting conclusions.

⁶⁸ Paul Allen, *Theological Method: A Guide for the Perplexed* (London, U.K.: Bloomsbury, 2012).

⁶⁹ David K. Clark, *To Know and Love God: Method for Theology*, ed John S. Feinberg (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010). Kindle.

Carl F. H. Henry, in *God, Revelation, and Authority; God Who Speaks and Shows*, confronts those who count themselves, Christian while denying Christianity's very fundamental dogmatic tenets.⁷⁰

Literature regarding How Scholars can Refute Secularism, including Skepticism Regarding the Existence and Activity of Demons

Primary Sources

Moses's Genesis 3:1ff. account of "The Fall" of humanity via original sin remains perhaps the most referenced text in acknowledging Satan's involvement in the world. It is helpful as a marker for *sola fidei* occurring without proof outside of mysterious and overwhelming evidence for the Judeo-Christian worldview.

Multiple OT and Apocrypha writers attest to "The Watchers," "Sons of God," "Council," "*ḥə-nê-hā- 'ē-lō-hîm*" (an alliteration of Heb. וַיִּרְאוּ בְנֵי-הָאֱלֹהִים אֶת- (1) or "Divine Assembly" commencing with Moses in Genesis 6:1–4.⁷¹ The passages report that such deities are most probably not of human mortals but "His holy ones" or created beings (Job 15:15–16) who caused "the Daughters of Men" to bear giants (Nephilim) as offspring.⁷² Scholars can refute Secularism, including Skepticism regarding demons, via historical accounts that are multiply attested.

⁷⁰ Henry, *God, Revelation*.

⁷¹ See also, Enoch 15:2-15, Psalm 82:1-6 or "*theōn*" in Psalm 135:2).

⁷² These include Numbers 13:32–33; Deuteronomy 2:20, 21, 3:11, and 8:19 reflecting Goliath's family tree (Anakim also called Rephaim and Amorites). Goliath's Brother (also a Giant) was killed by Abishai son of Zeruiah in 2 Samuel 21:17. The psalmist refers to Yahweh as "the god of Gods" (lowercase "g") in Psalm 136:2 (cf. Ps 95:3, 97:9) and confesses to singing His praises "before the gods" in Psalm 138:1, Who is more awesome and feared by these "high angelic powers" (Ps 89:7ff.) and "above all gods" (lowercase "g"; Ps 96:4) cf. Dt 10:17 "For the LORD your God is God of gods and Lord of lords." The psalmist calls these lesser gods to worship Yahweh in Psalm 97:5–7. Isaiah 14:12–15 (cf. Ez 28:1–19) describes Satan of desiring to rule over the divine council as God does.

Multiple OT writers besides Moses's report strange yet contemporaneously familiar "Canaanite deities." Writers include Habakkuk 3:5, referencing the gods of pestilence (*deer*) and plague (*rešep*) delivered unto the people slain by God.⁷³ Non-Judeo ANE sources additionally reference lesser gods.

The Ugaritic text tablets uncovered in Northern Syria in 1928 affirm these specifically named deities among 232 others, including Baal (1 Kgs 16:32, 18:25, 26, 40, 22:53; 2 Kgs 3:2, 10:18, 19, 21, 23, 27–29; 1 Chr 8:30, 9:36; 2 Chr 23:17; Jer 7:9, 19:5, 32, 35, 23:13; Jgs 2:13, 6:31, 32; Hos 13:1), as well as Asherah (Dt 16:21; 1 Kgs 14:23, 15:13, 18:19; 2 Kgs 13:6, 16:33, 17:10, 16, 18:4, 21:3–4, 7, 23:4, 6–7, 14, 15; 2 Chr 15:16, 34:7; Jer 17:2; Jgs 6:25–26, 28, 30; Hos 13:1; Mi 5:14) causing the need for a literal non-secular translation of the text.⁷⁴

Nonetheless, a listing of passages makes their accounts not necessarily true but worthy of participation in the conversation and inductive investigation.

In the NT, Matthew, Mark, and Luke all independently report the disciples seeing Jesus walk on water, whom they mistakenly and embarrassingly identified as "a ghost." Of special note remains the non-flattering or embarrassing accounts of the same disciples' failures to deal

⁷³ Shaul Bar, "Resheph in the Hebrew Bible," accessed May 7, 2021, https://jbnqnew.jewishbible.org/assets/Uploads/452/JBQ_452_Barreshef.pdf; Bar writes "Resheph was a well-known deity. The worship of Resheph is found in Ugaritic, Phoenician, Aramaic, and Egyptian texts. In these texts Resheph is described in various ways, such as the god or gatekeeper of the underworld, god of pestilence, god of war, and god of healing. In the Hebrew Bible Resheph is mentioned 7 times. Resheph has several meanings; among them 'pestilence,' 'arrow,' and 'fire.'"

⁷⁴ Ira Spar, "The Gods and Goddesses of Canaan," accessed May 7, 2021, https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/cana/hd_cana.htm; Spar writes, "Ugaritic mythological tablets describe the activities of the main gods and goddesses of the Canaanite pantheon... The universe was believed to be ruled in tandem by the older god El and a main warrior-god, Baal, surrounded by a council of deities and a lower level of attendant gods. The divine council included the older generation of the god El and his wife Athirat, known in the Bible as Asherah, as well as a younger group of figures that included the war god Baal and the war goddesses Anat and Astarte. Forces of destruction included Yamm, the god of the sea (also known as Nahar, the River), and Mot, the god of death as well as burning (Resheph) and pestilence (Deber), a god described in the Bible (Habakkuk 3). In total, more than 234 deities are recorded in Ugaritic texts, and these gods, unlike humans, were thought to have eternal lives."

with demons afflicting the *hoi polloi* as found in Matthew 17:19ff cf. Mark 9:28ff and Luke 9:38ff as explored in Chapter Five. Particularly, this admission is shocking amidst clear NT deliverance authority granted by Jesus to His disciples. Historian's Rules, such as Surprise Elements, work to vet historicity of supernatural beliefs.

Demons appear in the Apocalyptic. Revelation 9:20 reveals that it is not riches themselves that remain the eschatological problem for humanity. Instead, there is a biblical imperative against the serving (idolatry) of Mammon (a malevolent riches entity) according to Matthew 6:24, Luke 16:9–13 (cf. 1 Cor 10:20–21; Lv 17:17; Dt 17:2–5, 32:17; Ps 106:37; Bar 4:5–7; 1 Tm 4:1; Jas 2:19, 3:15). By Historian's Rules, valid historical events include Multiple Attestation via accounts in different genres of literature and writers.⁷⁵ Wars, famines, genocide, and economic collapses are historically examined by similar standards of valid historicity when measured by either Theists or non-Theists, as covered in Chapters Three, Four, and Five.

In the case of either Theistic or non-Theistic scholarly group, the Patristic and Gospel character Barnabas (or a pseudo writer) in “The Epistle of Barnabas” (AD 100)⁷⁶ focused upon idolatry being a causation for “a habitation of demons.”⁷⁷ The issue of idolatry was warned

⁷⁵ Revelation 16:14 reads “for they are spirits of demons, performing signs, which go out to the kings of the entire world, to gather them together for the war of the great day of God, the Almighty.” Revelation 18:2 reads “And he cried out with a mighty voice, saying, ‘Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great! She has become a dwelling place of demons and a prison of every unclean spirit, and a prison of every unclean and hateful bird.’ Jesus’s perspective on Gentiles, Neo-Pagans, Secular Naturalists/Humanists is the church trucking with demons (Rv 9:20 cf. Gal 4:8). 1 Corinthians 10:20 reads “No, but I say that things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons and not to God; and I do not want you to become partners with demons.” Revelation 2:14–20 deals with the church holding to the teachings of Balaam, and toleration of Jezebel.

⁷⁶ Barnabas, *The Epistle of Barnabas* 16; Barnabas, ed. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe, “Introductory Note to the Epistle of Barnabas,” in *The Apostolic Fathers with Justin Martyr and Irenaeus*, Vol. 1, The Ante-Nicene Fathers (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature, 1885), 133.

⁷⁷ A. Walker, “Apocrypha of the New Testament: Translator’s Introductory Notice,” in *Fathers of the Third and Fourth Centuries: The Twelve Patriarchs, Excerpts and Epistles, the Clementina, Apocrypha, Decretals, Memoirs of Edessa and Syriac Documents, Remains of the First Ages*, Vol. 8, ed. Alexander Roberts, J. Donaldson and A. C. Coxe (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature, 1886), 355; Henry Scott Holland, *The Apostolic Fathers*, in *The Fathers for English Readers* (New York, NY: E. & J. B. Young, 1897), 201.

against by additional Attestation found in the Decalogue, NT, Apocalyptic, and Apocrypha, cohering with Barnabas' account.⁷⁸ Barnabas specifically notes why demons manifest yields Multiple Attestation explained in Chapter Five.⁷⁹

Evagrius of Pontus wrote in *Talking Back: A Monastic Handbook for Combatting Demons* that the primary contemporaneous methods among Christian monks dealing with demonic oppression between the mid to late fourth century AD were systemic.⁸⁰ Evagrius coheres with acknowledgment of the communicative ability's demons held according to the Patristics Hippolytus, Tertullian, and Minucius Felix.

Hippolytus, in "The Refutation of All Heresies" (AD 220–30),⁸¹ agreed with both Tertullian and Minucius that communication is integral to demonic manipulation. Multiple Attestation within the framework of Historian's Rules argues that for the Patristics, demon's speech co-mingled with their demonic double-dealing of lies yields contemporaneous belief in the existence of malevolent incorporeal entities that either mislead or once mislead humans.

Like Barnabas, Ignatius of Antioch wrote in "The Epistle of Ignatius to the Smyrnæans" (c. AD 107)⁸² that Jesus acknowledged the existence of the incorporeal (Lk 24:36–51 "see that I

⁷⁸ Holland, *Apostolic Fathers*, 201.

⁷⁹ Jaroslav Pelikan, Jean Leclercq, and Karlfried Froehlich, "Introductions," in *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works*, ed. John Farina, trans. Colm Luibheid and Paul Rorem. The Classics of Western Spirituality (New York, NY: Paulist, 1987), 34; Pelikan wrote, "The story of Pseudo-Dionysius and the Protestant Reformation belongs in the context of the reception of the humanist 'new learning' itself among the adherents of both the old faith and the new."

⁸⁰ Evagrius, and David Brakke, *Talking back: A Monastic Handbook for Combating Demons*, (Trappist, KY: Cistercian, 2009).

⁸¹ Hippolytus, *The Refutation of All Heresies*, 4.28ff; F. L. Cross and Elizabeth A. Livingstone, *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2005), s.v. "Hippolytus St.,".

⁸² Ignatius of Antioch, The Epistle of Ignatius to the Smyrnæans, 3; Frederic William Farrar, *Lives of the Fathers: Sketches of Church History in Biography*, (London, U.K.: A. & C. Black, 1907), 53.

[Jesus] am not an incorporeal spirit”). Mary of Cassobelæ in “The Epistle of Maria the Proselyte to Ignatius,” also wrote regarding the incorporeal.⁸³ Jesus was not an incorporeal spirit despite contemporaneous Gnostic assertions.⁸⁴

Irenæus, in “Against Heresies” (c. AD 177)⁸⁵, meticulously highlighted sinful individual behaviors such as prophetic manipulation of women, deviant sexual conduct, and magic (altogether Gnostic behaviors) as attracting demons.⁸⁶ Logically, one could not attract something or someone to anything or anyone non-existent.

In “Oration to the Greeks” (c. AD 177–178)⁸⁷, Tatian argued that demonic bodies are recognizable, at least for believers. Unlike Tertullian and Minucius Felix, Tatian thought demons have souls yet remain incapable of repentance. Moreover, Tatian, Minucius Felix, and Theodoret of Cyrus argued that demons cause human bodily injury and death, including accidents and murder.

⁸³ Mary of Cassobelæ, *The Epistle of Maria the Proselyte to Ignatius*; Mary of Cassobelæ, in *The Epistle of Maria the Proselyte to Ignatius*, Ante-Nicene Fathers 1, ed. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature, 1885), 121; Mary wrote to Ignatius around AD 107 regarding king Josiah in (2 Kgs 22, 23) dealing with deceiving and defiling demons.

⁸⁴ Charles Simeon, *Horæ Homileticæ: Galatians-Ephesians*, Vol. 17 (London, U.K.: Holdsworth and Ball, 1833), 489.

⁸⁵ Irenæus, *Against Heresies*; Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe, “Introductory Note to Irenæus against Heresies,” in *The Apostolic Fathers with Justin Martyr and Irenæus*, Vol. 1, The Ante-Nicene Fathers (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature, 1885), 309–311.

⁸⁶ Pearcey, *Leonardo*, 56; Pearcey writes, “in the second century, the Gnostics denied them altogether. They taught that Jesus was an avatar from a higher, spiritual plane who entered the physical world temporarily to bring enlightenment and then returned to a higher state of being. As N. T. Wright explains, they ‘translated the language of resurrection into a private spirituality and a dualistic cosmology.’”

⁸⁷ Tatian, *Oration to the Greeks*, 14–15; Robert M. Grant, “The Date of Tatian's Oration,” accessed December 22, 2021, <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/harvard-theological-review/article/abs/date-of-tatians-oratio/B5C95BBE3CB13C17F8C06CFD6D70F36D>.

Like Tatian, Tertullian in “Apology” affirmed Christian authority over demons⁸⁸ (c. AD 197).⁸⁹ Tertullian offered an account of exorcism existing in the Patristic era that ameliorates Theodoret of Cyrus’ early cessation argument.⁹⁰ He, like Tatian, also argued demons cause human bodily injury and death, including accidents and murder, as “a demon attends every man.”⁹¹ Finally, Tertullian asserted that demons’ economic proposition engages in human fear remaining ubiquitous dispensers of anxiety even by influencing dreams.

Theodoret of Cyrus contended in the “Ecclesiastical History of Theodoret” (c. AD 430)⁹² a demon attended every person at one time or another to bring personal catastrophe.⁹³ However, demons “were destroyed” by Jesus Christ “after (at) His coming.” Scholars can use Theodoret’s charges to refute Skepticism via his early arguments for the existence and activity of demons.⁹⁴

⁸⁸ Tertullian, *Apology*, 22.23.15ff; *Tertullian and Minucius Felix, Apologetical Works and Octavius*, ed. Roy Joseph Deferrari, trans. Rudolph Arbesmann, Emily Joseph Daly, and Edwin A. Quain, Vol. 10, *The Fathers of the Church* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America, 1950), 304.

⁸⁹ T. Herbert Bindley, “Introduction,” in *The Apology of Tertullian for the Christians* (London, U.K.: London and Broad-street, 1890). Logos.

⁹⁰ Everett Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church: History, Theology, and Liturgy in the First Five Centuries* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009), 752–755; Ferguson argues that counter to the healings having ceased at the end of the Apostolic Age, “Scapula Instruction” for administering the rite of exorcism by the church was written as late as 790 in the “Barberini Euchologion MS.” This document remains the most recent work of the “Ordo of Constantinople” and persists in use today by the Eastern Orthodox Church.

⁹¹ Tertullian, *Oration to the Greeks* 27.5, TFC 10, 304; Tertullian, *A Treatise on the Soul*, 57.4.

⁹² Thomas Ridgley, *A Body of Divinity*, Vol. 2 (New York, NY: Robert Carter & Brothers, 1855), 39.

⁹³ Theodoret of Cyrus, *Ecclesiastical History of Theodoret*, 4.7.

⁹⁴ Theodoret’s early Reformer’s argument remains mutually exclusive to Tertullian in “Scapula” 2 that insisted demons reject, and convict believers. Moreover, they must be exposed and cast out “daily.” In “Scapula” 4 Tertullian wrote, “The secretary of a certain gentleman, when he was suffering from falling sickness caused by a demon, was freed from it; so also...a certain little boy...many distinguished men...common people...cured either of devils or of their sicknesses.” Likewise, Tatian in *Orations to the Greeks* 16 warned that demons may also inhabit the sick and take credit for the sicknesses. Tatian wrote, “There are, indeed, diseases and disturbances of the matter that **is** in us...and (demons) approach a man whenever disease lays hold of him.”

Secondary Sources

D. A. Carson, in *The Gagging of God: Christianity Confronts Pluralism*, asserts that the scriptural, historical interpretation (biblical theology) trumps any pluralistic, postmodern assertions of all truth being relative.⁹⁵ Scholars can refute the secularist worldview by arguing that “objective reality,” as measured by secular standards, refutes Skepticism regarding the existence and activity of demons via invalidating circular argument.

Carson, in *Christ and Culture Revisited*, asserts that Postmodernism remains “suspicious” of metanarratives, particularly in the collection of little stories leading to ultimate truth as found in the Bible, leading to a grander offering of truth.⁹⁶ Scholars can refute the secularist worldview by avoiding the use of metanarrative in their apology. Instead, Historian’s Rules survive secular scrutiny.

Newbigin, in *Foolishness to the Greeks: The Gospel and Western Culture*, argued that Western Christian ministers must adjust their message for a Postmodern audience via what he coins the “plausibility structure” of “beliefs, experiences, and practices.”⁹⁷ Scholars can accommodate Newbigin’s absolute existence of “plausibility structures” so long as the same grace extended to accept the absolute existence of “plausibility structures” is presented to scholarly arguments for the absolute existence of demons.

⁹⁵ Carson, *The Gagging*.

⁹⁶ Carson, *Christ and Culture*.

⁹⁷ Lesslie Newbigin, *Foolishness to the Greeks: The Gospel and Western Culture* (Geneva, Switzerland: World Council of Churches, 1986).

C. Fred Smith argues in *Developing a Biblical Worldview: Seeing Things God's Way* that individuals and the church require a biblical foundation to govern human life effectively.⁹⁸ Scholars can refute the secularist worldview by highlighting its regressive and negative impact upon society and culture because of its circular antibiblical arguments.

Kevin Vanhoozer, in *The Cambridge Companion to Postmodern Theology*, compiles a series of essays and then defines and *quasi-defends* postmodernism to train Christian theologians how to refute postmodern anti-absolutism.⁹⁹ For example, scholars can refute Secularism by arguing that both Evangelicals and Secular Humanists/Naturalists proselytize, the latter engaging to no apparent avail besides Humanism hubris and wrecking another's hope.

Nancy Pearcey, in *Saving Leonardo: A Call to Resist the Secular Assault on Mind, Morals, and Meaning*, argues that while Secularism cloaks itself in the idea that is tossing the supernatural out of the public square as unifying, Secularism offers the fragmentation and disintegration of human dignity.¹⁰⁰ Scholars can use Pearcey in answering why Secularists must reject the non-material to justify their circular argument against non-material thought construction.

In *Finding Truth: 5 Principles for Unmasking Atheism, Secularism, and Other God Substitutes*, Pearcey provides an alternative to the mantra "Do not Think, Just Believe," as offered by many in both church and secular circles.¹⁰¹ Instead of restriction to *sola fidei*

⁹⁸ C. Fred Smith, *Developing a Biblical Worldview: Seeing Things God's Way* (Nashville, TN: B&H, 2015).

⁹⁹ Kevin Vanhoozer, *The Cambridge Companion to Postmodern Theology* (New York, NY: Cambridge University, 2003).

¹⁰⁰ Pearcey, *Leonardo*.

¹⁰¹ Nancy Pearcey, *Finding Truth: 5 Principles for Unmasking Atheism, Secularism, and Other God Substitutes* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 2015).

argument, scholars can use Pearcey's work to uncover Secularism's deepest motivations and claims in her principles.

Walter Wink, in *Naming the Powers: The Language of Power in the New Testament*, argues from his Antisupernaturalist perspective that the term "power" is laden with contemporary materialistic assumptions cf. ancients' understanding of "power" as the confluence of both spiritual and material factors.¹⁰² Scholars can use Wink for his Enemy Attestation, albeit he self-identifying as Christian, in his launching linguistics as an Antisupernaturalist *apologia*.

Chapter Conclusion

The principal aim of this chapter is to recap existing sources' views regarding the historical existence and activity of demons. The chapter's thesis is that each major period of church/cultural history reflects an evolving view of what is material, non-material (not immaterial), and knowable reality. A review of the literature yields inductive proof of the chapter's thesis. The dissertation learned that while perspectives regarding the incorporeal evolved, outright denial of their existence and activities emerged from the Modernists of the Enlightenment period. Writers of the Bible, Patristics, and secondary sources held a seat at the table of discourse and have historically weighed in with their perspectives and evolving worldviews.

¹⁰² Walter Wink, *Naming the Powers: The Language of Power in the New Testament* (Philadelphia, PA. Fortress, 1984).

CHAPTER THREE: PHILOSOPHIES UNDERGIRDING PRESENT THOUGHT
REGARDING THE SUPERNATURAL FROM THE MEDIEVAL,
MODERN, AND POSTMODERN PERIODS

Chapter Introduction

Beliefs, no matter their factual or fallacious basis, involve systematically canceling potential competing ideas until the individual is satisfied with the result.¹⁰³ That outcome may likewise be logically rational or irrational, illogically circular, or rationally valid. Moreover, word definitions (including those terms of logic listed above) and whatever requisite justification for defining a word, as well as whatever undergirds those beliefs, are not universally agreed. Instead, schools of thought have formed around acquiring and validating knowledge (epistemology) explored in this Chapter.¹⁰⁴

Secular Humanists/Naturalists believe human thoughts are “material things.” Theists do not. Secularists believe thoughts are chemically constructed or “material” atomic substructures smashing together.¹⁰⁵ Theists do not. Instead, for Theists, “non-material” causations drive thoughts. The divide between thought sources separates Realism from Nominalism, Cartesianism from Particularism, and ultimately the Naturalist and Supernaturalist worldviews. Such is identifiable in philosophy and theology and notable as expressed in Education, Art, Music, and Literature. Not only words and their meanings, but more importantly, the source of those meanings lead to dogmatic level shifts in worldview.

¹⁰³ See note 11.

¹⁰⁴ Pearcey, *Leonardo*, 23; Pearcey writes, “The key to understanding modern secularism is its view of truth. Think of it this way: Before you decide what you believe, you must first decide what the credible options are. That list is determined by your definition of truth—what philosophers call your epistemology. It functions as a grid or sieve that allows only certain ideas through. Any idea sifted out becomes something you won’t even bother considering.”

¹⁰⁵ “1.2 Atomic Realities and Scientific Theories,” accessed Sept. 3, 2022, <https://openbooks.lib.msu.edu/clue/chapter/chapter-1/>.

For example, the difference expressed by the terms “material,” “immaterial,” and “non-material” is pivotal. “Immaterial” will be considered as coterminous with “irrelevant.” On the other hand, “non-material” will be understood as “incorporeal,” “bodiless,” or coterminous with “intangible” as taken in Secularist nomenclature. The Chapter’s thesis is that “material” reason (thought conclusions) became the god of the Moderns, leading to greater epistemological conundrums for its philosophies, philosophers, and associated historical periods. For now, it is crucial to view Greek philosophy as the precursor to Medievalism.

Plato and the Non-material Nature of Ideas

Plato (c. BC 429) thought abstracts were more accurate than the physical universe. For example, Plato measured a person’s value, validity, and purpose. Plato wrote, “a long and weary way has at last made clear to us who are the philosophers or lovers of wisdom and who are not...our purpose of discerning the difference between the just and the unjust life...those who are incapable of this but lose themselves and wander amid the multiplicities of multifarious things, are not philosophers.”¹⁰⁶ Thereunder, Plato employed descriptive in his writing that displays an Idealism via abstract thought over Materialism that rejects ideas transcending the physical realm. Plato’s Theory of Ideas reflects his belief in an unseen realm that harbors the birth of human thought.

Tension developed between Plato’s use of the Greek words εἶδος (*eidos*) or form, and ἰδέα (*idea*). Mark Burgin writes, “Plato pioneered...that the world as a whole consisted of two realms: the physical world, which people could comprehend with their five senses, and the world

¹⁰⁶ Plato, *Plato in Twelve Volumes & 6 Translated by Paul Shorey*, Vol. 5 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1969); Shorey asserts in note #1147, “This is the main theme of the *Republic*, of which Plato never loses sight.”

of Ideas or Forms, which people could comprehend only with their intellect...shaping his views on knowledge, ethics, esthetics, psychology, and political teachings” [italics Burgin’s].¹⁰⁷ Plato advanced his ideas around a philosophical school of thought emanating from the Greco-Roman world between the third and seventh centuries AD, later termed Neoplatonism. Neoplatonism survives as belief in a Supreme deity beyond autonomic control.

Neoplatonists synthesized the Hellenistic tradition of philosophy, religion, and literature with the theories of Plato, Aristotle, and the Stoics into a meta-discourse regarding the human condition. Christian Wildberg writes, “Neoplatonists developed their characteristically speculative brand of philosophical inquiry in which...[intellect] is ontologically prior to the physical realm...Mind over Matter...reality...depended on a...principle-monism...a single cause that they considered divine...‘the First,’ ‘the One,’ or ‘the Good’...in the hierarchy of being, the first principle...cannot be less ‘real’ than the phenomena it is supposed to explain.”¹⁰⁸ Plato’s conclusion caused the halt of scientific progress for centuries.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁷ Mark Burgin, “Ideas of Plato in the Context of Contemporary Science and Mathematics,” *Athens Journal of Humanities & Arts*, 4 no. 3, 161–82; Burgin writes, “Classical Greece gave many great ideas to the world. Two of them described the structure of our world. One was introduced by Leucippus of Miletus (ca. 480 - ca. 420 B.C.E.) and Democritus from Abdera (460–370 B.C.E.), who suggested that the universe consisted of a void and a large number of invisible and indivisible particles, which were called atoms. In this picture, all things were built of atoms.”

¹⁰⁸ Christian Wildberg, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, [Winter 2021] <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2021/entries/neoplatonism/>. s.v. “Neoplatonism,”.

¹⁰⁹ Friedrich Büchsel, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964–), s.v. “Ἰστορέω (ιστορία);” Büchsel writes, “The man who knows puts his knowledge into effect *vis-à-vis* the ignorant by telling what he knows. But the sense of ‘to investigate’ is also natural. For knowledge cannot be separated from enquiry. In many cases the activity of knowledge necessarily implies that of investigation. The Ionian representatives of ἱστορίη, Thales, Heraclitus, Hecataios of Miletus, and Herodotus, surpassed their contemporaries as investigators. The word ἱστορέω passed from Ionic into Attic tragedy in the sense of ‘to enquire.’ With Ionic nature philosophy ἱστορία also passed into Attic philosophy in the sense of ‘enquiry,’ ‘science,’ ‘information.’ Plato knows the term, and uses it as a target of witticisms. He does not adopt it into his scholarly vocabulary.”

Nonetheless, Medievalists sought wisdom initially via Platonism. Platonism begat two branches within Medievalist Scholasticism; Realism/Cartesianism and Nominalism.

Antisupernaturalism begins after Plato and the Medieval Period that follows.

The Medieval Period

The Late Medieval period of philosophy represents a renewed flowering of Western philosophical thought following the intellectual drought of the Dark Ages. The Dark Ages is an imprecise term once used to refer to the Middle Ages. Today the “Dark Ages” is primarily used concerning the early Medieval period, its genesis commencing in the centuries following the collapse of the Western Roman Empire (AD 476–800).¹¹⁰ Charles Taylor refers to this period from the time of Augustine to Anselm (AD 300–1000) as an “enchanted age” when people were “porous selves.”¹¹¹ People’s contemporaneous perception of the cosmos generally reflects divine order amidst the characters believed to exist only in fairy tales measured in the context of today’s thought forms.

For example, people commonly believed in fairies, nymphs, dwarfs, and elves co-existing within the “enchanted” world where they lived, simultaneously falling under a God-ordered

¹¹⁰ Frederic Huidekoper, *Judaism at Rome: B.C. 76 to A.D. 140*, Seventh Edition, Vol. I, Works of Frederic Huidekoper (New York, NY: David G. Francis, 1887), 387–388.

¹¹¹ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 809; Taylor writes, “The Platonic derived theory of things as manifestations of the ideas can consort easily with the popular beliefs about enchantment. Both can make sense of the notion that meaningful causal forces inhere (attach) in the objects around us. Plato-inspired views about the cosmos could serve as the high culture, theorized pendant to popular enchantment.”

divine cosmos.¹¹² Taylor writes, “The enchanted world...is the world of spirits, demons, and moral forces which our ancestors lived in...[where] the Christian God was the ultimate guarantee that good would triumph...[and] Atheism comes close to being inconceivable...[However,] science in helping to disenchant the universe, contributed to opening the way for exclusive humanism...not open and porous...but what I want to call ‘buffered.’”¹¹³ Understanding a relatively stable Medieval worldview is critical to contemplate the philosophical and relatively rapid theological shifts that ensued. The mystical worldview of the “Dark Ages” (earlier Medieval period) progressed towards a more serious academic inquiry into the theology and philosophy leading up to and through the modern Enlightenment period.

Scholasticism

Academic pursuits of the latter Medieval period fell under the philosophical term “Scholasticism” (Latin *Scholasticus*). Scholasticism is a Medieval method instructed at contemporaneous universities and cathedrals from the twelfth to sixteenth centuries, merging the disciplines of logic, metaphysics, and semantics into a single product.¹¹⁴ Scholasticism is best

¹¹² Charles Taylor, “Buffered and Porous Selves,” accessed November 4, 2021, <https://tif.ssrc.org/2008/09/02/buffered-and-porous-selves/>; Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 25–26; Taylor writes, “People lived in an ‘enchanted’ world. This is perhaps not the best expression; it seems to evoke light and fairies. But I am invoking here its negation, Weber’s expression ‘disenchantment’ as a description of our modern condition. This term has achieved such wide currency in our discussion of these matters, that I’m going to use its antonym to describe a crucial feature of the pre-modern condition. The enchanted world in this sense is the world of spirits, demons, and moral forces which our ancestors lived in.”

¹¹³ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 25–27.

¹¹⁴ Sharon Rusten with E. Michael, *The Complete Book of When & Where in the Bible and throughout History* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2005), 179.

known for its application in Christian theology, especially in attempts to reconcile Platonism¹¹⁵ and Aristotelian Philosophy¹¹⁶ to Christianity. However, Scholasticism advanced beyond theology in the fourteenth century (Late Scholasticism) to include epistemology and philosophies of science, nature, psychology, and economic theory.¹¹⁷

On the one hand, Scholasticism emphasizes logic, rhetoric, and grammar, maintaining a distinction between natural and reasoned theology (Realism). On the other hand, an opposing branch of Scholastic thinkers (Nominalists) employ claims (including word meanings falling outside historical linguistic and cultural context) to argue their findings in detail.¹¹⁸ Tantamount, however, Scholastics also view contradictions in logic as non-existent.¹¹⁹ Augustine asserted that

¹¹⁵ Th G. Sinnige, "Plotinus on the Human Person and Its Cosmic Identity," *Vigiliae Christianae*, 56 no. 3 [2002], Logos. Sinnige writes, "Platonism attempts to find irrefutable certainty apart from sense-perception and reflective consciousness. Thereunder, all knowledge about realities of this world, including rational arguments, must be put aside to not obstruct the path to the foundation of certainty. This foundation is based only in experiencing the presence of the One and Origin outside of the contemplative mind and knowable only when the mind withdraws itself from the process."

¹¹⁶ Evans, *Apologetics & Philosophy*, 13; Evans writes, "Aristotle (384–322 B.C.). One of the most famous philosophers of ancient Greece. Although Aristotle had been a student of Plato, he rejected Plato's doctrine of transcendent Forms in favor of the claim that universal properties exist immanently in particulars, which he saw as a synthesis of form and matter. Aristotle invented logic as a formal discipline and wrote on a wide range of topics, including metaphysics, ethics and much that would today be classified as natural science, including biology and physics. Aristotle's followers are sometimes called Peripatetics because of his habit of lecturing as he walked on the grounds of the Lyceum, his philosophical school in Athens."

¹¹⁷ Erich Schmalenberg, "Zum Verhältnis Von Theologie und Wissenschaft (Concerning the Relationship between Theology and Science)," *Kerygma und Dogma*, 24 no. 3 [1978]: 194–203; Late Scholasticism contemplates the historically disputed relationship between science and theology including conflicts between the certainty of faith and certainty of knowledge in epistemology.

¹¹⁸ Ewert H. Cousins, "Introduction," in *Bonaventure: The Soul's Journey into God; The Tree of Life; The Life of St. Francis*, ed. Richard J. Payne, trans. Ewert Cousins. *The Classics of Western Spirituality* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist, 1978), 8–11; M. H. Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition* (Oxford, U.K.: Oxford University Press, 1953), 299, 301; Barbara M. Shapiro, *A Culture of Fact: England, 1550–1720* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2000); Russell A. Fraser, *The War against Poetry* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1970). Logos.

¹¹⁹ Christophe Theobald, "The Church under the Word of God," in *History of Vatican II* Vol. 5, ed. Giuseppe Alberigo and Joseph Komonchak (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis; Leuven: Peeters, 2006), 312; Tim Perry and Daniel Kendall, *The Blessed Virgin Mary*, ed. Alan G. Padgett et al., *Guides to Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2013), 43.

except for matters made subject to the thinker seeking a (Lat. *summae*) or a total of argument, an eschatological conclusion eludes Scholastics.¹²⁰

Consideration of whether reason countermands faith in vetting biblical assertions regarding the existence and activities of demons is germane. As Augustine warned, the short answer is yes to seek a *summae* argument. While Christian theology maintains a view of the incorporeal in eschatology, Philosophers diverge. Adrian Pabst writes, “The most significant work in this trajectory is by those scholars who refuse a clear and distinct separation of theology and philosophy...there are profound continuities between the ‘early modern’ thought of Scotus and Spinoza and the ‘late Scholasticism’ of Descartes (who stands between the two) and Kant, notably the turn to subjectivity and the separation of transcendence from immanence.”¹²¹ The Scholastic learning method emphasizes the dialectic acquisition of answers via reasoning as its thesis and antithesis (counterargument).¹²² Descartes was a Scholastic Realist,¹²³ as evidenced by his Skepticism regarding traditional philosophical methods and findings. Moreover, and more specifically, Descartes was not a Nominalist.

¹²⁰ Robert S. Franks, *A History of the Doctrine of the Work of Christ in Its Ecclesiastical Development* Vol. 1 (New York, NY: Hodder and Stoughton, 2019), 158; Eric D. Bristley, *A Guide to the Writings of Cornelius Van Til 1895–1987*, Electronic ed. (Chicago, IL: Olive Tree Communications, 1995), Logos; Bristley argues the order of Medieval to Modern epistemology is the Greek worldview climaxing with Plato. Accordingly, Medieval as starting with Augustine and climaxing with Scholasticism; Modern starting with Luther, Arminius and Calvin and climaxing with Antitheist Pragmatism.

¹²¹ Adrian Pabst, *Metaphysics: The Creation of Hierarchy*, ed. Conor Cunningham and Peter Candler, *Interventions* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2012), 306.

¹²² Augustine of Hippo, *The Happy Life and Answer to Skeptics and Divine Providence and the Problem of Evil and Soliloquies*, ed. Ludwig Schopp, trans. Denis J. Kavanagh et al., Vol. 5, *The Fathers of the Church* (New York, NY: CIMA, 1948), 201–202.

¹²³ Justin Skirry, “René Descartes (1596–1650),” Nebraska-Wesleyan University Press, accessed June 20, 2022, <https://iep.utm.edu/rene-descartes/>.

René Descartes (AD 1596–1650)

Descartes was a French philosopher, mathematician, scientist, and writer of the Age of Reason. The Age of Reason commanded a continuation of the move away from theology and faith-based arguments. Descartes, a Realist, first shirked Scholasticism, primarily due to its inclusion of sensory inputs in its apology. Rationalism (any view appealing to intellectual and deductive reasoning over sensory experience or religious teachings)¹²⁴ and British Empiricism (a practical philosophical movement mainly connected with the Age of Reason and advancing Age of Enlightenment)¹²⁵ shaped the philosophy of Scholastic Realists that emerged in the line of Descartes. Realists, also known as Cartesians, do logic by disregarding the senses as either a numerator or denominator in their calculus of what constitutes knowledge.¹²⁶

In his academic work and world experience, Descartes was captivated by the realization that there appeared to be no sure way of acquiring knowledge. Epistemologically, he viewed what might otherwise be specific knowledge as a mere steppingstone toward the ultimate pursuit of truth. Descartes' more immediate aim was to place scientific inquiry in a position where it was no longer subject to attack by Skeptics (Skepticism is a Hellenistic school of philosophy holding

¹²⁴ See also Rationalists Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (or von Leibniz AD 1646–1716) and Baruch Spinoza (or Benedict Spinoza AD 1632–1677).

¹²⁵ See also British Empiricists John Locke (AD 1632–1704), George Berkeley (AD 1685–1753), and David Hume (AD 1711–1776).

¹²⁶ Cornelius Van Til, *A Survey of Christian Epistemology* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1969), 106.

one should refrain from making truth claims and avoid postulation).¹²⁷ Descartes' method was to be more skeptical than the Skeptics.¹²⁸

At the heart of Descartes' philosophical method was his refusal to accept either the authority of previous philosophers or the evidence of his senses. He accepted only to trust that clearly and distinctly presented beyond any doubt (methodological Skepticism/Cartesian doubt/hyperbolic doubt).¹²⁹ Instead, he wrote, "we reject all such merely probable knowledge and make it a rule to trust what is completely known and incapable of being doubted."¹³⁰ Descartes allowed himself to reconstruct knowledge only after he self-sufficiently doubted the doubt.

Descartes argued that the things in the external world are material because God would not deceive. Because God is benevolent and does not desire to deceive, we can therefore have some faith in the account of reality provided by the senses. Henry wrote, "The rationalists dealt constantly with the factor of deception in sense experience. Descartes was constrained to appeal to the veracity of God in order to trust the veracity of sensation."¹³¹ For Descartes, while the human body works like a machine and has the material properties of extension and motion

¹²⁷ This is not the same as claiming that absolute truth is impossible (which would itself be an absolute truth claim) but is often also used to cover the position that there is no such thing as certainty in human knowledge (Academic Skepticism).

¹²⁸ Peter Kreeft and Ronald K. Tacelli, *Handbook of Christian Apologetics: Hundreds of Answers to Crucial Questions* (Westmont, IL: InterVarsity, 1994), 370.

¹²⁹ Marcus Pound, *Žižek: A (Very) Critical Introduction*, ed. Conor Cunningham and Peter Candler (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008), 29; Pound writes, "Descartes withdrew into the *cogito* through the exercise of hyperbolic doubt, doubting everything that could be doubted until he arrived at the one thing that could not be doubted: the thinking being. The procedural start is the same [italics Pound's]."

¹³⁰ René Descartes, *Rules for the Direction of the Mind*, ed. Mortimer J. Adler, Philip W. Goetz, and A. H. Stirling, trans. David Eugene Smith, Marica L. Latham, and W. H. White, Second Edition., Vol. 28, Great Books of the Western World (Chicago, IL: Britannica, 1990), 224.

¹³¹ Henry, *God, Revelation*, 318.

following the laws of physics, the mind or soul, on the other hand, is a non-material entity.¹³²

This perspective is known as Cartesian Dualism. By the time of the Reformation in the early sixteenth century, contemporary Secular philosophers chose to construct their own *a priori* justifications, leading to Nominalism and Christian Antisupernaturalism explained in Chapters Four and Five.

For now, Descartes' primary philosophical method is first to doubt everything, evading tradition, unless and until presented to his mind.¹³³ However, Descartes cannot disbelieve he is the one doing the doubting. If Descartes were graded in a fictitious "Method for Qualitative Critical Analysis" class on a Western school report card, he would perhaps receive an A- or B+. Ernest A. Norris writes, "the non-recognition of the necessity of discounting the ego, self or person, and mind understanding itself as such all through its investigation of itself, is the cause of the breakdown in Descartes' synthesis."¹³⁴ The fact that the observer is observing the observed is inescapable.

Nevertheless, the Cartesian method remains so prevalent that most Western philosophers employ Descartes, whether consciously acknowledging his process or otherwise. John Bolt argues that within the Cartesian method, "each American relies on individual effort and judgment...with singular lack of self-consciousness; Cartesian intellectual self-reliance is habitual, not reflective...Of all the countries in the world, America is the one in which the

¹³² Frank B Dilley, "Taking Consciousness Seriously: A Defense of Cartesian Dualism," *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion*, 55 no. 3, [2004]: 135–53; Clayton, "Physicalism;" Clayton writes, "Dualism is in contrast with physicalism. While the body is made of matter, the mind is viewed as an unworldly type of non-material."

¹³³ Descartes, *Method*, 215.

¹³⁴ Ernest A. Norris, "On the Strength and the Weakness of Descartes' 'Method,'" accessed September 8, 2021, <https://opensiuc.lib.siu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=3658&context=ocj>.

precepts of Descartes are the least studied and best followed.’”¹³⁵ Descartes systematized and formalized logical autopsies applicable to many stripes of philosophical argument practiced to this day.

Thus, both Modernist and Postmodernist philosophers share the Cartesian method of rationalization. However, unlike the following Secularist philosophers, Descartes’s philosophy regarding God and the soul reveals him as a non-secularist (Deist). Scholastic philosophers separate into two groups’ holding distinct and divergent worldviews regarding reality: a metaphysical fork in the road distinguishing Realists from Nominalists.

Patterns emerge within each philosophy. Namely, the supernaturalist, theistic, transcendent worldview is both “universally” and “particularly” predicative of Realists. The material, Antisupernaturalist worldview, is “particularly” but not “universally” predicative of nominalists. The words “universal” and “particular” provide the key to unlocking doctrines of both traditional Christianity and approaching modern Secularism (advancing towards first-order Skepticism) as the reader progresses.

Realism

Realism is a commonsense account (Cartesian) of metaphysical reality. Andrea Borghini writes, “Realists postulate the existence of two kinds of entities, particulars and universals. Particulars resemble each other because they share universals. For example, each dog has four legs, can bark, and has a tail. Universals can also resemble each other by sharing other universals. For example, wisdom and generosity resemble each other because they are

¹³⁵ John Bolt, *A Free Church, A Holy Nation: Abraham Kuyper’s American Public Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI; Eerdmans, 2001), 33.

virtues. Plato and Aristotle were among the most famous Realists.”¹³⁶ These men were scholars and philosophers universally in function, but Realists, particularly in the attribute.

Additionally, the universals and particulars of Realist Scholasticism allow for both when generating the depiction of words. For example, George F. Holmes wrote, “The doctrine is that, before Socrates, Plato, and Phædo, or any other individual men existed, *Man*, as an abstract idea, had an essential and immutable reality, and that Socrates, Plato, and Phædo were men solely in consequence of possessing this ideal manhood [Italics Holmes’s].”¹³⁷ While each philosopher retains the universal quality of manhood, they also retain particular attributes, such as Realists or Nominalists.

Christian Realism explores and defends that Christian theology rests upon abstracts. Borghini writes, “Sometimes qualities are subjects of our discourse, as when we say that wisdom is a virtue or that red is a color. The Realist can interpret these discourses as asserting that there is a universal (wisdom; red) that exemplifies another universal (virtue; color) [italics Borghini’s].”¹³⁸ One God, revealed in Triune persons sharing the same attributes is a theistic example of a Christian Realist abstract. Christianity proclaims one God universally, but three “particular” persons upon that reality.¹³⁹ Definitions and worldviews are themselves abstracts.

¹³⁶ Andrea Borghini, “Understand the Philosophical Theories of Nominalism and Realism,” *ThoughtCo*, accessed June 15, 2022, <https://www.thoughtco.com/nominalism-vs-realism-2670598>.

¹³⁷ George F. Holmes, *Cyclopædia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature* (New York, NY: Harper & Brothers, 1894), s.v. “Realism.”

¹³⁸ Borghini, “Understand.”

¹³⁹ Katherine Sonderegger, “The Character of Christian Realism,” *Scottish Journal of Theology*, 57 no. 4 [2004]: 451–65.

Modern art, including Photorealism, Hyperrealism, Surrealism, Magic Realism, Materialism, and Traditional Realism, all retain particular attributes of Realism sub-species.¹⁴⁰ Such taxonomy falls outside the scope of this dissertation's argument. Suffice for now is an understanding that Realism believes in the big picture (a metaphysical cosmos) of entities that resemble each other and the God-ordained cosmos. Galileo was a Realist like Descartes, who straddled the late Medieval and early Modern periods.

Galileo di Vincenzo Bonaiuti de' Galilei (Galileo) (AD 1564–1642)

Galileo was an Italian astronomer, physicist, and engineer who, among other contemporaries, promoted inquiry as seminal to epistemology. Realism is apparent in Galileo, who opposed the Catholic church's rejection of science as an epistemic vehicle. Galileo wrote, "The work that you Venetians do in your famous arsenal suggests a vast field of investigation...inherited experience and observations became very experienced...[and] helped me investigate certain effects."¹⁴¹ Galileo reflects a tension between academic inquiry and grace. Douglas A. Campbell writes, "Minds are a *tabula rasa*...as characteristically modern as any tacit endorsement of Descartes and Kant...Bacon (1561–1626) and Galileo (1564–1642) had fought long and hard to establish this approach to knowledge...fundamentally individualist and rationalist, but also optimistic about individuals' capacity to discover incorrigible order and truths within the external world."¹⁴² At the same time, Realism and Nominalism may be conflated but

¹⁴⁰ Jackie Craven, "6 Realistic Styles in Modern Art," *ThoughtCo.*, accessed June 16, 2022. <https://www.thoughtco.com/realistic-styles-modern-art-4148445>.

¹⁴¹ Galileo Galilei, *Two New Sciences: History of Physics for Modern Readers*, ed. Arianna Borrelli, Bretislav Friedrich, and Fritz Haber, trans. Alessandro de Angelis (Berlin, Germany: Springer, 2021), 9.

¹⁴² Douglas A. Campbell, *The Deliverance of God: An Apocalyptic Rereading of Justification in Paul* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2013), 300–01.

are not coterminous.¹⁴³ Instead, while Realism and Nominalism remain parallel within the universal of Scholasticism, they are mutually exclusive in the particulars of Scholasticism.

Nominalism

Nominalism is the doctrine that generalized terms have no independent existence outside their name. Specifically, only actual physical things are real; everything else is a verbal abstraction.¹⁴⁴ Geisler added, “‘Humanness’ is a general concept that includes all individual human beings. But nominalists insist that humanness does not exist; only individuals really exist.”¹⁴⁵ Borghini wrote, “[For Nominalists] universals are of our own making. Virtue exists only because we say it does: not because there is a universal abstraction of virtue.”¹⁴⁶ Thus, for Realists, abstracts made by the mind, ideas in Plato’s terms, are necessary to derive a given word’s depiction. For Nominalists, however, a word’s depiction remains a culturally driven grouping of terms that retain no inherent universals.

Nominalism begins a few hundred years before Cartesian Realism and survives from Late Medievalism, Modernism, and Postmodernism.¹⁴⁷ As will be evident in Chapters Four and Five, Antisupernaturalists congregate around Nominalism. Examples of Nominalist philosophers are helpful at this juncture of study.

¹⁴³ Evans, *Apologetics & Philosophy*, 26.

¹⁴⁴ Gonzalo Rodriguez-Pereyra, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* [Summer 2019], ed. Edward N. Zalta, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2019/entries/nominalism-metaphysics/>, s.v. “Nominalism in Metaphysics,”.

¹⁴⁵ Norman L. Geisler, *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1999), s.v. “Nominalism,”.

¹⁴⁶ Borghini, “Understand.”

¹⁴⁷ Scholars also credit prior philosophers such as Peter Abelard (AD 1079–1142).

John Duns Scotus (AD 1266–1308)

John Duns Scotus was born near the English border in the Scottish village of Duns. Ordained to the priesthood in the Order of Friars Minor (Franciscans), Scotus studied philosophy and then theology at Oxford, became Doctor of Theology in AD 1305, and was Franciscan regent master at Paris in AD 1306–1307.¹⁴⁸

Scotus is best known as a pivotal philosopher of High Scholasticism. Scotus wrote, “O Lord our God, true teacher that you are...Help me then, O Lord, as I investigate how much our natural reason can learn about that true being which you are if we begin with the being which you have predicated of yourself. Although being has many properties it would not be irrelevant to consider, it is to the more fruitful source of the essential order that I turn.”¹⁴⁹ Jeffrey Hause writes, “In opposition to the prevailing thought in metaphysics that the term ‘being’ is analogical, Scotus argues that it must be a univocal term, a view others had feared would bring an end to metaphysics and natural theology...Scotus’s distinction between intuitive and abstractive cognition structured much of the discussion of cognition for the rest of the Scholastic period...[and] influential into the modern period.”¹⁵⁰ Scotus’s contemporaneously novel account of universals and individualism gained a comprehensive pursuit among Ockham and Thomist opponents.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁸ Thomas Williams, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta [Winter 2019], accessed June 16, 2022, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2019/entries/duns-scotus/>, s.v. “John Duns Scotus,”.

¹⁴⁹ John Duns Scotus and Allan B Wolter, *A Treatise on God As First Principle: A Revised Latin Text of the De Primo Principio* (Chicago IL: Franciscan Herald, 1966), 1.

¹⁵⁰ Jeffrey Hause, “John Duns Scotus,” accessed June 16, 2022, <https://iep.utm.edu/john-duns-scotus/>.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

William of Ockham (AD c. 1280–1349)

William of Ockham was a Franciscan monk, English philosopher, and theologian who studied and taught at Oxford. Despite connections via the Franciscan order and Oxford University, there is no evidence that Scotus directly instructed Ockham.¹⁵² Ockham wrote:

Logic is the most useful tool of all the arts. Without it no science can be fully known. It is not worn out by repeated use, after the manner of material tools, but rather admits of continual growth through the diligent exercise of any other science. For just as a mechanic who lacks a complete knowledge of his tool gains a fuller [knowledge] by using it, so one who is educated in the firm principles of logic, while he painstakingly devotes his labor to the other sciences, acquires at the same time a greater skill at this art.¹⁵³

Just as Scholastic Realism grew from Descartes, Scholastic Nominalism advanced from Ockham. Cross and Livingstone write, “A different form of Nominalism appeared in the 14th cent.; this is usually associated with William of Ockham. He asserted that the universal is not found at all in reality, but only in the human mind (‘in anima’), for every substance is radically individual...the resemblance between two men does not lead to the conclusion that they share a common nature; universals are only ways of conceiving or knowing individual things.”¹⁵⁴ Ockham’s philosophical debunking of *imago Dei* (Gn 1:27) and man’s collective sinful nature (Rom 8) are noteworthy since academia and philosophy grow further apart from the church via Nominalism.

Nominalism as a philosophy was theologically polemic to church doctrine. Sharon Rusten, with E. Michael, writes, “He [Ockham] taught that the Scriptures were the only infallible

¹⁵² Ralph McInerny, “The Fourteenth Century Chapter III,” in *A History of Western Philosophy*, Vol. II. Jacques Maritain Center, accessed June 23, 2022, <https://maritain.nd.edu/jmc/etext/hwp224.htm>.

¹⁵³ William of Ockham, “William of Ockham’s Prefatory Letter,” accessed June 20, 2022, <https://scholarworks.iu.edu/dspace/bitstream/handle/2022/18966/OCKHAM.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>.

¹⁵⁴ Cross and Livingstone, *Christian Church*, 1166.

source authority...the pope was not infallible...church councils, not the pope, were the highest ruling authority in the church. He [Ockham] believed that God could be comprehended only by faith and not by reason. He was summoned before the pope in 1324 and eventually excommunicated.”¹⁵⁵ Nonetheless, words and their depictions remained an important focus for Ockham.

It is imperative to note that Ockham not only definitively exalted the stature of “logic,” “science,” and being “educated,” but depicts “other sciences” as “this [an] art.” Thus, Ockham chose his words as “particular” portrayals to collect and group as particularly depictive but only universals via his authority and standards.

Therefore, Nominalism as a philosophy allows for linguistic liberties that oppose Realism.¹⁵⁶ Geisler wrote, “Ockham was the younger contemporary of Duns Scotus (1266–1308) and Thomas Aquinas (1224–1274)...Whereas Skepticism flowered in David Hume (1711–1776), its roots were in William of Ockham...empiricism and Skepticism of Hume...idealism of George Berkeley (AD 1685–1753), the antitransubstantiation of Martin Luther (1483–1546), as well as ethical voluntarism, Nominalism, and the univocity of religious language.”¹⁵⁷ Language is pivotal when transitioning from the Scholastic Medievalists, particularly Nominalists, to the Moderns and, later, Postmoderns.

¹⁵⁵ Rusten with Michael, *When & Where*, 191; Rusten and Michaels write, “He is also remembered for his belief ‘What can be done with fewer assumptions is done in vain with more’ (known as Ockham’s Razor), which had great influence on science by proposing that natural phenomena could be rationally examined.”

¹⁵⁶ This is later seen delivered via Jacques Derrida in the Postmodern Period.

¹⁵⁷ Geisler, *Baker Encyclopedia*, s.v. “William of Ockham,”.

Antisupernaturalism grows from Nominalism that becomes culturally influential and dominant in academia. Most importantly, Ockham births Skepticism into the world,¹⁵⁸ to which Descartes reacts as a Realist who is self-admittedly a Skeptic. A deeper look into the variegated species of Skepticism is necessary before continuing the pursuit of the foundations undergirding Antisupernaturalism.

Skepticism

Skepticism is an intellectual position of doubt about the nature of reality or phenomena.¹⁵⁹ Skepticism evolved from Ockham's Nominalism before the Enlightenment period. Bryan D. Bibb writes, "Modern Skepticism emerged in the works of such thinkers as Descartes and Hume...whether we can be sure that the external world even exists... the work of philosophers such as Nietzsche, Freud, Derrida, and the postmodernists...if truth is ultimately beyond human perception, then all knowledge is constructed for political, psychological, or rhetorical purposes."¹⁶⁰ If thought is subject to Skepticism and morality is subject to thought as Secularists ascribe, morality is mechanically rational instead of supernatural. Diego E. Machuca identifies ten varieties of Moral Skepticism, including sub-types.

Nihilistic Epistemological Moral Skepticism argues that moral knowledge is either impossible epistemically to know or justify. Pyrrhonian Moral Skepticism judges moot the

¹⁵⁸ Geisler, *Baker Encyclopedia*, s.v. "William of Ockham,".

¹⁵⁹ Bryan D. Bibb, *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*, ed. John D. Barry et al., (Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2016), s.v. "Skepticism,".

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

possibility of either doing or justifying dubious claims.¹⁶¹ Finally, Epistemological Normative Skepticism argues that no prescriptive belief (including no moral belief) is epistemically justified because humans have neither the requisite knowledge of moral facts nor the credentials of those facts. Thus, metaphysically, choices regarding right or wrong must be suspended.¹⁶²

For conciseness, grouping Machuca's taxonomy into models befitting the dissertation's purpose of eliminating Skepticism of demons is useful. Specifically, skeptics' prototypes for the dissertation's purpose are here limited to an audience that either doubts human knowability of reality altogether or doubts justification for whatever beliefs a skeptic reasons to accept.¹⁶³ Those beliefs include the existence and activity of demons.

Moral Skepticism

Moral Skepticism rejects innate moral knowledge, moral justification, and the existence of moral reality. The Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) published, "A first order view

¹⁶¹ Bredo C. Johnsen, "On the coherence of Pyrrhonian Skepticism," *The Philosophical Review*, 110 no. 4 [2001]: 521–61; Diego E. Machuca, *Moral Skepticism: An Introduction and Overview*, ed. Diego E. Machuca, (New York: NY: Routledge, 2018), accessed December 7, 2021, <https://philarchive.org/archive/EMAMSAv1>, 21; Machuca writes, "I am inclined to think that a moral Skepticism of a Pyrrhonian stripe might well represent a more challenging rival to moral realism than other moral skeptical stances, but also a serious rival to these skeptical stances. For the Pyrrhonian moral skeptic recognizes the strength of realist views...but claims that their strength does not appear to be greater than that of skeptical views."

¹⁶² David Enoch, "The Epistemological Challenge to Metanormative Realism: How Best to Understand it, and How to Cope with it," *Philosophical Studies*, 148 no. 3 [2010]: 413–38; Machuca, *Moral Skepticism*; Machuca writes, "At the very least, robust moral realists maintain that there exist mind-independent moral facts, properties, or relations that are the source of categorical reasons or inescapable requirements, and one of the reasons moral error theorists target morality is precisely that they take it to posit such queer or mysterious entities."

¹⁶³ Taylor Francis, "The Belief Problem for Moral Error Theory," accessed March 21, 2022, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/0020174X.2019.1612779>; Machuca, *Moral Skepticism*, 22, 23; Machuca writes, "(As an example, Skepticism includes employment of moral) error theory...constructivism (both conclude that morality is invented and not objective) projectivism, veneer theory, inferentialism, disagreement, expressivism, non-naturalism, the Benacerraf challenge, evolutionary debunking arguments, and fictionalism...Some strains claim that there are no "determinate moral answers," others find those answers "are only contingent and local phenomena that cannot thereby be taken as universal...formulated in connection with moral judgments. But there is a more radical version of it that targets normative judgments as a whole, claiming that all such judgments are false."

is a claim about what we ought (morally) to do. Is abortion, genetic engineering, the killing of animals for food, the killing of human beings in wartime, and so on, right or wrong?”¹⁶⁴ These are first-order questions.

A second order (or meta-ethical) view is an account of what morality is. “Do moral sentences like ‘abortion is wrong’ have truth values (that is, are they true or false)?”¹⁶⁵ These are second-order questions. Consequently, there is a division between Skeptics questioning what is moral and whether those moral assertions are defensible (justified). However, first, consideration is due in defense against the claim that objective moral values, prescriptions, qualities, or relations humans claim do not exist and are thus unknowable.

Second, a defense against the claim that anyone knowing moral judgments lacks requisite foundations for underlying factual qualities is warranted. Again, Nominalism rings loudest in this area. Machuca writes that for the Moral Skeptic, “all first-order moral judgments are false because there are no objective moral facts, properties, or relations; or that they are all neither true nor false because the moral facts, properties, or relations they presuppose; or that moral judgments are...non-cognitive attitudes and not assertions about alleged mind-independent moral facts, properties, or relations.”¹⁶⁶ Under Scholasticism, Nominalists think each of these afore-quoted words yields detailed individualized depictions.

¹⁶⁴ “First and Second Order Views of Morality,” Handout #7 (Revised), “Harman and Thomson 1,” accessed March 16, 2022, <https://dspace.mit.edu/bitstream/handle/1721.1/35895/24-03Fall-2002/NR/rdonlyres/Linguistics-and-Philosophy/24-03Relativism--Reason---RealityFall2002/6DA5471E-FF8C-4005-B6AB-98FF9DBD26C2/0/f02handout7.pdf>.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ Brian Leiter, “Moral Skepticism and Moral Disagreement: Developing an Argument from Nietzsche,” accessed March 21, 2022, <https://nationalhumanitiescenter.org/on-the-human/2010/03/moral-Skepticism-and-moral-disagreement-developing-an-argument-from-nietzsche/>; Machuca, *Moral Skepticism*, 2-4; As an example, Machuca argues that Moral Non-Cognitivism holds that moral judgments are not based upon truth because they are fueled by attitudes or states of emotion. Machuca writes, “(moral non-cognitivism) maintains not only that moral judgments are not descriptions of objective moral facts or properties, but also that these facts or properties do not exist.”

For example, describing the history of “judgment” within Judeo-Christianity requires engagement in the biblical metanarrative. Analyzing individualized depictions of each word would create a tenuous endeavor in processing metanarratives. Some biblical textual critics eviscerate Scripture, as Chapters Four and Five describe. For now, some Skeptics levy a “Moral Error Theory,” concluding that in creating first-order moral judgments (what we ought morally to do), humans either unavoidably misdescribe or misrepresent reality.¹⁶⁷ Nominalism, Skepticism, Secularism, and Antisupernaturalism all levy reasoned apologies to defend their claims, as would Christian apologists who adhere to 1 Peter 3:15.

According to Machuca, Moral Skeptics’ “Argument from Evolution” claims that the origin of morality most plausibly occurs through natural selection forging specific human capacities or faculties. Machuca writes, “the evolutionary account defeats our first-order moral beliefs because it does not require that morality be *true*, but only that it be evolutionarily advantageous to *believe* that it is true...Humans are therefore disposed to make moral judgments regardless of the evidence to which they are exposed, regardless of whether there are or are not

¹⁶⁷ Machuca, *Moral Skepticism*, 6, 21; Machuca writes, “we (humans generally) project certain sentiments or emotions onto the things, actions, or characters that cause them and are their objects, with the result that we ascribe (project) to those things, actions, or characters certain objective moral features that are intrinsically action-guiding—features that are nonetheless ‘fictitious.’”

objective moral facts [*italics Machuca's*].”¹⁶⁸ In such a case, the evolutionary account renders all moral beliefs unjustified.¹⁶⁹

Evans agrees. Evans writes, “If Skepticism is true, then how can we know it is true? How can we know that it is not possible to gain knowledge? If the Skeptic says that we know that it is impossible to know anything, it appears he has contradicted himself...dogmatic assertion of Skepticism would undermine Skepticism.”¹⁷⁰ Similarly, Antisupernaturalists contemplate by what means we may cognitively know demons exist.

Cognition

First, cognition was firmly, qualitatively, within Plato's, then Scotus's, then Ockham's wheelhouse. Second, Descartes (and Scholastic Realism) advanced cognition to resolution outside any eschatological conclusion (see Augustine in the fourth century regarding Scholasticism). Third, the impact of Ockham's philosophical influence ripens over time into the

¹⁶⁸ William A. Rottschaefer, “Naturalizing Moral Agency: A Critical Review of Some Recent Works on the Biological and Psychological Bases of Human Morality,” *Bridges*, 4 no. 3 [1997]: 229–49; Machuca, *Moral Skepticism*, 15–16; Machuca argues “(that inherent to the Argument from Evolution is) the tendency to use general moral categories and the belief that certain types of action bear objective moral properties are innate; that cultural influences can cause some of those actions...that moral dispositions require environmental cues to become manifest.”

¹⁶⁹ Machuca, *Moral Skepticism*, 17, 28; Machuca writes, “More precisely, Mackie (1985: 160–161) maintains that the pre-moral tendencies to care for one's offspring and close relatives, to enjoy the company of fellow members of a small group, to exhibit reciprocal altruism, and to display kindly and hostile retribution are to be ascribed to biological evolution. To cultural evolution are to be ascribed ‘the more specifically moral virtues which presuppose language and other characteristically human capacities and relations’...Evolutionary considerations have also played a key role in an argument for Skepticism about the moral significance of disgust...namely, the avoidance of toxic or poisonous foods and the avoidance of pathogens and parasites. The disgust system provided (additional) motivation to comply with acquired norms and punish those who violated them, and to avoid members of other tribes. Feelings of disgust are therefore irrelevant to the epistemic justification of moral judgments and norms. This form of Skepticism is very restricted inasmuch as it is not concerned with the question of whether or not such judgments and norms are epistemically justified.”

¹⁷⁰ C. Stephen Evans, *A History of Western Philosophy: From the Pre-Socratics to Postmodernism* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2018), 110–111.

oxymoron of Christian Antisupernaturalism, as explained in Chapter Four and demonstrated in Chapter Five.

Nominalism advances via Skepticism to further erode belief in the existence and activity of demons. Evans writes, “In the period after the Reformation, a number of theologians known as Protestant Scholastics attempted to systematize Lutheran and Calvinist thought in ways that resembled the work of the medieval Scholastics [namely, Duns Scotus and Ockham] in both style and content.”¹⁷¹ Accordingly, the prior premodern spirit realm is considered delusional and filled with projections of the mind instead of material proofs. As will be seen when using Historian’s Rules in Chapter Five, the closer one gets to Eyewitness Accounts, the closer to historicity one arrives. As an example, Peter Kreeft and Ronald K. Tacelli write:

If you pit Paul of Tarsus, John the Evangelist, Justin Martyr, Clement of Alexandria, John Damascene, Origen, Augustine, John Chrysostom, Boethius, Erigena, Anselm, Abelard, Aquinas, Bonaventura, Scotus, Ockham, Nicholas of Cusa, Cajetan, Luther, Calvin, Kepler, Ignatius Loyola, Dante, da Vinci, Michelangelo, Descartes, Pascal, Leibniz, Berkeley, Copernicus, Newton, Kierkegaard, Newman, Pasteur, Jaspers, Marcel, Galileo, Tolstoy, Chesterton, Dostoyevsky, T. S. Eliot, and C. S. Lewis against Machiavelli, Hobbes, Renan, Freud, Darwin, Marx, La Mettrie, Skinner, Nietzsche, Sartre, Bertrand Russell, Ayer, Paine, and the ACLU, it would hardly be a fair fight.¹⁷²

The “fight” is an issue of defending either the Supernaturalist or Antisupernaturalist worldview. Thereunder, the opposing worldview does each apologetic argument, beginning with epistemology.

The Premodern Period

The epistemic differences between the Medieval and Modern periods are emphatic when considering their impacts on philosophy and theology. The logical mutual exclusivity of a

¹⁷¹ Evans, *Apologetics & Philosophy*, 105.

¹⁷² Kreeft and Tacelli, *Christian Apologetics*, 157.

“porous” self (vulnerable to spirits, demons, and cosmic forces) and the “buffered” self (bounded, making disengagement possible) leading up and through the Enlightenment is a matter of seemed physical control over actual spiritual boundaries that govern experience over either mere theory or belief.¹⁷³ While for Descartes, God is necessary, Cartesianism does not rely on God for its reasoning usefulness. On the other hand, Pascal was critical of the emerging cultic faith exchange for a reason.

Blaise Pascal (AD 1623–1662)

Pascal was born in Clermont, France. His widowed mathematician father provided his only formal education, a unique arrangement in the seventeenth century for those of Pascal’s social stature. Unfortunately, Pascal also suffered from poor health most of his life.¹⁷⁴

Pascal was a follower of the Roman Catholic Church but also a Jansenist.¹⁷⁵ Cross and Livingstone write, “Jansenism is summed up in five propositions...(1) that without a special grace from God the performance of His commandments is impossible to men, and (2) that the operation of grace is irresistible; and hence, that man is the victim of either a natural or a supernatural determinism, limited only by not being violently coercive. This theological pessimism was expressed in the general harshness and moral rigorism of the movement.”¹⁷⁶ Like the Reformation Protestants conflict (since the AD 1517 split) and TULIP Calvinists today, the Roman Catholic Church remains doctrinally opposed to Jansenism. Specifically, Jansenism and

¹⁷³ Kenneth D. Boa, *A Taste of the Classics: The Screwtape Letters, Paradise Lost, Confessions by Augustine & the Pursuit of God* (Westmont, IL: InterVarsity, 2012). Logos.

¹⁷⁴ Desmond Clarke, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* [Fall 2015], ed. Edward N. Zalta, accessed June 29, 2022, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2015/entries/pascal/>, s.v. “Blaise Pascal.”

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

¹⁷⁶ Cross and Livingstone, *Christian Church*, 867.

its determinism conflicted with the Roman Catholic Church's doctrine of sacramentally driven salvation. As in the case of the Reformation (Catholicism v. Protestantism), the battle against Jansenism raged from within. At the urging of the French Jesuit order, Pope Innocent X declared the tenets of Jansenism heretical via his 1653 papal bull *Cum occasione*.¹⁷⁷

Although Pascal's Father had home-schooled him in French,¹⁷⁸ Pascal wrote little compared to Descartes. Desmond Clarke writes, "Pascal did not publish any philosophical works during his relatively brief lifetime. His status in French literature today is based primarily on the posthumous publication of a notebook in which he drafted or recorded ideas for a planned defence of Christianity."¹⁷⁹ His work begins with his preface, "Profession of Faith," then migrates to various apologies, including "The Misery of Man Without God," "The Weakness, Unrest, and Defects of Man" then proceeds to describe "The Happiness of Man with God."

In this latter section, Pascal diverges from emerging reasoned Pre-Modernism. He wrote, "Their first Chapter is to prove Divinity by the works of nature. I should not be astonished...for those in whom this light is extinguished...men destitute of faith and grace...find only clouds and darkness...no man knows the Son but the Father, neither does anyone know the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son wishes to reveal him]...It is not of a light like the sun at noonday."¹⁸⁰ Contemporary scholarship views Pascal as attempting to synthesize Descartes with Christian apologetics.

¹⁷⁷ John M'Clintock and James Strong, *Cyclopædia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature* (New York, NY: Harper & Brothers, 1891), s.v. "Jansen(ius) Cornelius,".

¹⁷⁸ Clarke, "Pascal."

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

¹⁸⁰ Blaise Pascal, *The Thoughts of Blaise Pascal*, ed. M. Auguste Molinier, trans. C. Kegan Paul (London, U.K.: Trench, 2012), 89.

John M’Clintock and James Strong noted that Pascal applied Descartes to the difficult task of inductively defending prophecy and miracles beyond the evidence for God. They wrote, “[For Pascal] Grace is the only resource, faith the only refuge for reason convinced of its own impotence.”¹⁸¹ “Impotence” aids in launching the Modern period since full human autonomy becomes the antithesis of man’s helplessness.

Consequently, a philosophical gulf develops between the spiritually (upper, Creator) driven life through grace and the physical (lower, created) manufactured hyper-autonomy. As a result of the transition from Realism (universal) cf. Nominalism (particular word meaning owed only to cultural collections), Secularism arrives via Humanism. Such is prevalent in Benedict Spinoza’s philosophy.

The Modern Period

Benedict (Baruch) de Spinoza (AD 1632–1677)

Spinoza was a Portuguese-Jewish descendant and a pupil in Amsterdam’s Talmud Torah school. Spinoza embraced virtuosity while remaining contentious with religion. He wrote, “Ambition and unscrupulousness have waxed so powerful, that religion is thought to consist, not so much in respecting the writings of the Holy Ghost, as in defending human commentaries, so that religion is no longer identified with charity, but with spreading discord and propagating insensate hatred disguised under the name of zeal for the Lord, and eager ardor.”¹⁸² His beliefs and related teachings aided a split between Church and humanity.

¹⁸¹ M’Clintock and Strong, *Cyclopædia of Biblical*, s.v. “Pascal, Blaise,”.

¹⁸² Benedict Spinoza, *The Philosophy of Spinoza*, ed. Joseph Ratner (New York, NY: Tudor, Logos).

Succinctly, Spinoza's views do not sync with church doctrine. Keener writes, "Spinoza argued that miracles are self-contradictory, because...he viewed 'laws of Nature' as identical with God or God's will. Spinoza's approach was heavily indebted to Descartes, but whereas Theism was part of Descartes' approach, Spinoza seems to have adapted Cartesian methodology in light of pantheistic conceptions of medieval Kabbala."¹⁸³ Such conceptions caused his excommunication. Steven Nadler writes, "Spinoza was issued the harshest writ of *herem*, ban or excommunication, ever pronounced by the Sephardic community of Amsterdam...His extremely naturalistic views on God...serve to ground a moral philosophy centered on the control of the passions leading to virtue and happiness...and a deep critique of the pretensions of Scripture."¹⁸⁴ For Spinoza, at most a Deist, God is not there.

Moreover, the God who is not there is unnecessary. While Spinoza's initial metaphysical occupation began with a systematization of Descartes, it resulted in Atheism. George F. Holmes wrote regarding Spinoza that his "geometrical method is employed in...[AD] 1670 [whence] appeared his *Tractatus Theologico-politics*, which aroused a storm of violent denunciation, and was the chief cause of his being regarded by his contemporaries as the prince of atheists," [italics Holmes's]."¹⁸⁵ In any event, Spinoza was critical of a religiosity he viewed as hypocritical. Newton fits into this emerging theme of counter-ecclesia in philosophy.

¹⁸³ Keener, *Miracles*, 114.

¹⁸⁴ Steven Nadler, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta [Summer 2022], accessed June 16, 2022, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2022/entries/spinoza/>, s.v. "Baruch Spinoza,".

¹⁸⁵ George F. Holmes, *Cyclopædia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature* (New York, NY: Harper & Brothers, 1880), s.v. "Spinoza, Benedict De,".

Sir Isaac Newton (AD 1642–1727)

Newton was an English scientist, astronomer, alchemist, theologian, and author widely recognized as one of the chief mathematicians and physicists of all time. In addition, history notes him for his gravitational work and claims.

For purposes of the dissertation, Newton's philosophy warrants focus. Newton wrote, "Since the ancients (according to Pappus) considered *mechanics* to be of the greatest importance in the investigation of nature and science and since the moderns – rejecting substantial forms and occult qualities—have undertaken to reduce the phenomena of nature to mathematical laws, it has seemed best in this treatise to concentrate on *mathematics* as it relates to natural philosophy."¹⁸⁶ George Smith writes, "In his *Principia*, the single most important work in the transformation of early modern natural philosophy into modern physical science...leading figures as Christiaan Huygens and Leibniz, both of whom saw the theory as invoking an occult power of action at a distance in the absence of Newton's having proposed a contact mechanism by means of which forces of gravity could act."¹⁸⁷ Newton's God as an unmoved mover was not new but grounded in Aristotle.

¹⁸⁶ Isaac Newton, *The Principia* (1687, first edition) ed. Andrew Janiak, https://www-cambridge-org.ezproxy.liberty.edu/core/services/aopcambridgecore/content/view/B2B8DFD37E9DED17153B13293D09B9DA/9780511809293c3_p40-93_CBO.pdf/principia_1687_first_edition.pdf.

¹⁸⁷ George Smith, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* [Fall 2008], ed. Edward N. Zalta, accessed February 22, 2022, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2008/entries/newton/>, s.v. "Isaac Newton,".

Nonetheless, Newton suffered the charge of Christian Heterodoxy, namely, Gnosticism¹⁸⁸ and Arianism¹⁸⁹ (the Son of God is not co-eternal with the Father but begotten of God within time) and thus, not holding to trinitarianism.¹⁹⁰ Like Descartes, Newton was not an Antisupernaturalist, however.¹⁹¹ Keener writes, “Isaac Newton, Robert Boyle, and others envisioned laws in nature ‘only because there had been a Legislator,’ and expressly insisted ‘that God was free to change them.’”¹⁹² Arianism notwithstanding, Newton’s view of Man as entirely reliant upon God’s absolute sovereignty, but like the Reformers, includes God’s ability to change His Word. Science, namely Physics, is the focal point.

Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (AD 1646–1716)

About Physics, Leibniz thought the gaps between the fundamental components of matter are rationalizable. He advanced Cartesianism into the secular realm of metaphysics, pursuing a similar learning philosophy to Descartes, concluding that reality is knowable. Leibniz wrote, “It

¹⁸⁸ Edwin M. Yamauchi, *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, ed. Gerald F. Hawthorne, Ralph P. Martin, and Daniel G. Reid, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1993), s.v. “Gnosis, Gnosticism,”; Yamauchi writes, “The Gnostics were followers of a variety of religious movements which stressed salvation through *gnōsis*, or ‘knowledge,’ that is, of one’s origins. Cosmological dualism was an essential feature of Gnosticism—an opposition between the spiritual world and the evil, material world. Gnosticism was attacked in the writings of the church fathers, who regarded the various gnostic groups as heretical perversions of Christianity. Modern scholars believe that Gnosticism was a religious phenomenon which was in some cases independent of Christianity.

¹⁸⁹ Edwin M. Yamauchi, *Dictionary of New Testament Background: A Compendium of Contemporary Biblical Scholarship* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000), s.v. “Gnosticism,”; Yamauchi writes, “*Gnosticism* is a term that designates a variety of religious movements that stressed salvation through *gnōsis*, or ‘knowledge,’ that is, of one’s origins. Most scholars would identify as an essential of Gnosticism the element of cosmological dualism—an opposition between the spiritual world and the evil, material world.”

¹⁹⁰ Graham Keith, “Review of Early Arianism—a View of Salvation by Robert C. Gregg and Denis E. Groh,” *Themelios*, 7 no. 2 [1982]: 29.

¹⁹¹ William H. Austin, “Isaac Newton on Science and Religion,” *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 31 no. 4 [1970]: 521–42; Newton’s Religious Writings, accessed February 19, 2022. <https://www.newtonproject.ox.ac.uk/texts/newtons-works/religious>.

¹⁹² Keener, *Miracles*, 121–123.

is agreed that whatever God wills is good and just. However, there remains the question of whether it is good and just because God wills it or whether God wills it because it is good and just: in other words, whether justice and goodness are arbitrary or whether they belong to the necessary and eternal truths about the nature of things, as do numbers and proportions.”¹⁹³

George F. Holmes writes, “Leibnitz was essentially a Cartesian...in his fundamental principles...mode of analysis and abstraction...by mathematical demonstration...from presumptive principles...not wholly negligent of experience.”¹⁹⁴ For Leibniz, physical construction and impacts in the spiritual realm are metaphysics. Likewise, others employed the Cartesian method leading up to and beyond the Enlightenment.

John Locke (AD 1634–1703)

Locke was a British Oxford academic, philosopher, and medical researcher. Politically, Locke believed that life, liberty, health, and property as primary to individual civil interests, thus remaining the proper concern of civil government.¹⁹⁵ He challenged the transcendent divine right of kings in the context of a natural social contract to include engagement in commerce.¹⁹⁶ Such ideas include color, taste, and smell gleaned via personal interactive perception.

¹⁹³ Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, *Political Writings*, 2nd Edition (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 45.

¹⁹⁴ George F. Holmes, *Cyclopædia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature* (New York, NY: Harper & Brothers, 1882), s.v. “Leibnitz, Gottfried Wilhelm,”.

¹⁹⁵ Alex Tuckness, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* [Winter 2020], ed. Edward N. Zalta, [https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2020/entries/locke-political.](https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2020/entries/locke-political/), s.v. “Locke’s Political Philosophy,”.

¹⁹⁶ Alexander Moseley, “John Locke: Political Philosophy,” accessed June 10, 2022, <https://iep.utm.edu/locke-po/>; Morley writes, “Locke proposed a radical conception of political philosophy deduced from the principle of self-ownership and the corollary right to own property, which in turn is based on his famous claim that a man earns ownership over a resource when he mixes his labour with it.”

Locke was a Cartesian Realist in his questioning and a Nominalist in processing word meanings.¹⁹⁷ Locke wrote, “From what has been said in the foregoing chapters, it is easy to perceive what imperfection there is in language, and how the very nature of words makes it almost unavoidable for many of them to be doubtful and uncertain in their significations...First, One for the recording of our own thoughts. Secondly, the other for the communicating of our thoughts to others.”¹⁹⁸ Locke focused on secondary qualities of communication.

These include ideas. According to Alexander Mosely, Locke thought, “our ideas of secondary qualities do not resemble the powers that cause them...the powers that one substance has to effect [sic]another, e.g., the power of a fire to melt a piece of wax...He is also puzzled about what material and immaterial substances might have in common that would lead us to apply the same word to both...For we have no experience of that supporting substance.”¹⁹⁹ The exact process expands to question physics empirically.

On the one hand, physical substances are atoms. On the other hand, we have no experience with the atomic structure of things such as horses and tables. The atomic constitution of a horse cannot derive its meaning from the horse’s essence. Instead, ideas beget more ideas nominally. Locke provides a more apparent synthesis between Realism and Nominalism outside Theism.

Namely, the ideas that comprise our nominal essences derive from experience and are individualized, explaining why different people hold substantially different ideas regarding the essence of a given substance, including demons. For Locke, differences in word language, usage,

¹⁹⁷ Jan-Erik Jones, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* [Fall 2022], ed. Edward N. Zalta and Uri Nodelman, [https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2022/entries/real-essence.](https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2022/entries/real-essence/), s.v. “Locke on Real Essence.”

¹⁹⁸ Locke, *An Essay*, 104.

¹⁹⁹ Moseley, “Locke.”

and meaning yield a cessation of communication only ameliorated by improvements to knowledge and understanding. Such perfections are more precise and determinate, albeit abstract ideas of others as expressed and understood by the hearer.

For example, while whales and fish swim (Realism), each retains its qualities (Nominalism). Most importantly, those substantial and substantive differences drive whether things fit our ideas or whether our ideas correspond to the nature of things. So, on the one hand, are ideas of mathematics, morality, religion, politics, and human conventions. On the other hand, is both theological and philosophical trepidation over the priority of either experience or deductive certainty. This phenomenon includes engagement by those self-identifying as Christian while rejecting the supernatural, as explained in Chapter Four and demonstrated in Chapter Five.

Humanism and Modernity

The ensuing secularist philosophy reflects a hopeful autonomy. According to Taylor, society has lost core spiritual beliefs and practices.²⁰⁰ Although another dimension (realm viewed as possible or even probable, society has been “buffered” from far firmer “psychic and physical” boundaries. Using Taylor’s words, the shift means the once “enchanted world” (of Medieval times past) where people lived no longer includes any “magic.” The world has shed anything deemed irrational, trading Medieval mysticism for Humanism. Taylor thinks society and culture migrated towards inoculated beliefs, which he calls the “ethics of belief,” to refrain from sinning against science by bantering about such silly notions as a spirit world.²⁰¹

²⁰⁰ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 570.

²⁰¹ Ibid, 519, 547.

Humanism was a positive philosophy that viewed man as a rational and perceptive being who can decide and think for himself. It viewed man as inherently good by nature, which was in tension with the Christian view of man as an original sinner needing grace. Humanism provoked fresh insight into the nature of reality, questioning beyond God and spirituality and providing some knowledge about history beyond Christian history.²⁰²

Reformers were principally concerned with the unseen source of those ideas. The biblical teaching, therefore, opposes the Platonic, which makes the soul (the “upper”) very important and leaves the body (the “lower”) with little importance at all.”²⁰³ For Reformers, while segregation exists between Creator and the created, the created does not deserve disdain. Alternatively, Christian Nominalists break from Realists regarding word meanings. Christian Nominalists, process word meanings befitting a worldview reflecting the Humanism pre-requisite to Modernism. Such individual assessment of authority is attributable to Kant.

Immanuel Kant (AD 1724–1804)

Kant was a German philosopher of the Age of Enlightenment. He is one of the most influential thinkers of modern Europe, and his influence on Western thought is immeasurable. He was the starting point and inspiration for the German Idealism movement in the late Eighteenth and early Nineteenth Centuries, and more specifically for Kantianism, which grew up around him during his lifetime. Idealism or Kantianism is the theory that reality is ideas or

²⁰² Austin Kline, “Humanism & Evil, Philosophy of Religion in Humanism,” accessed November 11, 2021, https://www.crsd.org/cms/lib5/PA01000188/Centricity/Domain/667/English/Nature%20of%20Mankind/Humanism%20and%20Evil_Philosophy%20of%20Religion%20in%20Humanism.pdf.

²⁰³ Schaeffer, *Escape*, 58.

thoughts.²⁰⁴ Man can never be confident that matter or anything in the outside world exists.

Kant's works, especially those on Epistemology, Metaphysics, and Ethics, such as his masterworks the *Critique of Pure Reason* and the *Critique of Practical Reason*, achieved a complete paradigm shift and moved philosophy beyond the debate between the Rationalists and Empiricists.²⁰⁵

At this juncture, the reader must consider Kant's moral philosophy. Kant wrote, "Freedom...is the only one of all the ideas of the speculative reason of which we know the possibility a priori (without, however, understanding it) because it is the condition of the moral law which we know. The ideas of God and immortality, however, are not conditions of the moral law, but only conditions of the necessary object of a will determined by this law; that is to say, conditions of the practical use of our pure reason."²⁰⁶ Kant asserted that moral judgment over a choice is a duty, not based upon the outcome.

Kant was a Realist that generally reflected Descartes. However, Kant declined to follow Descartes' rationale to conclude God. Carl F. H. Henry thought Secularism retained inherent limitations providing both philosophers as his example. Henry wrote, "modern philosophy and science sought to anchor elsewhere: Descartes and Kant in *a priori* reasoning...which would presumably lead to scientific metaphysics. Yet philosophers of science were driven to concede

²⁰⁴ Efraim Lazos, "Kant's Reaction to Cartesian Skepticism," in *Recht und Frieden in der Philosophie Kants*, ed. Valerio Rohden, Ricardo R. Terra, Guido A. de Almeida, and Margit Ruffing (Berlin, New York: De Gruyter, 2008), 469–480.

²⁰⁵ Henning Graf Reventlow, *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1992), 1043, s.v. "Scriptural Authority: Biblical Authority in the Wake of the Enlightenment."

²⁰⁶ Immanuel Kant, *The Critique of Practical Reason*, ed. Thomas Kingsmill Abbott, Floating, <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/lib/liberty/detail.action?docID=432132>.

that no number of confirming or verifying instances can prove any theory true.”²⁰⁷ On the one hand, secularists think the most fundamental concepts of life, such as space, time, and purpose, are dealt with naturally.

Carson affirms this conclusion. Carson writes, “In the world it is called Tolerance, but in hell it is called Despair...the sin that believes in nothing, cares for nothing, seeks to know nothing, interferes with nothing, enjoys nothing, hates nothing, finds purpose in nothing, lives for nothing, and remains alive because there is nothing for which it will die.”²⁰⁸ Carson illustrates the modern difference between Christian Theism and modern Secularism.

On the other hand, while everything is knowable, not all things may be known, including someone else’s preferred word meaning. Schaeffer clarified this by writing, “Above the line the new theologian has undefined words. The ‘leap theology’ centers everything in the undefined word. Tillich, as an example, spoke of the ‘God behind God’—with the first word ‘God’ totally undefined. The defined words in the area of science and history are below the line; up above, there are only connotation words...they *are* undefined.”²⁰⁹ The challenge for Christian philosophers and apologists pursuing demonology is first to be aware that the Nominalist evolution of word meaning, and intent has led to circular secularist defenses. Relativism necessarily includes negating a word’s traditional meaning replaced with a preferred word meaning.

First, Modernists believe that if one follows Cartesian logic, one can ascertain absolute truth, albeit only in math, science, and nature. Descartes sought certainty in vetting claims.

²⁰⁷ Henry, *God, Revelation*, 174.

²⁰⁸ Carson, *Gagging of God*, 53.

²⁰⁹ Schaeffer, *Escape from Reason*, 241.

Second, noted agnostic Dale C. Allison Jr. thinks Descartes battled what Allison terms ironically “the demon of doubt” via his foundationalism. Allison writes, again ironically, that Descartes “located a foundation stone (the *cogito*) and then set upon it allegedly indubitable item of knowledge after allegedly indubitable item of knowledge. He built his house upon the rock, so that when the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat upon that house, it would not fall, because it had been founded on the rock [Italics Allison’s].”²¹⁰ Thus, Secular Humanists/Naturalists and Theists find common ground to understand one another without agreement. That agreement may not include what is depicted by Allison’s use of the word “demon,” as the reader of the dissertation comes to understand the particularism of Nominalism and its early impacts upon language.

For now, rejection of the supernatural is also the logical secularist conclusion of doing self-preservation *sans* authority. Christian Fundamentalism is Cartesian and, thus, Realist in that certain things are knowable by investigating doubt.²¹¹ Nonetheless, according to some philosophers, including Descartes, innate knowledge exists.

Evans argues that the certainty of some truths is knowable on an *a priori* basis. He writes, “Descartes, in particular, described those truths that are self-evident (clear and distinct to human reason) as truths that we know by ‘natural light.’ This metaphor is partly a survival of the strong emphasis in the medieval period on knowledge as the result of the divine illumination of the mind.”²¹² Augustus Hopkins Strong synthesizes:

²¹⁰ Dale C. Allison Jr., “A Plea for Thoroughgoing Eschatology,” *Journal of Biblical Literature*, no. 113 [1994]: 664–65.

²¹¹ George Marsden, “Spurring on Secularism,” *Christian History Magazine* 55: *The Monkey Trial & the Rise of Fundamentalism* (Carol Stream, IL: Christianity Today, 1997), Logos.

²¹² Evans, *Apologetics & Philosophy*, 78–79.

Descartes' said that God could have made it untrue that the radii of a circle are all equal. Lord Bacon said that Adam's sin consisted in seeking a good in itself...If God can make truth to be falsehood, and injustice to be justice, then God is indifferent to truth or falsehood, to good or evil, and he ceases thereby to be God. Truth is not arbitrary—it is matter of being—the being of God...God knows and wills truth, because he is truth.²¹³

However, the culmination of Modernist impacts leaves little comfort for the human condition.

Despair

Frank Breslin finds exceeding despair in the Modernist worldview, primarily due to its reason-centric epistemology. He writes, "It has been said that the truth is sometimes sad. Now, who is there who can say that modern philosophy is true, but for those who *believe* that it is, there is much sadness. It was as though certain experiences had driven them to a point where they needed to understand modern philosophy to understand themselves, as if, contrary to what is usually supposed, it is not the mind that seeks understanding, but the heart. [*italics Breslin's*]." ²¹⁴ In its evaluation of Modernism, especially within the context of emerging Modernist Antisupernaturalism, the dissertation must also consider the possible material sources of human emotional realities such as disappointment and despair.

David Hume (AD 1711–1776)

Hume was a Scottish philosopher, economist, and influential figure in the Scottish Enlightenment. Central to grasping Hume's philosophical system is the "Origin of ideas," and how we can make inductive inferences (reasoning from the observed behavior of objects to their

²¹³ Augustus Hopkins Strong, *Systematic Theology* (Philadelphia, PA: American Baptist, 1907), 262–263.

²¹⁴ Frank Breslin, "What is Modern Philosophy?," accessed January 18, 2022, <https://epochmagazine.org/23/what-is-modern-philosophy/>.

unobserved behavior).²¹⁵ Hume wrote, “And as reasoning is not the source, whence either disputant derives his tenets; it is in vain to expect, that any logic, which speaks not to the affections, will ever engage him to embrace sounder principles.”²¹⁶ Hume noted that humans tend to believe that things behave regularly and that patterns in the behavior of objects will persist into the future and throughout the unobserved present (the Principle of the Uniformity of Nature).²¹⁷

Notably, Hume argued that such a belief could not be justified other than by the reasoning under question (induction), which would be circular reasoning. Hume argued that inductive reasoning and causality are not rationally justifiable. Instead, habits experientially drive belief. Hume’s solution to this problem was to argue that instinct, rather than reason, explains our ability to make inductive inferences. Moreover, miracles are no more probable than the laws of nature.²¹⁸ For these reasons, Hume spurned supernaturalism and added to modernity’s rejection of the incorporeal with the ultimate secularization of the West by AD 1800.

Nevertheless, some scholars argue that Hume was no atheist. For example, Timothy S. Yoder concludes, “Hume challenges some of the arguments for the existence of God, but

²¹⁵ James Orr, *David Hume and His Influence on Philosophy and Theology*, ed. Oliphant Smeaton, The World’s Epoch-Makers (New York, NY: Scribner, 1903), 104–105.

²¹⁶ Andrew Valls et al, “Of the General Principles of Morals,” in *David Hume on Morals, Politics, and Society*, ed. Angela Conventry and Andrew Valls (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2018), 3–7.

²¹⁷ Evans, *A History*, 342–343; Gene Edward Veith, *State of the Arts: From Bezalel to Mapplethorpe* (Wheaton IL: Crossway, 1991), 69–70; Gene Edward Veith, *Painters of Faith: The Spiritual Landscape in Nineteenth-century America* (Lanham, MD: National Book Network, 2001), 59.

²¹⁸ Reventlow, “Scriptural Authority,” 1040.

repeatedly in his writings, he affirms God's existence and speculates about God's nature."²¹⁹

Morality and ethics, whether viewed in terms of a God or social construct, epistemology navigated the Enlightenment. *Sola scriptura* is not under consideration, however. Philosophers of the Enlightenment Period advocated ethics, but do they originate from God? Hume reflects early secular Antisupernaturalism in his views.²²⁰

Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (AD 1770–1831)

Hegel was a German philosopher of the early Modern period. He was a leading figure in the German Idealism movement in the early Nineteenth Century. Although his ideas went far beyond earlier Kantianism, he founded his school of Hegelianism.²²¹ Hegel wrote, “Geist [is] in its true, fully thought-through reality—liberated from natural and self-imposed thresholds of oblivion.”²²² Pearcey writes, “Hegel’s pantheism was secularized and his Absolute Spirit was reduced to a metaphor—the spirit of the age, the *Zeitgeist*. (In German, *Zeit* means time or age; *geist* means spirit.)...individuals are ‘unconscious tools’ of the *Zeitgeist*...not *producers* of culture...[however] *products* of a particular culture...shaped by the communities they belong to, each with its own shared perspective, values, habits, language, and forms of life.”²²³ Geisler thought Hegel’s dialectic theory inspired the Dialectical Materialism of Karl Heinrich Marx (AD 1818–1883) and Marxism.²²⁴

²¹⁹ Timothy S. Yoder, “Hume’s Conclusions on the Existence and Nature of God,” Marquette University Press, accessed September 5, 2021, <https://publications.marquette.edu/dissertations/AAI3184687/>.

²²⁰ Keener, *Miracles*, 121–123.

²²¹ Carson and Woodbridge, *Scripture and Truth*, 180–181.

²²² G. W. F. Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Spirit* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2019), 409.

²²³ Pearcey, *Finding Truth*, “How Nietzsche Wins,” Logos.

²²⁴ Geisler, *Baker Encyclopedia*, s.v. “Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich,”.

Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche (AD 1844–1900)

Nietzsche was the Nineteenth Century German philosopher and philologist who birthed the transition from Modernism to Postmodernism.²²⁵ He is considered an essential forerunner of the Existentialism movement (although he does not fall neatly into any specific school of Existentialism).²²⁶ However, he challenged the foundations of Christianity and traditional morality. While appearing Modernist, Nietzsche was predominately Existentialist in that “essence” belongs to categories. For example, the “essence” of a tree is wood. Wood is wood, and gold is gold. Existence precedes essence, however.

Perhaps his most notable quote is “God is dead,” leading to charges of Atheism, Moral Skepticism, Relativism, and Nihilism (the theory that “being,” especially past and current human existence, is without objective meaning).²²⁷ Nietzsche considered himself an “immoralist.”²²⁸ He treasured natural values over the values of Judeo-Christianity. He advanced Secularism, if not Cynicism, in the West for these reasons and philosophies into the twentieth century.

²²⁵ Steven D. Boyer and Christopher A. Hall, *The Mystery of God: Theology for Knowing the Unknowable* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2012), 66–67; Don Cupitt, *Is Nothing Sacred? The Non-Realist Philosophy of Religion* (New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 2002), 34. Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, “On Truth and Lie in a Nonmoral Sense” (1873), *Philosophy and Truth: Selections from Nietzsche’s Notebooks of the Early 1870s*, trans. Daniel Breazeale, ed. Daniel Breazeale (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities, 1979), 88.

²²⁶ James Montgomery Boice, *Foundations of the Christian Faith: A Comprehensive & Readable Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1986), 120–121.

²²⁷ Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, *Sprach Zarathustra: ein Buch für Alle und Keinen*, (Leipzig: Druck und Verlag von C. G. Naumann, 1901) Logos; Geisler, *Baker Encyclopedia*, s.v. “Altizer, Thomas J. J.,”.

²²⁸ David P. Gushee, *The Sacredness of Human Life: Why an Ancient Biblical Vision Is Key to the World’s Future* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2013), 287.

Martin Heidegger (AD 1889–1976)

Heidegger was a highly controversial German philosopher. His best-known book *Being and Time*, is considered one of the most important philosophical works of the Twentieth Century, yet difficult to understand.²²⁹ However, his outspoken early support for the Fascist Nazi regime in Germany obscured his significance.²³⁰ Although often considered a founder of Existentialism, Heidegger vehemently rejected the association, while drawing physics into essence. Heidegger wrote, “Why is Western ‘philosophy’ in its essence metaphysics? Because in the *ground* of its essence, it is ‘physics.’ And to what extent, and why, is Western philosophy ‘physics?’ ‘Physics’ here means knowledge (preservation of the truth) of φύσις. Φύσις is the determination of being found at the commencement, and that therefore reigns throughout the entire history of Western philosophy.”²³¹ For Heidegger, *Dasein* is “being” in the sense of “there.”²³² There are other philosophers and scholars to consider in the definition.

For example, Erich Przywara, in an attempt to define *Dasein* in a way that points to Simone Weil’s anti-metaphysical romantic Christian thought, presents Jean-Paul Sartre’s

²²⁹ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, (New York, NY: HarperCollins, 2008); S. J. McGrath, *Heidegger: A (Very) Critical Introduction*, ed. Conor Cunningham and Peter Candler, *Interventions* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008), viii–ix.

²³⁰ McGrath, *Heidegger*, 2–3.

²³¹ Martin Heidegger, William McNeill, and Jeffrey Powell, *The History of Being*, (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2015), 6.

²³² George R. Beasley-Murray, *John*, Vol. 36, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas, TX: Thomas Nelson, 1999), cxxxi.

interpretation of “existential.”²³³ In any event, Heidegger was a Secular Naturalist/Humanist promoter in the West.

Living Below the Line of Despair

Naturalism inevitably leads to Antisupernaturalism cohering with contemporaneous conditions of the church. The church deployed pro-active supernaturalism to avert an intermediate lapse into Fideism. This transitional step traversed a tightrope from hyper-Rationalism to special revelation between secular Postmodernism and the church gleaned sound theology. The church’s answer to a theistic philosophy *sans* the supernatural was Liberalism, as explained in Chapter Four and demonstrated in Chapter Five. The Theists’ answer was Thomas Reid’s commonsense Realism.²³⁴ Culture’s answer was and is a pluralist theology, whereby everybody in society is entitled to personal truth about God. The claim that one or another can never reach a universal and absolute truth birthed Postmodern nonsense.

Namely, in Medieval and up to modernist society, the Resurrection was regarded as a fact, even though not everybody believed the Resurrection was true.²³⁵ Today, the engine of individual preference, driven by values over truth, is driving the bus, including morals becoming a matter of preference, like whether to watch a basketball or football game. John Beversluis writes:

²³³ Erich Przywara, *Analogia Entis: Metaphysics: Original Structure and Universal Rhythm*, trans. John R. Betz and David Bentley Hart (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2014), 600; In this section of his work Przywara is seeking to compare Edith Stein and Simone Weil as to their basic philosophical themes which he sees as closer to one another than most scholars believe. Przywara believes that there is a close connection between the pure Essentialism of Stein and the pure Existentialism of Weil.

²³⁴ Philip E. Devine, “What Is Naturalism?” *Philosophia Christi*, 8 no. 1 [2006]: 125–40.

²³⁵ Henry, *God, Revelation*, 35; Mickey L. Mattox, “Christology in Martin Luther’s Lectures on Hebrews,” in *Christology, Hermeneutics, and Hebrews: Profiles from the History of Interpretation*, ed. Jon C. Laansma and Daniel J. Treier (New York, NY: T&T Clark, 2012), 108.

Atheism is “too simple,” naturalism is “self-contradictory,” and Materialism is “a philosophy for the nursery” to say nothing of ethical relativism, which reduces moral judgments to “mere subjective preference” like a “fondness for pancakes or a dislike for spam,” or theological Liberalism, whose denial that Jesus was God logically commits its exponents to saying that he was a lunatic “on the same level with the man who says he is a poached egg.”²³⁶

The fact/values line has migrated from a just certitude to a location where nothing other than mathematics and empirical science can produce facts. In this environment, the Resurrection becomes a religious preference instead of a fact. All religious claims beyond the Enlightenment’s “leap of faith” now reside under Postmodernism. Postmodernity lives in a neverland where people’s preferred beliefs eclipse the truth. Meanwhile, the church seeks a counter-migration of its religious claims back to the truth side of the ledger, where personal preferences transcend truth.

Preferences are not reality. Newbigin wrote, “in the terms of post-Enlightenment thought—there could be no logically viable move from ‘is’ to ‘ought,’ the past 250 years have seen numerous attempts to find a basis for moral judgments somewhere else.”²³⁷ That “somewhere else” is society through culture. That “somewhere else” offers virtually anyone an affirmation, “we are glad you found something that works for you, [mine]” on the value side of the ledger. Smith writes, “Movies, speeches, novels, documents of all kinds, and other cultural artifacts all presuppose a certain worldview...false ideas about reality.”²³⁸ All positions become culturally defensible. Absolute truth need not apply. Postmodernism disregards any notions of

²³⁶ John Beversluis, “Beyond the Double Bolted Door,” *Christian History Magazine 7: C.S. Lewis: His Life, Thought & Theology* (Worcester, PA: Christian History Institute, 1985), Logos.

²³⁷ Newbigin, *Foolishness*, 36.

²³⁸ Smith, *Worldview*, 127.

universal truth, including the absolute existence of a classic supernatural. Thereunder remains requisite denial of any absolute truth about truth, relegating truth as subjective.

Why the Ontology of Thoughts is Pivotal to Epistemology and Epistemology is Critical to Worldview

Epistemology may be presupposed as a process or maybe presupposed as existing innately. Regarding the latter, such processes include the proposition of biblical veracity. Doctrine, either scripturally based or otherwise, reflects personal preference usurping whatever epistemological foundations precede.

For example, following the Middle Ages and during the subsequent Enlightenment period, whereas once ancient superstitious Medieval prevailing enchantment existed, modern philosophy disregarded superstition and religion for a reason. Accompanying Enlightenment thinking does its philosophy/theology *sans* God. Belief in the supernatural requiring a “leap of faith” critically fails both in terms of Scripture and science, as ultimately reflected by secular culture’s rejection of piety. Secular culture and its attitude are best demonstrated by briefly viewing cultural shifts toward liberal arts.

Art and Worldview

For example, in France, Fouquet (c. AD 1416–1480), in about AD 1450, painted the king’s mistress, Agnes Sorel, as Mary. However, the painting depicted Mary with her breast exposed. Schaeffer wrote, “Whereas before it would have been Mary feeding the baby Jesus, now it is the king’s mistress with one breast exposed—and grace is dead...when nature is made autonomous [*sans* God], it is destructive...authority of an autonomous realm. . .[where] the lower element begins to eat up the higher.”²³⁹ Looking at art through Schaeffer’s lens helps

²³⁹ Schaeffer, *Escape*, 21.

comprehend culture through art in that art is prescriptive. Namely, art tells its viewer(s) what is essential in the world.

Comparatively, the viewer can discern that the Medieval artist tells the audience that the Christian faith is essential. Medieval artists expressed their worldviews by painting an idealized version religiously. Consider a Byzantine icon brought to Venice in 1349 that depicts Mary and baby Jesus. In the Eastern Orthodox tradition, from around the sixth century until the present, the child Jesus looks like a little man.²⁴⁰ Upon observation, it is noticeable that “Baby Jesus” sports facial wrinkles and a receding hairline. The artist is telling Christians how they should think in reverence of God. While Medieval painters reflected how one should piously feel, Modern painters convey their perspective, how the artist feels. Personal Impressionism replaces expressed reverence.

For example, painter Jackson Pollock (AD 1912–1956) expressed a modern secular worldview, very different from those expressed in Medieval paintings. Pollock replaced the piety of Byzantine expressions with expressions of his personal outlook. Pearcey writes, “Pollock...the abstract expressionist...went further by abandoning all compositional conventions...no focal point, no discernable relationships between the parts, no distinction between figure and ground—in fact, no bounded figure at all, whether representational or abstract.”²⁴¹ This is what Pearcey describes as “chaos.” Chaos comports with the Big Bang Theory and Materialism over reflecting pietism relaying Fundamentalist thoughts of the early twentieth century. Pollock’s worldview comes from whatever Pollock is feeling convicted to

²⁴⁰ The Conversation, “Baby Jesus in Art and the Long Tradition of Depicting Christ as a Man-child,” accessed July 15, 2022, <https://theconversation.com/baby-jesus-in-art-and-the-long-tradition-of-depicting-christ-as-a-man-child-127812>.

²⁴¹ Pearcey, *Leonardo*, 272.

feel. Material chaos makes the Modernist more comfortable with reality than Theist Creation, and art reflects that worldview.

Whether done in a theology of idealized Realism (Jesus piously sporting a receding hairline) or idealized eroticism (Mary depicted as the king's mistress with her breast exposed), art reflects the Skepticism of despair. Epistemology instructs an acceptable, albeit often subjective individualized reality (arithmetic and science-driven) over scriptural absolutism. For example, Francis Halsall writes, "To account for...chaotic structure... Pollock's claim of 'no chaos'...provides evidence of an internal structure, an order within the chaos."²⁴² Realism cf. Nominalism, Abstraction cf. Nominalism, Antisupernaturalism cf. Nominalism is seen in both visual art and music simultaneously in culture. For now, note that the fluidity of contemporaneous word definition cf. traditional meanings yields hypocrisy via self-contradictory statements.

Specifically, in the same article, the same writer (Francis Halsall) in support of Pollock also argues, "This is undoubtedly a consequence of their abstraction...disintegration of the traditional pictorial distinction between figure and ground, multiplicities of (sometimes contradictory) readings present themselves...the baffled audience of the 1950s, they are nothing but an inchoate mess."²⁴³ In short, Halsall argues that Pollock reflects creation not scripturally but from a Big Bang Theory that is simply a theory yet fundamental, circular logic via redefining chaos.

²⁴² Francis Halsall, "Chaos, Fractals, and the Pedagogical Challenge of Jackson Pollack's 'All Over' Paintings," accessed July 16, 2022, [https://www.jstor.org/page-scan-delivery/get-page-scan/25160299/0ackson pollack](https://www.jstor.org/page-scan-delivery/get-page-scan/25160299/0ackson%20pollack).

²⁴³ Ibid.

Art reflects the culture of the age. Theology reflects the culture of the age. Music migrates similarly to art in reflection of culture.²⁴⁴ Schaeffer wrote, “We have studied our exegesis as exegesis, our theology as theology, our philosophy as philosophy; we study something about art as art; we study music as music, without understanding that these are things of man, and the things of man are not unrelated parallel lines.”²⁴⁵ While defensible by Pythagorean mathematical arguments, particularly when combined with non-supernaturally ordered chaos, the modernist apology position remains unduplicatable and only defensible circularly.

Music and Worldview

The Antisupernaturalist/materialist worldview and resultant philosophical/theological/atheistic (or at least agnostic) product extend to music. The music falls beyond the arithmetic Pythagorean theorem. Such is particularly identifiable when comparing the scores of Beethoven cf. Mozart, for example, and within the viewpoint of Igor Stravinsky. Comparatively, “Mozart was...marked by clarity, balance, simplicity, and precision. The sound of each note is very clear and pleasant to the ears...creating music that is comfortable and very light...Beethoven, on the other hand...was a fan of Mozart and wanted to study with him but...the sound of his music is marked by variations and changes...harder to play for those who are not technically skilled as it was written with the ruthlessness that marked his personality.”²⁴⁶ While the Theist cannot ignore skill and talent, modernity ignores the transcendental.

²⁴⁴ Schaeffer, *Escape*, 58.

²⁴⁵ Ibid, 17.

²⁴⁶ “Difference Between Mozart and Beethoven,” accessed August 20, 2022, <http://www.differencebetween.net/miscellaneous/culture-miscellaneous/difference-between-mozart-and-beethoven/>.

Newbigin saw a balance. Newbigin wrote, “A great pianist must, at the proper time, concentrate all possible attention on the precise detail of finger movements. But if she attends to these alone while playing a sonata at a concert, the result will be disaster. While she plays, all her mind and soul must be wrapped up in the glory of the music, completely forgetting the finger work. And yet she will lose the glory of the music if she has not done the finger work.”²⁴⁷ For Newbigin, the interaction of the natural and the supernatural drives accomplishment.

Schaeffer agreed in his commentary regarding the loss of such hope via modernity. He wrote, “Modern man continues to hang on to his rationalism and his autonomous revolt even though to do so he has had to abandon any rational hope of a unified answer. Previously, educated men would not give up rationality and the hope of the unified field of knowledge. Modern man has given up his hope of unity and lives in despair—the despair of no longer thinking that what has always been the aspiration of men is at all possible.”²⁴⁸ As made evident, variations in music styles, like art, are not subjective but prescriptive. Moreover, beauty is not in the eye of the beholder as is commonly accepted by modernity.

Composer and pianist Igor Stravinsky (AD 1882–1971) challenged modern music in his autobiography. Stravinsky wrote, “I consider that music is, by its very nature, essentially powerless to express anything at all, whether a feeling, an attitude of mind, a psychological mood, a phenomenon of nature, etc....If, as is nearly always the case, music appears to express something, this is only an illusion and not a reality.”²⁴⁹ Something more than atoms firing in the brain lies beyond the materialist reductionist worldview denying a spirit realm. Both the

²⁴⁷ Newbigin, *Foolishness*, 57–58.

²⁴⁸ Schaeffer, *Escape*, 59.

²⁴⁹ Igor Stravinsky, *An Autobiography* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1962), 53.

musician and listener has more in mind than the emotional visceral reduction to what the pure secularist atheist claims. For example, who hears a score written in D Minor and thinks it is happy or fails to notice the “science of harmony and discord”²⁵⁰ in Beethoven’s Fifth?

Just as there are differences between musical styles, there are differences between secular and Christian music. Robert Webber writes, “The argument that Christian musicians are indistinguishable from secular ones is one based either in ignorance, or a faulty, limited frame of reference...is quite striking. Besides the absolute contrast in the message conveyed, there is a distinct otherness to the environment in which the music is performed, the least of which is the absence of drugs and drunkenness.”²⁵¹ While art drives, culture or the inverse remains germane to excellent apologetics, historical sources in culture aid the contemporary apologist.

Specifically, if, on the one hand, Pythagorean structure follows an enlightened arithmetic, strictly material understanding of music, then it necessarily dismisses non-material spiritual elements. On the other hand, however, the application of music theory predates Pythagoras’ circle of fifths while Pythagoras lived between c. BC 570–500, musical notation (recorded on tablets) dates before BC 2000 (Abrahamic era) in Babylon.²⁵² Scott Aniol writes, “The Bible presents the most complete record of the musical practices of any ancient civilization.”²⁵³ Therefore, Scripture cannot be divorced from the history of culture, including its arts, just as

²⁵⁰ Tom Melia, “Beethoven's Fifth ‘Sine’-phony: The Science of Harmony and Discord, *Contemporary Physics*, 48 no. 5, [2007]: 291–95.

²⁵¹ Robert Webber, *Music and the Arts in Christian Worship*, 1st ed., Vol. 4, The Complete Library of Christian Worship (Nashville, TN: Star Song, 1994), 178.

²⁵² Scott Aniol, ed. John D. Barry et al., *The Lexham Bible Dictionary* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2016), s.v. “Music.”

²⁵³ Aniol, “Music.”

musical inspiration is inseparable from an existent spirit realm.²⁵⁴ Beauty and truth reflect the character of God's Creation and are thus not subjective, as the commonly known phrase "beauty is in the eye of the beholder," asserts.²⁵⁵

Jean-Paul Sartre (AD 1905–1980)

Sartre was a French philosopher, writer, apolitical activist, and one of the central figures in Twentieth Century French philosophy. He is best known as the main figurehead of the Existentialist movement.

As a young man, he also contributed to Phenomenology (how we experience).²⁵⁶ Sartre wrote, "Christians...reproach us [Humanists] for denying the reality and validity of human enterprise, for inasmuch as we [Humanists] choose to ignore God's commandments and all values thought to be eternal, all that remains is the strictly gratuitous; everyone can do whatever he pleases and is incapable, from his own small vantage point, of finding fault with the points of view or actions of others."²⁵⁷ Sartre was a confirmed Atheist and a committed Communist and Marxist. He absorbed the ideas of Kant, Hegel, and Heidegger, and

²⁵⁴ Smith, *Worldview*, 47.

²⁵⁵ California State University Emeritus & Retired Faculty & Staff Association, "Who Created the Saying 'Beauty Is in the Eye of the Beholder?'," accessed May 21, 2022, <https://www.csuerfsa.org/index.php/news--views/blog/blog/who-created-the-saying-beauty-is-in-the-eye-of-the-beholder>; "Beauty in the eye of the beholder" has a literal meaning: that the perception of beauty is subjective - people can have differing opinions on what is beautiful. So what one person perceives as flawless and captivating might be ordinary or unappealing to another...The concept that each individual has a different inclination of what is beautiful first appeared in the 3rd century BC in Greek. According to Plato, the sense of beauty is itself transient in nature."

²⁵⁶ Storm Heter, *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, accessed February 11, 2023, <https://iep.utm.edu/sartre-p/>, s.v. "Sartre's Political Philosophy,".

²⁵⁷ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Existentialism Is a Humanism*, ed. John Kulka (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007), 18.

given the underlying philosophies of these thinkers, Sartre, too, advanced Secular Humanism in the West.

The most significant development in this regard is around how humans can know anything (epistemically/skeptically). To summarize the progression of advancing humanist thought to Secularism, Kantianism does not take God seriously, standing outside the church. Heidegger thought physics was coequal to knowledge. Sartre thought experience tantamount to knowledge. Hegelian “*Geist*” pushes Secularism ahead by the exact mechanism. The experience of being is justification for beliefs. Secularism, particularly Antisupernaturalism as shown in Chapter Four and demonstrated in Chapter Five, continually becomes more plausible than Theism taken literally in the Synoptics.

Thoughts cf. Knowledge

According to Pearcey, in the case of Secularists, reason has become their god. Pearcey writes, “according to Romans 1, those who reject the Creator will create an idol.”²⁵⁸ Within the same work, she writes, “How can we learn to recognize false gods, especially when they are hidden under secular labels and taught through the secular education system?”²⁵⁹ Philosopher J. P. Moreland argues, “If a man goes overseas for any length of time we would expect him to learn the language of the country to which he is going. More than this is needed, however, if he is really to communicate with the people among whom he is living. He must learn another

²⁵⁸ Pearcey, *Finding Truth*, “Twilight of the Gods,” Logos; Herman Dooyeweerd, *New Critique of Theoretical Thought* (Ontario, Canada: Paideia, 1984), I: 58, 61, 176, II: 322, 572.

²⁵⁹ Ibid.

language—that of the thought-forms of the people to whom he speaks.”²⁶⁰ Notwithstanding just cultural linguistics, however, standards for truth socially evolved.²⁶¹

Comparatively, Charles Darwin presented his theory of Natural Selection; although Darwinians evolved monkey bones into humanoid bones, nobody has yet to excavate. Vetting all data via math or science does not yield answers such as the existence of the supernatural.

First Order Skepticism cf. Secular Humanism/Naturalism

One must witness an occurrence to know that it occurred. If that is not possible, then one must turn to eyewitness testimony. Requisite is eyewitness truthful character and intention. There is, however, the Skeptic proposition that nothing is knowable for sure. That is the view of First Order Skeptics.

In the case of Secularist Humanist/Naturalists, however, and specifically within the subspecies of Materialism, truth is limited to the physical realm. The realm of spirit, including the Holy Spirit and anything incorporeal, is not epistemically knowable, or at least knowable only noumenally (in Kant’s terms). Opening with biblical reference, Walter F. Taylor Jr. writes, “Paul is skeptical of what happens in the reality of life in this world, in which the weak part of humanity, the *sarx*, becomes the beachhead in the body for the operation of sin. When the flesh is thus elevated and becomes the focus of life, that life is misdirected and opposed to the spirit.”²⁶² Within the secular realm, Skepticism is expected but not synonymous. The difference is the level of Skepticism permitted to pervade a supernatural worldview.

²⁶⁰ J. P. Moreland, “Preface” in *Escape from Reason*. (Westmont, IL: InterVarsity, 2014), 11.

²⁶¹ Eugene Raikhel, “Charles Taylor on ‘Buffered and Porous Selves,’” accessed October 30, 2021, <http://somatosphere.net/2008/charles-taylor-on-buffered-and-porous.html/>.

²⁶² Walter F. Taylor Jr., *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1992), s.v. “Humanity, New Testament View of,”.

For example, on the one hand, Secularism permits perception, albeit physically. Accordingly, everyone operates while applying the non-spiritual foundations of reality. On the other hand, Skepticism permits perception as a universal principle, even in cases of a group hallucination. In the case of Secularists, perception is material. In the case of skeptics, perception is hallucinatory. The difference lies in the metaphysics of matter.

Secularist Problems with Metaphysics

Although Secular Humanists/Naturalists appear to be sure of certain conclusions, such as denial of the incorporeal, non-material, and intuitive inspiration (spirit central), their argument is circular. Secularist circular argument against metaphysics violates the understanding of mutual exclusivity in logic and breaks modern science's findings. Circular arguments are weak. David Wenkel writes of weak arguments when he proposes, "'The Christian Scripture is the authoritative Word of God because I know it is the Authoritative Word of God'...is so tight that it attacks itself and undermines itself."²⁶³ Similarly, in context, while Secularists cannot be sure of the non-existence of what they do not see, skeptics scapegoat perception as an illusion. This includes, whether skeptical or secular, any intuition (thought) that emerges beyond physicalism.

Inherently, Carl F. H. Henry noted that intuition was employed by Descartes, no less, for the primary task of proving oneself as existent. Henry wrote, "intuition and deduction give us knowledge beyond risk of illusion...an unclouded and attentive mind gives us so readily and distinctly that we are wholly freed from doubt...more certain than deduction itself, in that it is

²⁶³ David Wenkel, "The Logic and Exegesis behind Calvin's Doctrine of the Internal Witness of the Holy Spirit to the Authority of Scripture," ed. Joel R. Beeke, *Puritan Reformed Journal*, 3 no. 2 [2011]: 99–100.

simpler.”²⁶⁴ Secularist Antisupernaturalists reject a transcendent (non-material/spiritual) reality because of their commitment to Cartesian certainty. Christian Anticorporatists likewise believe in the death, deity, and resurrection of Jesus Christ in literal acceptance of Scripture, yet remain Skeptical of demonic existence, explained in Chapter Four, and demonstrated in Chapter Five. Likewise, other theologians disagree regarding Schaeffer’s absolutism that “true truth” exists.²⁶⁵

For example, according to John R. Franke, subjectivism pervades much of world religion. He writes, “In the postmodern context...foundationalism is in dramatic retreat, as its assertions about the objectivity, certainty, and universality of knowledge have come under fierce criticism. The heart of the postmodern quest for a situated and contextual rationality lies in the rejection of the foundationalist approach to knowledge along with its intellectual tendencies.”²⁶⁶ The rationale behind rejecting the metaphysical is coterminous with dismissing human ideals, whereby conclusions are drawn from pure intellect alone. Descartes rejected speculation regarding the debunking of metaphysics.

Instead, Descartes asserted metaphysics ontologically. Conversely, secularists *a priori* reject a supernatural ontology but accept natural ontological possibilities outside God’s existence. Henry described this path as opening a “differentiating thinking substance and material substance, and by finding in the idea of God—as expounded in the ontological

²⁶⁴ Henry, *God, Revelation*, 74, 303; Henry added, “Both classic ancient idealism and medieval theology found in the logically prior supernatural realm the indispensable rational foundation of all things. In sharp contrast was Kant’s later reduction of all conceptions of the metaphysical realm to merely regulative or postulation significance. Descartes’s epistemology links him with the pre-Kantian approach, albeit in a defective mood. Augustine had not only recognized God as the source of all being and true knowledge, but viewed all knowledge also as in some sense the revelation of the one ultimate Spirit to created spirits.”

²⁶⁵ Os Guinness, “Francis Schaeffer’s ‘True Truth,’” accessed October 29, 2021, <https://www.bethinking.org/truth/francis-schaeffers-true-truth>.

²⁶⁶ John R. Franke, *The Character of Theology: An Introduction to Its Nature, Task, and Purpose* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2005), 27.

argument—the reason for asserting God’s existence.”²⁶⁷ Pearcey concludes that Descartes’ “mechanistic model view was perfectly compatible with a biblical view of nature...someone must have created it and wound it up...however, he [Descartes] also wanted to salvage the concept of a mind or spirit capable of surviving the body after death...Cartesian dualism was irreverently dubbed the ‘ghost in the machine.’”²⁶⁸ Nevertheless, Postmoderns embrace subjectivity, disdain certainty, and fiercely criticize “the universality of knowledge.”²⁶⁹ Instead, subjectively good philosophy entails accommodation of what Taylor refers to as the “social imaginary.”

Taylor employs the term “social imaginary” 138 times in his book *A Secular Age*. He defines “social imaginary” as “the way that we collectively imagine, even pre-theoretically, our social life in the contemporary Western world.”²⁷⁰ The expression connotes notions of prioritizing lateral societal acceptance of individual imparted righteousness.²⁷¹ In religious terms, “social imaginary” has become a secular doctrine. Taylor writes:

What I’m trying to get at with this term [“social imaginary”] is something much broader and deeper than the intellectual schemes people may entertain when they think about social reality in a disengaged mode. I am thinking rather of the ways in which they imagine their social existence, how they fit together with others, how things go on between them and their fellows, the expectations which are normally met, and the deeper normative notions and images which underlie these expectations.²⁷²

²⁶⁷ Henry, *God, Revelation*, 309.

²⁶⁸ Pearcey, *Leonardo*, 51..

²⁶⁹ Franke, *Character of Theology*, 27.

²⁷⁰ Taylor, *Secular Age*, 146.

²⁷¹ The Roman Catholic Church generally views salvation as an imparted sacramentally driven communal status. Protestantism generally views salvation as an individually imputed relationship that yields reconciliation with God.

²⁷² Taylor, *Secular Age*, 171.

Secularists accept the non-supernatural material realm in religious (but not spiritual) terms, rejecting propositions of the existence of the incorporeal contentiously and even with contempt. For example, James Crittenden comments that Taylor self-identifies as a believer who acknowledges “some truth” to the Enlightenment narrative, particularly those gains inherent to some necessary fissure between established religion and society. Crittenden writes, “What he [Taylor] sees as wrong and stifling in secular humanism...is the [anti] metaphysical primacy it accords to human life...that a closed world structure is the obvious or natural reading of our situation...an epistemic argument to the effect that science...disproves God and religion...beyond anything that scientific inquiry could establish.”²⁷³ While metaphysics is necessary for *metanoia*, biblical metanarratives promote proper repentance thinking. Secularists have problems with metanarratives.

Secularist Problems with Metanarrative

Pearcey contends that the neutering of truth is an oversight of self-referent subjectivity. Thereunder, truth, history, and authority all fall under some “master narrative.” Pearcey writes, “The assumption is that there is no unified storyline, no master narrative...merely a collection of conflicting quotations from the surrounding culture...Once you understand Hegel, it’s amazing how...German idealism to phenomenology to Existentialism to Postmodernism (with its offshoot, deconstructionism)...is a logical progression from what went before.”²⁷⁴ Preference drives philosophy instead of reality driving truth.

²⁷³ Paul James Crittenden, “A Secular Age: Reflections on Charles Taylor’s Recent Book,” *Sophia* 48 [2009]: 474.

²⁷⁴ Nancy Pearcey, “*Saving Leonardo*: A Review,” accessed July 7, 2022, <https://itiablog.wordpress.com/2011/02/11/saving-leonardo-a-review/>.

That epistemology extends to the secular metanarrative. The proposition includes the distribution of humanity's fundamental basics that were never their property to allot. Mark Ward writes, "The secular metanarrative can't give humans their rights. It doesn't recognize who humans truly are, so how can we trust what it says about what we truly deserve? Personhood is a divine gift, and until we see it that way, we're just lucky animals."²⁷⁵ Richard J. Mouw writes, "so much of what is associated with the 'postmodern' fosters a suspicion toward the sorts of 'metanarratives' that posit a shared human nature that allows for moral commonalities and continuities across cultural divides."²⁷⁶ Apologetically, this view can neither be proven empirically nor via scientific duplication of the inorganic (rock) to re-materialize into organic matter (an Amoeba, for example) with any clear understanding of why life could not naturally occur on Earth *sans* existence and activity of the Supernatural often described through metanarrative as in the Bible.

Secularist criticism of metanarratives includes the reader's needed deconstruction of the author's word meanings. Word meanings remain the author's purview as the determiner of textual intent. Critically, devices of metanarrative include deployment of "ordinary language," "literal meaning," and "common sense" Biblicists consider Scriptural in terms of author intent.²⁷⁷ "Deconstruction" invalidates biblical metanarratives, including those containing demons' existence and activity.

²⁷⁵ Mark Ward, *Biblical Worldview: Creation, Fall, Redemption*, ed. Mark L. Ward Jr. and Dennis Cone (Greenville, SC: BJU, 2016), 66.

²⁷⁶ Richard J. Mouw, *The Challenges of Cultural Discipleship: Essays in the Line of Abraham Kuyper* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2012), 70.

²⁷⁷ Herbert N. Schneidau, "The Word against the Word: Derrida on Textuality," *Semeia* 23 [1982]: 5–28.

Jacques Derrida (AD 1930–2004)

Derrida was best known for developing a form of semiotic textual analysis known as deconstruction, by which he analyzed numerous texts.²⁷⁸ Derrida wrote:

[In writing Autobiography] I no more answer for what I am saying...I am no longer responding. If autobiography were at least a genre, in the sense of an exercise fortified with all the assurances that a centuries-old institution can guarantee...in that institution of the so-called “autobiographical” genre...whomever speaks of himself to find refuge—in order to decline all responsibility and all onus of proof— behind the artificial authority of...whose literary pedigree...authorizes either veracity or mendacity, but always in accordance with a scene of witnessing, that is to say, an “I am telling you the truth.”²⁷⁹

The existence and activities of a divinely infused Spirit, or spirits malevolent or otherwise are removed from consideration by Derrida. Not just regarding genre, but in word usage, Derrida was critical. Carson writes, “Derrida’s unpacking of deconstruction is in some ways summarized in his much-repeated slogan ‘there is nothing outside the text’...[Derrida] is insisting that there is no access to uninterpreted text, to uninterpreted reality...all our experience is always already an interpretation.”²⁸⁰ Evans writes, “The term *postmodernism* is often used synonymously with *poststructuralism* to indicate the ways in which postmodernist thinkers both reacted against and were influenced by structuralism, [italics Evan’s].”²⁸¹ Word meaning in the eyes of a deconstructionist (or whatever alternate word chosen by the text) places ultimate authority into the hands of the reader to determine both authors meaning and intent. The demonstration of

²⁷⁸ Dwayne McCance, *Derrida on Religion: Thinker of Difference* (New York, NY: Peter Lang, 2008), 134.

²⁷⁹ Jacques Derrida, *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, ed. Marie-Louise Mallet (New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 2008), 56–57.

²⁸⁰ Carson, *Christ and Culture*, 99–100.

²⁸¹ Evans, *Pocket Dictionary*, 95.

deconstruction by Christian Antisupernaturalists demonstrate doing deconstruction in Chapter Five.

For now, readers exercise liberty with interpreting texts that rationally cannot retain so many interpretation options. For example, R. Michael Allen argues that Derrida (apparent author of Derrida's writings) and measured by Allen (apparent reader deriving Derrida's textual intent) claims Derrida denied neither the existence of reality, nor the existence of "real things." Instead, Allen claims Derrida meant "all of life requires interpretation."²⁸²

If Allen is correct in the irony of his circular analysis, and truth in the Secular realm is infinitely malleable and forever subjective, all readers cannot be simultaneously correct. Thus, no reader is assured that subjectivity itself is not circularly subjective. Ironically, Secularists, who may be conterminously coined Subjectivists, remain sure of something they cannot possibly know.

For Secularists/Subjectivists, there only remains the exhausting and impossible task of nullifying all other possibilities of fact or meaning in all texts whatsoever. Ironically, the author can only mean one thing at once outside of double-entendre, while a room full of readers may walk away with myriad interpretations. For example, Robert W. Wall and Richard B. Steele argue that regardless of the dating of 1 Timothy, the dating of the epistle is irrelevant to the text's plain meaning. Wall and Steele write, "Reading 1 Timothy in its canonical setting and in relationship with Acts elaborates this sense...the *sine qua non* of Christian fellowship...the leaders of the church gathered in Jerusalem to discuss issues of table fellowship...repeated three

²⁸² R. Michael Allen, *ET101 Law and Gospel: The Basis of Christian Ethics* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2016), Logos Mobile Education.

times in Acts for rhetorical effect (15:20, 29; 21:25), concerns food and sex.”²⁸³ Nevertheless, such is not Christianity’s only issue and, least of all, the only moral subject broached in the Bible. Instead, therein Scripture, malevolent entities exist. These entities are summarily dismissed by subjectivists *a priori* since there is no such thing if either word meaning or authenticity remains subjective.

For example, outside of Class A Skeptics, Secularists believe in something they consider the truth. Otherwise, they could not forward the ideation of a presuppositional Creation *ex nihilo sans* expression of their non-material, non-foundational ideations. Unless thinkers agree with the secularist’s presupposition that inorganic matter can somehow re-materialize and magically, non-supernaturally reassemble into the living via a natural anomaly, the entire Secular Humanist/Naturalist argument collapses into the Moderns’ claim that “we will figure it out someday [mine].” Among myriad evidential proofs meeting the non-Class A Skeptic’s denial of truth found in metaphysics and metanarrative must address *metanoia*.

Secularist Problems with *Metanoia*

The Apostle Paul uses the verb *metanoēō* “to repent,” and the noun *metanoia*, “repentance,” as terms in Hellenistic culture to indicate a rational and radical change of mind. Derek R. Brown, E. Tod Twist, and Wendy Widder write, “In the NT, *metanoēō* indicates a wider scope of change and is connected to morals and allegiances in addition to thoughts...The idea of repentance in the NT may be summarized as turning from a path ‘characterized by rebellion toward God’”²⁸⁴ However, the Secularist has no God from or to which to turn.

²⁸³ Robert W. Wall and Richard B. Steele, *1 and 2 Timothy and Titus*, The Two Horizons New Testament Commentary, ed. Joel B. Green and Max Turner (Grand Rapids, MI; Eerdmans, 2012), 118.

Other scholars regard the term more grievously. For example, Ferdinand Schlingensiepen writes, “If one has completely renounced making something of oneself...throws oneself completely into the arms of God...no longer takes one’s own sufferings seriously, but rather the suffering of God in the world...stays awake with Christ in Gethsemane. And I think this is faith, this is *metanoia* [conversion]; and this is how one becomes a human being, a Christian.”²⁸⁵ Leonhard Goppelt argues, “In light of the approaching reign of God, Jesus summoned people to repentance. The term ‘repentance’ (*metanoia*) can, in fact, summarize everything on the human side that should take place in anticipation of the coming kingdom.”²⁸⁶ However, for Secular Humanists/Naturalists, there is no coming kingdom. There never was a kingdom. Therefore, for them, *metanoia* is entirely superfluous to life and, therefore, both unnecessary and impossible.

A Corporeal and Material Life is Easier without the Existence of either Authority or Authoritative Figures

Henry engrossed morality, or lack thereof, as manifesting in societal standards of behavior. Thereunder, “the good life” establishes secularist sensibilities of “good” to encompass little more than “selfish and prurient preferences of the morally profligate.”²⁸⁷ The “radical secularist” does three principal conducts that illustrate how behavior affects attitude instead of the inverse. First, repudiation of universal and transcendent authority. Second, denial of divine truth, including any fixed morality that might threaten personal moral license. Finally, the

²⁸⁴ Derek R. Brown, E. Tod Twist, and Wendy Widder, *2 Corinthians*, ed. Douglas Mangum and John D. Barry (Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2013), 2 Co 7:9–12:21.

²⁸⁵ Ferdinand Schlingensiepen, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer 1906–1945: Martyr, Thinker, Man of Resistance*, trans. Isabel Best (New York, NY: T&T Clark, 2012), 356.

²⁸⁶ Leonhard Goppelt, *Theology of the New Testament*, ed. Jürgen Roloff, trans. John E. Alsup, Vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1981), 76.

²⁸⁷ Henry, *God, Revelation*, 498.

refutation of Christlikeness not as emanating from logic but alleged personal power over self-gratification, either sensual or material, as successfully navigating the road to self-satisfaction.

The secular method yields what Henry summed as a secular nirvana. Henry wrote that amidst this product is “a creative morality independent of supernatural disclosure...final human judgment on the basis of divinely fixed moral criteria...a rubric now used for harboring all manner of permissiveness...[assertions that] this generation’s heady wine would of course be better vintage than that of the past.”²⁸⁸ In essence, secular cultic behavior of promiscuity and permissiveness drives attitudes regarding a nouveaux historicity of subjective morality. The child of secular morality is tolerance.

Tolerance of the secularist worldview via virtue through subjectivity invites pluralism and a penchant for denial of the absolute. Secularism tolerates mutually exclusive worldviews generally, except the exclusive claims of Christianity. More precisely, while Secularists deny the supernatural, including the existence and activity of demons, it demonizes Christians. J. E. Llewellyn writes, “Surely we can all agree that the only beings who should be demonized are demons, and in our enlightened and demythologized age perhaps there are none of them left. On the other hand, we should not allow our commitment to tolerance to overwhelm our critical faculties.”²⁸⁹ As demonstrated in Chapter Five, Christian Antisupernaturalists retain their methods for excusing the Supernatural, employing much from secular philosophers. For now, critically speaking, life is more manageable without demons in the pictures, each nominal painting of reality.

²⁸⁸ Goppelt, *New Testament*., 498–499.

²⁸⁹ J. E. Llewellyn, “Hindu Fundamentalism: The Once and Future Oxymoron,” *Critical Review of Books in Religion* [1996]: 97–8.

Chapter Conclusion

Regardless of their factual or fallacious basis, thoughts and beliefs involve systematically canceling potential competing thought until the individual is satisfied with the result. That outcome may be rational, irrational, illogically circular, or valid. The solution to the dilemma of fact is that, outside First Order Skepticism, all history is evaluable by static criterion. For example, imagine if the referee's rules governing a prize fight were malleable to the point of governing standards occurring throughout the bout. The winner or loser of the contest (argument) then becomes subjective, arbitrary, and capricious instead of objective, determinative, and assured. Secular humanists/Naturalists consider human thought as entirely material, dismissing supernatural non-material elements of the supernatural. The Chapter successfully argued its thesis that reason became the god of the Moderns leading to greater epistemological conundrums.

CHAPTER FOUR: WHY MANY CHRISTIANS READ THE BIBLE IN WAYS THAT DISMISS ITS SUPERNATURAL ELEMENTS INCLUDING THE EXISTENCE AND ACTIVITY OF DEMONS

Chapter Introduction

The purpose of this chapter of the dissertation is to make connections between what Secular philosophers and Christian theologians were saying following the historic deployment of varying forms of biblical criticism. The examples include how Christianity arrived at a place where it doubts the authorship of John's Gospels, his Epistles, and Revelation. Additionally, why Andrew Lincoln's argument that Mary, Mother of Jesus, did not conceive as a virgin glean the attention of those who self-identify as Christian. The research thus advances to answer why these questions are asked post-Enlightenment and promote them to the stature as worthy of study in the first place. The thesis is that many Christians read the Bible in ways that dismiss its supernatural elements due to the theological and cultic descendants of Cartesians who have levied its Skepticism of biblical veracity over generations.

The Philosophical Roots underlying Christian Skepticism

The presupposition of this chapter's analysis is that Descartes was the main transition figure from the Medieval Period of enchantment to the Enlightenment Period of Rationalism as demonstrated in the dissertation's previous chapter. Further, however, Descartes created the conditions of doubt that led to the outworking of modernity in mass culture.²⁹⁰ Smith writes:

An understanding of the universe, which excludes the concept of purpose, is one in which religious truth claims have no place. This revolution in science did not take place in an intellectual vacuum. Behind it lay Descartes' philosophical method. This occupies a key place in the development of western thought and, as Newbigin describes it, "we in our particular culture are all heirs of Descartes." Descartes "exalted the 'critical principle' to

²⁹⁰ Newbigin, *Foolishness*, 23; Smith, diss., Chapter 1, note 29; Smith writes, "In addition, the Renaissance with its emphasis on humanistic ideals, and the Reformation which contributed to the breakdown of religious consensus and a critique of the value of tradition also helped set the stage for the Enlightenment."

a position of priority in the search for reliable knowledge.” He lived in a time when Skepticism was growing, largely, Newbigin believes, as a result of the failure of Thomist thought to provide a rational basis for truth and for the existence of God. Efforts were being made at that time to overcome Skepticism and to reestablish a sure basis for knowing. Descartes himself sought “to find a fresh starting point for thought,” to clear away tradition and dogma and establish truth on indubitable foundations.²⁹¹

As will be shown, cynicism of biblical text or its authorship grows out of Cartesian Skepticism and is done by one or numerous critical methods of not just Secular Modernists, but by those self-identifying as Christian. The dissertation does not argue that biblical criticism is inherently negative, nor Descartes is a heretic. Instead, Modernist application of those methods questions the veracity of Scripture and resultantly erodes Bible inerrancy within the Christian worldview.

Source Criticism

One method Modernists employ is source criticism (also known as literary criticism) that measures the NT (and earlier texts including the Pentateuch) in terms of historical soundness. Charles B. Puskas and David Crump write, “source criticism attempts to do three things: (1) detect the presence of a source, (2) determine the contents of the source, and (3) understand how the source was used...to anyone who is confronted with startling or conflicting information...the quest for sources can often help clarify or explain the problem.”²⁹² German Lutheran OT Scholar Julius Wellhausen developed source criticism.

²⁹¹ Smith diss., Chapter 1; Newbigin, *Foolishness*, 23; Lesslie Newbigin, “Religious Pluralism: A Missiological Approach,” *Studia Missionalia* 42 [1993]: 231.

²⁹² Charles B. Puskas and David Crump, *An Introduction to the Gospels and Acts* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008), 55.

Julius Wellhausen (AD 1844–1918)

Wellhausen in *Prolegomena to the History of Ancient Israel* condensed decades of source criticism of the Torah.²⁹³ Thereunder, Wellhausen claimed priestly texts and laws within the Pentateuch are post-exilic revisions yielding only a patchwork of latter ideological narratives. Sidney Greidanus argues that those who follow the Graf-Wellhausen Documentary Hypothesis of J, E, P, and D sources are students of such brand of scholarship in operation from c. AD 1878–1970. Greidanus writes, “It was held that J (Yahwist)...[c. BC 950], E (Elohist) from the time of the divided kingdom [c. BC 850]...D (Deuteronomist) from shortly before the exile around [BC] 620 and P (Priestly Code) from after the exile around [BC] 500 ...was the rejection of the traditional Jewish and Christian position that Moses was the primary author of the Pentateuch since Moses would predate these sources by at least 300 years.”²⁹⁴ Conceding that source criticism as a method is not necessarily problematic, Wellhausen’s application of source criticism caused OT scholarship to fundamentally abandon preaching since preachers do not preach from hypothetical sources.²⁹⁵

For Wellhausen, through his application of source (redaction) criticism (or literary criticism), scriptural texts have culminated into a disingenuous and tainted liberal rabbinic theological historicity. He drew this conclusion by charging that whatever had been added by the Redactors (historical editors) J, E, P, and D throughout the post-exilic age remain only as provocative and transient agendas that errantly drive Protestantism, including Protestantism’s

²⁹³ Wellhausen, *Prolegomena*.

²⁹⁴ Sidney Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from Genesis: Foundations for Expository Sermons* (Grand Rapids, MI; Eerdmans, 2007), 11.

²⁹⁵ Greidanus, *Modern Preacher*, 52.

traditional view of the patriarchs. Nonetheless, the Patriarchs wrote extensively regarding the existence and activity of demons transcending latter doctrines as shown.

Edward Bridge argues that some literary critics using the “Documentary Hypothesis” in source criticism reduce the patriarchs to fictional characters. Bridge writes, “they think, the patriarchal narratives were probably finalized during the seventh century [BC] at the earliest...time for the stories to have...set forms for memorization and oral transmission...However, literary approaches cannot determine when a given narrative was written...or why a particular type of story is repeated.”²⁹⁶ Wellhausen misapplying source criticism contributed to the decline of Scripture’s once proposition of inerrancy, given its litany of historical editors (Redactors and redaction criticism). Nonetheless, even if a source is identified other criticisms of the text ensue. These include intertwined taxonomies of an additional critical methods; one such method being form criticism.

Form Criticism

According to Maegan C. M. Gilliland, form criticism measures biblical text from the perspective of oral tradition. She writes, “Form criticism is a framework in which biblical text is seen as a compilation of several literary units which have a pre-literary tradition. The German word *Formgeschichte*, meaning ‘form history,’ is commonly used to describe the form Critical method.”²⁹⁷ Form criticism argues that a framework emanates from choices a writer makes in communicating his or her written literature as it emerges from oral tradition.

²⁹⁶ Edward Bridge, *The Concise Lexham Bible Dictionary*, ed. John D. Barry et al., (Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2021), s.v. “Patriarchs,”.

²⁹⁷ Maegan C. M. Gilliland, *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*, ed. John D. Barry et al. (Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2016), s.v. “Form Criticism,”.

Among these expressions include the narration of an event or historical report of a conversation. Puskas and Crump write, “There are numerous assortments of literary forms in every culture, ancient and modern. In our culture literary forms include a personal letter, an obituary notice in the newspaper, a school drama script, and the love poem on a greeting card... modes of communication used by writers for various audiences.”²⁹⁸ Like misapplication of source criticism, misapplication of form criticism contributes to why many Christians read the Bible in ways that dismiss its supernatural elements.

N. Perrin notes that biblical critic Hermann Gunkel (AD 1862–1932) and ideas developed by his students Karl L. Schmidt (AD 1891–1956), Martin Dibelius and Rudolf Bultmann have wielded “considerable sway” upon historical Gospel studies. Perrin writes, “form criticism should be understood not so much as a consistent and clearly defined critical approach but as a methodological trajectory that seeks through various strategies to elucidate the relationship between the form of a text (a literary question) and its *Sitz im Leben*, that is, its ‘setting in life’ (a sociohistorical question).”²⁹⁹ Like as with source criticism, the method of form criticism can be misused.

²⁹⁸ Puskas and Crump, *Gospels and Acts*, 55–56.

²⁹⁹ N. Perrin, *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, Second Edition, ed. Joel B. Green, Jeannine K. Brown, and Nicholas Perrin, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2013), s.v. “Form Criticism;” Martin J. Buss, “The Idea of *Sitz im Leben* - History and Critique,” *Journal of Old Testament Scholarship*, 90 no. 2 [1978]: 157; Buss writes, “H. Gunkel coined the phrase ‘*Sitz im Leben*’ to refer to the social usage in which a genre originates, distinguishing it from the contexts in which individual instances or applications of the genre occur. Proposes to clarify the concept, to show its history within interdisciplinary endeavor, and to point to ways in which it needs to be modified for progress in understanding. Suggests that the nature of Gunkel’s views on the relationship of literature to human life are untenable. Human processes and life situations are to be seen as socio-psychological processes, and *Sitz im Leben* must be reinterpreted in that context. The basic genres expressing human processes are given concrete shape in genre variants, while the human situation is handled in conventional settings.”

Heinrich August Wilhelm Meyer (AD 1800–1873)

Meyer was a German Protestant clergyman, commentator scholar of the NT. Born in Gotha, he studied theology at the University of Jena, was pastor at Harste, Hoye and Neustadt, and superintendent at Hanover. His best-known work is a sixteen-volume series titled *Kritischexegetischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament* (AD 1832–1859) later translated into English.³⁰⁰ “Meyer outlined the principles of historic-grammatical exegesis as he understood them. Although it is customary to award the laurels to F.C. Baur for founding the modern critical approach to the NT, an equal case could be made for granting the honor to Meyer.”³⁰¹ Meyer exegeted with an emphasis on words, form, and structure of the text.

He did so unapologetically. Meyer wrote, “With reference to the method of judging the New Testament writings, which Dr. Baur started, and in which he has taken the lead, I cannot but regret that, in controversy with it, we should hear people speak of “believing” and “critical” theology as of things necessarily contrasted and mutually exclusive. It would thus seem, as if faith must of necessity be uncritical, and criticism unbelieving.”³⁰² Meyer is useful in the dissertation demonstrating, in the next chapter, how a liberal scriptural view and an Antisupernaturalist worldview intersect.

³⁰⁰ “Commentaries,” accessed January 3, 2023, <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/eng/hmc.html>.

³⁰¹ “Heinrich August Wilhelm Meyer,” accessed January 3, 2022, <https://www.biblicaltraining.org/library/heinrich-august-wilhelm-meyer>.

³⁰² Heinrich August Wilhelm Meyer, *Critical and Exegetical Handbook to the Acts of the Apostles* Vol. 1, ed. William P. Dickson, trans. Paton J. Gloag (Edinburgh, Scotland: T&T Clark, 1877), vi–vii.

Rudolph Bultmann (AD 1884–1976)

Bultmann in *New Testament Mythology* argued the NT's foolish presupposition of a literal OT is merely employed to support the fallacious idea that man needs redemption.³⁰³

Bultmann argued enlightened human understanding of natural laws renders the possibility of good and evil spirits incomprehensible. Moreover, mankind is a mere collection of individuals solely responsible for personal existential outcomes instead of a Savior as the NT asserts.

Misapplication of form criticism yields a problem for valid measurement of text historicity and Scripture Literalism.

For example, Bultmann argued Mark's depiction of Jesus as "Exorcist" is a matter of mankind's development of myth. Although Heiser agreed that exorcisms appear in neither the OT nor the Gospel of John, Heiser counter-argued that "While the Synoptic Gospels have much to say about Jesus and his power over demons, the Gospel of John says nothing about Jesus being an exorcist...Johannine *sēmeia* [signs]...portend the salvation to be enjoyed by the beneficiaries of the completion of his messianic work (cf. Jn 7:37–39)."³⁰⁴ Bultmann's standards for requiring the historical title "Exorcist" to vet historicity is a good example of form criticism when misapplied.

In *Jesus Christ and Mythology*, Bultmann further explored mythology from his modern method of form criticism including the Christian message and the modern worldview, modern biblical interpretation within the lens of Existentialist philosophy, and the meaning of God as acting contemporaneously.³⁰⁵ Bultmann overtly shifts from the traditional Christian reading of

³⁰³ Rudolph Bultmann, *New Testament and Mythology*. accessed January 6, 2022, <http://www.religion.emory.edu/faculty/robbins/Pdfs/BultmannNTMyth.pdf>.

³⁰⁴ Heiser, *Demons*, 204–206.

³⁰⁵ Bultmann, *Jesus Christ*.

the Bible into his metaphorical view asserting that any possible historical interpretation drowns in personal conclusions regarding the text. Bultmann's presuppositions indicate a shift of form/textual criticism into textual deconstruction whereby the reader, instead of the author, determines textual meaning.

Martin Dibelius (AD 1883–1947)

Dibelius argued in his work *Jesus* that source and form criticism evidence a NT based in early Christian preaching material.³⁰⁶ Dibelius thought Jesus did not proclaim a present kingdom but signified the coming kingdom through His signs of healing and speaking in Messianic terms.³⁰⁷

Another example of Dibelius's form criticism is found in his assertions regarding the Gospel of Mark. Adela Yarbro Collins and Harold W. Attridge write, "As was noted by Klostermann, von Dobschütz, and many others since, the author of Mark sometimes begins a story, interrupts it to tell a second story, and then concludes the first. [However, Dibelius

³⁰⁶ Martin Dibelius, *Jesus*, trans. Charles B. Hedrick and Frederick C. Grant (Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1949).

³⁰⁷ Martin Dibelius, Chapter V: *The Kingdom of God*, accessed February 12, 2022, <http://media.sabda.org/alkitab-2/Religion-Online.org%20Books/Dibelius,%20Martin%20-%20Jesus.pdf>.; Martin Dibelius and Bertram Lee Woolf, *From Tradition to Gospel* (New York, NY: Scribner, 1935), 264; Gerhard Friedrich, "Εὐαγγελίζομαι, Εὐαγγέλιον, Προεὐαγγελίζομαι, Εὐαγγελιστής," ed. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964–), s.v. "The Synopsists;" Friedrich writes, "The proclamation of the Gospel is an eschatological event. Mk. 13:10: εἰς πάντα τὰ ἔθνη πρῶτον δεῖ κηρυχθῆναι τὸ εὐαγγέλιον, is given in Mt. 24:14 the form: κηρυχθήσεται τοῦτο τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τῆς βασιλείας ἐν ὅλῃ τῇ οἰκουμένῃ εἰς μαρτύριον πᾶσιν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν. τοῦτο τὸ εὐαγγέλιον does not mean the Gospel written in Mt.; it means that this Gospel of the kingdom which is now preached to Israel will be declared to the whole world. Similarly, the τοῦτο of Mt. 26:13 is to be understood in terms of the situation. The Gospel is the salvation of those who believe, Mk. 16:15."

believed Mark redacted his narrative via composition].”³⁰⁸ Dibelius held that the Son of Man is bound with Jesus as ontologically both the present and the future Son of Man.³⁰⁹

In contrast to Bultmann, and despite Bultmann’s affectation towards a fallacious OT, Dibelius and Bultmann agreed on the basic method behind form criticism and its foundations in source criticism but disagreed on conclusions. Thus, the problem relates more to presuppositions than to critical method.

For example, both scholars agreed that Mark and Q were likely sources for Matthew and Luke; that Mark, Q, Matthew, and Luke are most likely influenced by the early church; and that these factors remained insufficient to conclude an earthly Jesus. Dibelius wrote, “We are able to say now how our gospels arose from their sources, but we cannot yet say how this whole literature arose. We have some conception how the order, increase, and variation of the materials took place, but not how they came to be handed down and collected.”³¹⁰ Hence, both form criticism and source criticism play roles in why many Christians reject the Bible’s supernatural elements, beginning with rejection of biblical inerrancy.

Biblical Worldviews Splintered

The heart of the matter is the individualized determinations and scholarship emanating from differing worldviews. For example, Bultmann denied need for redemption via his

³⁰⁸ David Friedrich Strauss, *The Life of Jesus Critically Examined* (London, U.K.: Chapman Brothers, 1846), 2:201–3; Martin Dibelius and Bertram Lee Woolf, *From Tradition to Gospel* (New York, NY: Scribner, 1935), 47; Adela Yarbro Collins and Harold W. Attridge, *Mark: A Commentary on the Gospel of Mark, Hermeneia* Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2007), 226; in note 92 the authors write, “David Friedrich Strauss, followed by Dibelius, argued that the evangelist composed vv. 20–21 as an introduction to vv. 31–35.”

³⁰⁹ Martin Dibelius, *The Son of Man*, Chapter VII, accessed February 12, 2022.
<http://media.sabda.org/alkitab-2/Religion-Online.org%20Books/Dibelius,%20Martin%20-%20Jesus.pdf>.

³¹⁰ Dibelius and Woolf, *Tradition to Gospel*, 9.

interpretation gleaned from Mark's Gospel, which he considered a "sayings document" emanating from "Hellenistic Christianity."³¹¹ Philosophically, the scholars further diverged.

James D. Dvorak argues that Dibelius's and Bultmann's form criticism differed from each other methodologically. On the one hand, Dibelius employed a "constructive method" or "top down" approach attempting to describe the central *Sitz im Leben* (life circumstances) from which the text emerged.³¹² Alternatively, Bultmann used an analytic or "bottom up" approach attempting to identify the forms to extrapolate the *Sitz im Leben* based upon those forms. According to Dvorak, while Dibelius narrowed his study to the narrative material (including within Mark), Bultmann applied form criticism to both narrative and "sayings" materials such as found in Mark's Gospel. Dibelius and Bultmann account for variations in the kinds of forms each scholar identified, as well as how they analyzed and categorized the Synoptic material.³¹³

Martin G. Klingbeil sees benefit in form criticism. Klingbeil writes, "Tremper Longman III, in a paper originally presented at the 1982 [Evangelical Theological Society] ETS meetings, stated that 'the move toward a positive and constructive form criticism as a hermeneutical tool is a proper one and that evangelicals should continue to formulate and apply such a method which is shorn of the negative presuppositions of the method as applied by critics.'"³¹⁴ Chris Keith adds that "Several scholars note that the formative development of certain criteria of authenticity

³¹¹ Craig A. Evans, *Mark 8:27–16:20*, Vol. 34B, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas, TX: Word, 2001), 119.

³¹² James D. Dvorak, "Martin Dibelius and Rudolf Bultmann," in *Pillars in the History of Biblical Interpretation* Vol. (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2016), accessed February 7, 2022, https://www.researchgate.net/profile/JamesDvorak/publication/328201590_Martin_Dibelius_and_Rudolf_Bultmann/links/5bbe32eb299bf1010178a5c9/Martin-Dibelius-and-Rudolf-Bultmann.pdf.

³¹³ Ibid.

³¹⁴ Martin G. Klingbeil, "Off the Beaten Track: An Evangelical Reading of the Psalms without Gunkel," ed. Craig A. Evans, *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 16 [2006]: 26.

occurred concomitantly with the rise and practice of form criticism, and thus the criteria reflect form-critical influence.”³¹⁵ However, it is important to weigh form critics’ conclusions in context of how form criticism, when misapplied via personal presuppositions/worldviews, erodes certainty in the reliability of Scripture.

Cartesianism Prevails in the Church

Descartes, Kant, then the philosophers from the eighteenth century forward (largely covered in Chapter Three) paved the way for an *a priori* Antisupernaturalist worldview contributing to an atmosphere where Wellhausen and others operated. Certainly, at the opposite end of the spectrum from bibliocentric epistemology is Modernist deference of believing only in what can be “empirically verified.”³¹⁶ Nonetheless, that oversimplifies the issue.

Not only is the supernatural rejected by Moderns because it cannot be physically seen (outside of its effects), but biblical supernatural elements are mainly precluded due to Moderns’ appetite to find a natural explanation for everything. Christianity, at least outside of traditional orthodoxy agree. It is here that Cartesianism meets scientific method. Moderns dismiss historical testimony, such as supernaturalism found in Scripture, yet accept what other Moderns say, so long as the empirical testing passes Antisupernaturalist muster.

³¹⁵ Chris Keith, *Jesus’ Literacy: Scribal Culture and the Teacher from Galilee*, ed. Mark Goodacre, Vol. 8, Library of Historical Jesus Studies (New York, NY: T&T Clark, 2011), 30; Keith adds, “My argument, however, is that the *entire enterprise* of criteria of authenticity is dependent upon a form-critical framework. For, the criteria approach adopts wholesale the form-critical conception of the development of the Jesus tradition and thus its method for getting ‘behind’ the text (italics Keith’s).”

³¹⁶ James Emery White, *What is Truth? A Comparative Study of the Positions of Cornelius Van Til, Francis Schaeffer, Carl F. H. Henry, Donald Bloesch, and Millard Erickson* (Nashville, TN: Broadman, 1994), 10.

The Waning of Liberal Christianity and the Waxing of Progressive Christianity

James Emery clarifies that the influence of liberal readings of Scripture over time. He writes, “One thing is clear enough about liberal Christianity: it had a huge role in the rise of modern Western ideology—of secular liberalism. And another thing is clear: it has been in decline for decades. Secular liberalism has no need of it (the clue is in the word “secular”), and it seems to be much less appealing than more conservative forms of Christianity—among theologians as well as generally...an aura of weakness, compromise, well-meaning muddle.”³¹⁷ Migrations in Christian theology reveal many self-identifying as Christians who are open to God remaining active in the world amidst asserting errors existing within the Bible and permissible ethics not in line with Scripture.

This includes dogmatic shifts in the naming of scriptural authority. Donald K. McKim writes, “A key dimension of the post-Reformation Protestant theologians’ [is]...attributes of Scripture such as its complete truthfulness or inerrancy...were the product of God’s ‘breath’ or ‘inspiration’ (*theopneustos*), so there is a ‘plenary inspiration’ of Scripture; and therefore, the words of Scripture themselves are directly inspired by God (verbal inspiration)...with it God’s own truthfulness.”³¹⁸ Late Nineteenth-century theologians such as Wellhausen and others who questioned biblical inerrancy reflect the definition of Liberal Christianity.

Until the AD 1950s many theologians trained in Europe espoused theological liberalism. However, alongside those Liberals were conservative scholars such as those trained at Princeton such as J. Grescham Machen (AD 1881–1937) and Carl F.H. Henry (AD 1913–2003). From the

³¹⁷ Theo Hobson, *Reinventing Liberal Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2013), 1.

³¹⁸ Donald K. McKim, *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1992), s.v. “Scriptural Authority: Biblical Authority and the Protestant Reformation,”.

AD 1970's forward, liberalism grew to offer only ethics. Crittenden sums up liberal theology's focus when he writes:

on the liberal humanist ethics that aspires to universal justice and benevolence; on Kantian and post-Kantian ethics; on Hume's morality of the emotions and its appeal to sympathy as fundamental; on Utilitarianism; on Nietzschean-type heroic gestures; and on current types of Stoicism that he associates fleetingly with Camus and Derrida. Whatever their merits, these approaches all fail the test of identifying moral sources that could generate a genuinely commensurate moral response.³¹⁹

A prime example lying within the purviews of ethics and Christian dogma is the premise within Christianity that Jesus is not the only One Who saves. Carson includes the following when he writes, "Radical religious pluralism:...holds that no religion can advance any legitimate claim to superiority...Inclusivism: ...while affirming the truth of fundamental Christian claims, nevertheless insists that God has revealed himself, even in saving ways, in other religions...[cf.] Exclusivism:...teaches that the central claims of biblically faithful Christianity are true...where the teachings of other religions conflict with these claims, they must necessarily be false."³²⁰ Where freedom becomes synonymous with autonomy, virtually anything is permissible in Christian doctrine.

William Barclay (AD 1907–1978)

Barclay was Scottish Professor of Divinity and Biblical Criticism at the University of Glasgow having no record of being a Cleric, but a teacher of Hellenistic Greek, that tracked historical linguistics as basis for his exegesis. Barclay self-identified as Christian who was

³¹⁹ Crittenden, "Reflections," 477.

³²⁰ Carson, *The Gagging*, 26–27.

familiar with words utilized in the first-century Koine Greek as basis for his exploration of the NT's usage of terms.³²¹

Barclay was an open and affirming Universalist Theist. Regarding the former, Barclay wrote, "There are many ways to God. He has his own secret stairway into every heart. He fulfils himself in many ways; and no individual or church has a monopoly of his truth...tolerance must be based not on indifference but on love. We ought to be tolerant not because we could not care less; but because we look at the other person with eyes of love."³²² With regard to the latter, Barclay wrote, "in the end all men will be gathered into the love of God...Origen...connected with universalism...Gregory of Nyssa...believed in universalism...God is Father...No father could be happy while there were members of his family for ever in agony."³²³ Barclay's universalism was based upon four self-defined tenets. See Nominalism.

First, Barclay, like Origen and Gregory of Nyssa, believed in an often-lengthy purification process following death. The course could include hell for some, not as permanent punishment but a permanent penalty, whenever failing to qualify for the invitation of God's eternal presence. Barclay found justification for this perspective in John 12:32 "draw all men to myself," Romans 11:32 "that he may have mercy on all," 1 Corinthians 15:28 "in Christ shall all be made alive," 1 Timothy 2:4–6 God, "who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth," and, Christ Jesus "who gave himself as a ransom for all." Barclay emphasized the Bible's use of the word "all" as justification for Universalism.

³²¹ "William Barclay (1907–1978) Professor, Theologian, Author, Greek Scholar," accessed September 21, 2022, <https://www.tentmaker.org/biographies/barclay.htm>.

³²² William Barclay, *The Gospel of Luke*, The New Daily Study Bible (London, U.K.: Knox, 2001), 153–155.

³²³ William Barclay, "I am a Convinced Universalist," accessed September 21, 2022, <https://tgulcm.tripod.com/cu/barclay1.html>.

Second, Barclay cited Matthew 25:46's use of the Greek word for punishment *kolasis* as meaning "pruning of trees to make them grow better," or "remedial punishment." Moreover, in Barclay's exegesis of *aionios*, citing Plato, "remedial punishment" is only meted by God.

Third, Barclay believed God's grace bore no limits. Such limits, if there were such a thing, is inbounded by other worlds spanning the universe.

Fourth, Barclay believed in God's absolute and ultimate triumph (1 Cor 15:24–28). Barclay wrote, "If one man remains outside the love of God at the end of time, it means that that one man has defeated the love of God—and that is impossible."³²⁴ Many Christians, under the influence of Berkof, Wink, Barclay and the "spirit of the age" read the Bible in ways that dismiss its supernatural elements.³²⁵ The roots of this are easily traceable to Descartes and his method.

Hendrik Berkhof (AD 1914–1995)

Berkhof was a Dutch Reformed Pastor, Professor, and Author.³²⁶ Berkhof wrote with regards to reading Paul, "Either...orthodox doctrine about angels and devils, or else...vestiges of antiquated mythology...Paul borrowed the terms [powers, principalities] rather than creating them...the Powers found in the apocalyptic and rabbinic writings. Two things were always true

³²⁴ William Barclay, *A Spiritual Autobiography* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1975), 65.

³²⁵ Guadalupe Navarro-Garcia, "Integrating Social Justice Values in Educational Leadership: A Study of African American and Black University Presidents" (PhD diss., University of California Los Angeles, 2016), 44, ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global; C. Fred Smith, "An Evangelical Evaluation of Key Elements in Lesslie Newbigin's Apologetics" (PhD diss., Southwest Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, 1999), Chapter 5, note 196, https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1108&context=fac_dis.diss; Smith writes, "It has become popular to point out the corporate dimension of the Bible. Evangelicals, like others, have been guilty of reading the Bible through the perspective of Enlightenment individualism. Seeing the corporate, communitarian aspect of Scripture is important, but one must not go from one extreme to the other. The individual dimension of salvation is very real."

³²⁶ Robert Ewusie Moses, *Practices of Power: Revisiting the Principalities and Powers in the Pauline Letters* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2014), 26.

of the Powers: (1) they are personal, spiritual beings and (2) they influence events on earth, especially events within nature.”³²⁷ David G. Murphy argues that Berkhof shows the influences of Schleiermacher and Barth in developing a “mediating theology” that includes revelation and experience.³²⁸ Nonetheless, Berkhof is instrumental to understanding the impacts of Modernism upon the existence and activities of a spiritual realm, particularly what Newbigin and Walter Wink thought about the spiritual realm.

Smith argues that Berkhof’s understanding of the term “powers” (Eph 6:12) is used by the Apostle Paul to mean “the given structures within which human life is lived,” an interpretation shared by Newbigin and Wink to include the “outer” worldly realms of “political systems, appointed officials and laws.”³²⁹ Nevertheless, Berkof admitted the powers are viewed as spiritual beings in “Jewish apocalyptic thought.”³³⁰ Berkhof thought historical orthodoxy

³²⁷ Hendrik Berkhof, *Christ and the Powers*, trans. John H. Yoder (Scottsdale, PA: Herald, 1977), 15–18.

³²⁸ David G. Murphy, “Hendrikus Berkof and the Theological Appeals to Experience.” *Calvin Theological Journal*, 26 no. 2 [1991]; 350–69.

³²⁹ Smith diss., Chapter 3, note 48; Lesslie Newbigin, “Politics and the Covenant,” *Theology* 84 [Spring 1981]: 358; Hendrik Berkhof, *Christ and the Powers*, trans. John H. Yoder (Scottsdale, PA: Mennonite, 1977), 17, 23; Walter Wink, *Engaging the Powers: Discernment and Resistance in a World of Domination* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1992), 3; Smith writes, “Berkhof described ‘the Powers, as ‘religious and ethical rules’...Berkhof’s study of Paul’s use of the term admits that the source was Jewish apocalyptic in which ‘the Powers’ designated spiritual beings which control, through nature, events on earth Berkhof believes, took the terminology but infused it with different meaning for his own purposes, making them ‘structures of earthly existence’...The outer include ‘buildings, portfolios, personnel, trucks, fax machines’ while the inner is the ‘corporate culture or collective personality of the institutions.’”

³³⁰ Berkhof, *Christ and the Powers*, 7; Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 648–52, 445–51; Smith diss. Chapter 5, note 191, 195; Smith writes, “Millard Erickson believes that Paul may have reinterpreted Jewish apocalyptic language in a way to make the powers somewhat less personal in nature than angelic beings. At the same time he describes them as evil forces at work in the structures of society. While he (Erickson) does not abandon a supernatural understanding, his position may be seen as somewhat of a mediating position between that of Henry and Melick and that of Newbigin He still recognizes a supernatural source of these powers, more strongly it appears than Newbigin or Berkhof, though Erickson cites Berkhof’s work. Elsewhere Erickson specifically attests to the reality of supernatural evil powers at work in the world.”

morphed into the basis for supernaturalism falling outside reality. Wink follows Berkhof in perspectives regarding demons.

Walter Wink (AD 1935–2012)

Many Christians such as Walter Wink participated in the Modernist/Antisupernaturalist worldview. What makes Wink plausible is the theological milieu created by Wellhausen's misapplication of source criticism, as well as Bultmann's and Dibelius's misapplication of form criticism. However, these methods derive their genesis from the Skepticism of Descartes and Kant affecting scriptural Literalism.

Wink was an American biblical scholar, progressive biblical critic, and author that rejected the supernatural. Regarding fallen angels as an example, Wink wrote, "the terms for power are used...not to refer to evil spirits, demons, or Satan but only to obedient angelic powers whose activity and presence confirm the status of Yahweh, that the world into which the gospel came was not a world which longed for release from powers...the Christian message was not one of a cosmic battle in which Christ rescued humanity from the domination of such forces."³³¹ Progressive Christians do not take biblical stories as literal. For Progressive Christians, biblical stories remain constructed only to convey value and virtue promotion of good behavior.³³²

Accordingly, Progressive Christians question tradition, accept human diversity, promote social justice and care for the oppressed as is expressed in John 15:17.³³³ Alisa Childers writes,

³³¹ Wink, *Naming the Powers*, 23.

³³² Gregory C. Jenks, "Taking the Bible Seriously but Not Literally," accessed September 22, 2022, <https://progressivechristianity.org/resources/taking-the-bible-seriously-but-not-literally/>.

³³³ Eau Claire, "Soul Play: What Is Progressive Christianity Exactly?" *The Flip Side*. University of Wisconsin Press accessed February 11, 2022, http://shortpedia.net/view_html.php?sq=1970s_merengue_music&lang=en&q=Progressive_Christianity.

“Progressive Christians view the Bible as a record of what people believed about God in the times and places in which they lived, rather than the inspired and authoritative Word of God.”³³⁴ What is important to the dissertation is philosophic negation of the supernatural realm.

Such negation commences in replacement of traditional word meaning with individualized and relative meanings (Nominalism). As an example, Kirk Wetters argues that for Progressives, biblically archived violence is a matter of self-preservation amidst wordplay of historical reality. Wetters writes:

In the 1920s, Freud’s *Totem and Taboo*...primitive man’s world is ruled by demons...and unspoken interdictions of taboo...Freud, of course, does not believe in demons except as manifestations of the human psyche...Freud also does not present demons and the demonic in a way that might leave some doubts about what he meant by them...Primitive superstitions are the analogues of modern neuroses...The point of the example is that human laws only play into (and reinforce) preexisting determinations...the modern world, appear to the individual as something resembling fate. The law which claims to be “equal” only maintains *preexisting unequal* material conditions...Even with this contextualization, “demonic ambiguity” remains open to divergent readings. The demonic (or “mythic”) state may itself be characterized by ambiguity.³³⁵

Supernaturalism to Naturalism begins at the Creation narrative in Scripture. Geisler wrote, “Connected with an anti-supernatural presupposition...[is] a failure to distinguish between *operation science*, which deals with observed present regularities, and *origin science*, the speculative reconstruction of unobserved past singularities. The former is an empirical science; the later operates more like a forensic science. Neither macro-evolution nor creation is an operational science. Both operate on the principles of origin science [italics Geisler’s].”³³⁶

³³⁴ Alisa Childers, “How to Recognize Progressive Christianity through Theology,” accessed August 22, 2022, <https://www.impact360institute.org/articles/how-to-recognize-progressive-christianity-through-theology/>.

³³⁵ Kirk Wetters, *Demonic History: From Goethe to the Present* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2014), 112–113.

³³⁶ Geisler, *Baker Encyclopedia*, s.v. “Creation and Origins,”.

Christian Progressive shirking of scriptural literalism also includes denial of supernatural “powers” as the early church understood them.

Keener quotes Wink as part of his chapter 4 title in *Miracles: The Credibility of the New Testament Accounts*: “Antisupernaturalism as an Authenticity Criterion?” Keener immediately thereafter cites Wink as claiming, “People with an attenuated sense of what is possible will bring that conviction to the Bible and diminish it by the poverty of their own experience.”³³⁷ Thereunder, Keener questions, “the dogmatic Antisupernaturalism that most of modern academia has inherited from Hume and others.”³³⁸ Additional Modernist biblical scholars both contribute to and pile onto the Antisupernaturalist/materialist fray.

Smith thinks Newbigin relies upon Berkhof and Wink for his understanding of “the powers.” Smith writes, “They [the powers] are anything outside of Christ which claim to control human destiny...[seeking] to exercise ‘masterful control’ over history...the destinies of nations by their own power...but when they [the powers] see themselves as autonomous they become ‘agents of the ‘ruler of this world’...Wink totally rejects any concept of the powers as ‘angelic beings or as demons flapping about in the sky’”³³⁹ Nonetheless, Wink was influenced by Berkhof’s argument that demons exert power over natural phenomena.

Christian Antisupernaturalists must be seen considering the operative descriptive “Christian.” As shown, some self-identify as Universalist (Barclay), but nonetheless Christian.

³³⁷ Walter Wink in Craig S. Keener, *Miracles: The Credibility of the New Testament Accounts*, Vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2011), 85.

³³⁸ Keener, *Miracles*, 85.

³³⁹ Newbigin, “Politics and the Covenant,” 358; Smith diss., Chapters 3, 4 footnotes 49, 50, 51, 52, 188; Smith writes, “Jesus disarmed them passively by submitting to them, a mystery seen through the eyes of faith. They have been ‘disarmed’ though not ‘destroyed.’ Destruction will come when at the end God reconciles all things to himself through Christ, ushering in his kingdom.”

Others were and are ministers of the Gospel who believe in the bodily Resurrection of Jesus Christ. Christian Antisupernaturalists are challenging to identify in title.

John Nolland (AD 1947–)

Nolland is a retired Anglican faculty member of Trinity College in Bristol, U.K. where he also served as Academic Dean. He was born, was raised, and ministered in Sydney, Australia following a background in science.³⁴⁰ Nolland writes, “My work is committedly eclectic...I take sources seriously, and with some regularity I try to see how Matthew has edited his sources to serve the purposes of his narrative...The whole commentary is, broadly speaking, redaction-critical, inasmuch as I see Matthew as a careful editor of sources—a fairly conservative editor but one who carefully integrates his material into a well-considered, unified message.”³⁴¹ As will be seen, lineage of interpretation is key to understanding differences between the conservative and liberal view of scriptural events in Chapter Five of the dissertation.

³⁴⁰ “Rev'd Dr John Nolland, BSc, ThL, BD, PhD,” accessed January 3, 2022, <https://www.trinitycollegebristol.ac.uk/about-us/faculty-and-staff/associate-faculty/dr-john-nolland/>; His written works include: John Nolland, “Does the Cultic $\pi\alpha\iota\varsigma$ make Reparation to God?,” *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* 92 [2015], 87–110; John Nolland, “In Search of Undocumented Uses of Greek Connectives: The Case of a Causal $\kappa\alpha\iota$,” *Estudios Bíblicos* 72 [2014]: 237–56; John Nolland, “Preaching the Ethics of Jesus” in *We Proclaim the Word of Life': Preaching the New Testament Today*, ed. Ian Paul and David Wenham (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2013); John Nolland, *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels* (2nd ed.), ed. J. B. Green, J. K. Brown, and N. Perrin (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2013) s.v. “Blessing and Woe,”; John Nolland, *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels* (2nd ed.), ed. J. B. Green, J. K. Brown, and N. Perrin (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2013), s.v. “Sabbat,”; John Nolland, *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels* (2nd ed.), ed. J. B. Green, J. K. Brown, and N. Perrin (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2013), s.v. “Blessing and Woe,”; John Nolland, “Luke and Acts,” in *The Handbook of the Study of the Historical Jesus*, ed. T. Holmén and S. E. Porter (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2011); John Nolland, “The Thought of John 1:3c-4,” *Tyndale Bulletin* 62 [2011], 295–311; John Nolland, “The Times of the Nations and a Prophetic Pattern in Luke 21,” in *Biblical Interpretation in Early Christian Gospels*, Vol. 3, ed. Thomas R. Hatina (London, U.K.: T & T Clark, 2010).

³⁴¹ John Nolland, “Preface,” in *The Gospel of Matthew: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005), xvii–xviii.

N. T. Wright (AD 1948–)

Wright is an Anglican prolific scholarly author and professor at Oxford, Cambridge, and McGill University, Montreal. He was Bishop of Durham from AD 2003–2010. He is Research Professor Emeritus of New Testament and Early Christianity at St Mary's College in the University of St Andrews and Senior Research Fellow at Wycliffe Hall, Oxford and Senior Editors for the St Andrews Online Encyclopedia of Theology.³⁴² Wright, like many Liberal and Progressive Christians, parses text in development of this theology.

This includes text contained in the OT as well as the Gospels. Wright writes from his Nominalist view:

I constantly run into loose talk about a 'literal' resurrection as opposed to a 'metaphorical' one...The terms 'literal' and 'metaphorical' refer, properly, to *the ways words refer to things*, not to the things to which the words refer...When ancient Jews, pagans and Christians used the word 'sleep' to denote death, they were using a metaphor to refer to a concrete state of affairs... [As an example] sometimes, as in Ezekiel 37, Jewish writers used 'resurrection' language as a metaphor for concrete political events...to *denote* the concrete event while *connoting* the idea of a great act...the entire world of greco-roman paganism), used the word [resurrection] to refer to a hypothetical concrete event that might take place in the future, namely the coming-to-life in a full and bodily sense of those presently dead...Thus the normal meaning of this language was to refer, literally, to a concrete state of affairst...he language of resurrection [is] like that as well [italics Wright's].³⁴³

³⁴² "Faculty of Theology and Religion," accessed January 3, 2022, <https://www.theology.ox.ac.uk/people/n.-t.-wright>; Some of Wright's publications include N. T. Wright and Simon Gathercole et. al, *The Meaning of the Atonement* (Louisville, KY: John Knox, 2021); N. T. Wright, *Galatians*, Christian Formation Commentaries (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2021); N. T. Wright, *God and the Pandemic: A Christian Reflection on the Coronavirus and its Aftermath* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2020); N. T. Wright, *Interpreting Jesus: Essays on the Gospels* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2020); N. T. Wright, *Interpreting Paul: Essays on the Apostle and his Letters* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2020); N. T. Wright, *Interpreting Scripture: Essays on the Bible and Hermeneutics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2020); N. T. Wright, *Broken Signposts: How The Gospel Makes Sense of the World* (San Francisco, CA: HarperOne, 2020); N. T. Wright, *History and Eschatology: Jesus and the Promise of Natural Theology*, Gifford Lectures 2018 (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2019); N. T. Wright, *Paul and his Recent Interpreters* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2015); N. T. Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2013); N. T. Wright, *Pauline Perspectives* (Collected essays, 1978–2013) (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2013).

³⁴³ N. T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, Christian Origins and the Question of God (London, U.K.: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2003), xviii–xix.

The reader of the dissertation will see connections of Antisupernaturalism as being necessary to changes in traditionally held word meanings by the church in the next chapter. For now, it is important to review the perspectives of Christian Secularists in terms of metanarrative, metaphysics, and *metanoia*, as biblical elements.

Metanarrative for the Christian Secularist

The term “metanarrative” has been variously defined as easily noted from the Christian secularist’s viewpoint. Walter Brueggemann uses the term to mean “military consumerism,” “commodity militarism,” “a more-or-less coherent perspective on reality” whereby individuals self-authorize “in unfettered freedom,” seeking “well-being, security, and happiness as they choose,” with “force, coercion, or violence” at their disposal, for selecting “the greater good.”³⁴⁴ Secularists do metanarrative with their own twist.

The dissertation charges that Christian Secularists juxtapose acceptance of the historical basics behind Christianity without necessarily agreeing to mandates such as the immaculate birth, death, and resurrection as obligatory to Christianity. Instead, Secular Christians accept the “story” of the Cross without having the associated obligations of its metanarrative broken down into moral vignettes of moral mandates. Michael J. Gorman writes:

Twenty centuries later the cross has become so familiar to us, and perhaps so sanitized of its stark reality as a tool of political and social control, that we often fail to perceive the inherently radical nature of a spirituality of the cross. Our distance from the meaning of crucifixion in the first century means our connection to it is bound to be skewed. Embracing the cross requires, therefore, another act of the imagination, this time of the historical imagination.³⁴⁵

³⁴⁴ Walter Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament: Testimony, Dispute, Advocacy* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1997) 486, 558, 718.

³⁴⁵ Michael J. Gorman, *Cruciformity: Paul’s Narrative Spirituality of the Cross* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001), 383–384.

On the one hand, inanimate objects do not have imaginations. On the other hand, humans apply imagination to objects. This includes assumptions of whatever obligations inherent to the pursuit of Scripture *veritas*. Christian Secularists limit personal commitments to arrive at a Secularist worldview holding a personally amicably desired metaphysical conclusion.

As an example, author Andrew Lincoln denies the Virgin Birth (more specifically, the Virgin Conception) of Christ, yet still maintains his self-identification as a Christian.³⁴⁶ Lincoln illustrates those in the Christian faith who reject the supernatural. Moreover, Lincoln is a respected scholar serving as President of the British NT Society, and Portland Professor of New Testament in the University of Gloucestershire. For Lincoln, albeit the existence of a hermeneutical argument carrying Christians who make the biblical texts particularly important for faith, a diversity of views does not conclude veracity. Secularists, including Christian Secularists adopt doctrines of personal convenience. Theology reflects history and revisionist history in culture, including metaphysics, and *metanoia* beyond metanarratives.

Metaphysics for the Christian Secularist

Metaphysics remains as much historical as it does theological. The three Personhoods of the Godhead provides a good example. Richard D. Patterson and Andrew Hill argue that the Trinity prepares and holds the entirety of the salvation story, explaining why the Christian church must reintroduce the Trinity for two reasons. First, in a pluralistic world full of variegated worldviews, the doctrine of the Trinity makes Christianity unique. Second, Patterson and Hill write, “like it or not, we find ourselves living in a society that craves a future without a past...characterized by a ‘centripetal individualism’ that scorns any communal record...because

³⁴⁶ Andrew T. Lincoln, *Born of a Virgin?: Reconceiving Jesus in the Bible Tradition and Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2013).

of its preoccupation with self-gratification in the ‘present tense.’”³⁴⁷ Secular doctrinal injections of what is not real, loaded with pretensions get in the way of traditional Christianity.

Edward C. Appel argues that Secular Christians today require metaphysicians that are “coy theologians.” Appel writes, “[Kenneth] Burke founds his own dramatistic philosophy of language...on a few patently metaphysical propositions...and features theology as the exemplar of symbolic action...and dramatism/logology is best understood as an approach to language...as a quasi-gnostic universalism.”³⁴⁸ The result of fitting metaphysics into word definitions one finds personally palatable relegates the eschatology of one’s personal salvation to a future event performed by a distant non-controlling deity.

Nevertheless, belief in the soul is not new in myriad worldviews. Robert Duncan Culver writes, “despite intense attack in the last several generations against the existence of the soul and its permanent, conscious existence after death, it remains the conviction of almost everyone...pagans, Jews, Christians and secularists...the major non-Christian religions...a consensus gentium, i.e., common consent of the (human) race.”³⁴⁹ Interacting with Culver, at least within the confines of the Christian worldview, there is space for Secular Christians to accept biblical doctrine dependent upon who, when, whether, if, and where some universal deity judges each personal soul; creating a necessary theism to accommodate all these views. Christian secularism, more aptly, Christian universalism spackles these gaps.

³⁴⁷ Richard D. Patterson and Andrew E. Hill, *Minor Prophets, Hosea–Malachi*, Cornerstone Biblical Commentary Vol. 10 (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale, 2008), 321.

³⁴⁸ Edward C. Appel, “Kenneth Burke: Coy Theologian,” *Journal of Communication and Religion*, 16 no. 2 [1993]: 99–110.

³⁴⁹ Robert Duncan Culver, *Systematic Theology: Biblical and Historical* (Ross-shire, U.K.: Mentor, 2005), 1030.

The most prevalent remains the area of forgiveness by God, including whatever minimum requisite standard by which God judges man as “passing the test [mine]” drives the answer. Biblically, considering discussion regarding why many Christians read the Bible in ways that dismiss or deny certain elements, is Secularists accept need to simply say sorry while Christians are called to repent (change of mind) before their Creator. Christian Secularists remain somewhere in between theologically.

Metanoia for the Christian Secularist

Etymology behind the word *metanoia* includes *nous*, mind and *noieo*, to exercise the mind. According to Rick Flanders, Luke speaks more about repentance than faith in his Gospel. For example, Luke 7:50 connects faith to salvation. Flanders writes, “In chapter 5, Jesus calls sinners ‘to repentance,’ and in chapter 7 He tells a sinner that her ‘faith’ had ‘saved’ her. Which is it then, repentance or faith...Either one brings salvation...Repentance and faith are two sides of the same coin...When a sinner believes on Christ for his salvation, he has repented.”³⁵⁰ Interacting with Flanders, *metanoia* is a change of mind on a deep spiritual level. The word for repent or repentance is used 69 times in the ESV, 73 times in the NASB, 74 times in the NIV, and 106 times in the KJV.³⁵¹ While Scripture speaks of repentance, Christian Secularists create their own standards for God. This is best understood as a form of Reductionism resident within Christian Secularism.

³⁵⁰ Rick Flanders, “7 Biblical Facts About Repentance A Look at What Repentance Is (And Isn’t),” accessed January 22, 2022, <https://ministry127.com/christian-living/7-biblical-facts-about-repentance>.

³⁵¹ Matt Slick, “How Many Times.” accessed January 22, 2022, <https://carm.org/about-the-bible/how-many-times-do-various-words-appear-in-the-bible/>.

Carl F. H. Henry thought that Reductionism attacks believer's faith like a virus. Henry wrote, "We are under no Christian necessity...to limit human cognition of God...whom their former cohorts may demean as a few mentally exhausted and emotionally frayed naturalists who have turned to religion...even some secularists come to forgiveness of their sins...sharing in the redemptive vitalities of biblical theism."³⁵² Interacting with Henry, Scripture, to which secular Christians do not particularly adhere, generally undervalue the power of repentance.

Original language provides a key to understanding an author's intent in the text. Joseph A. Fitzmyer writes, "[salvific] destiny is freely granted by the Savior-King to one who is repentant (who has experienced *metanoia*) and turns to the source of salvation (in *epistrophē*)."³⁵³ Nowhere does biblical text turn to one's self-reliance but submission. However, the world seeks spiritual solutions in self instead of Spirit. Christian Secularists side with personal works instead of the deeper repentance the Bible speaks of repetitively.

Modification of Traditional Biblical/Linguistic Definitions

Some Christian Secularists also modify contemporaneous biblical word meanings in ways that align with Antisupernaturalist presuppositions. The unavoidable product of this method is conflating contemporaneous linguistic distinctions with contemporary philosophic agendas. Wink offered an example of this by comingling the term "powers" via his exegesis falling outside traditional word meanings. For example, human structures such as governments and institutions represent the outpouring of evil instead of malevolent incorporeal entities.

³⁵² Henry, *God, Revelation*, 15.

³⁵³ Joseph A. Fitzmyer S.J., *The Gospel according to Luke X-XXIV: Introduction, Translation, and Notes*, Vol. 28A (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008), 1509.

On the one hand as an example, Alan J. Hauser reconstructs the miracle stories to accurately recreate the historical Jesus. Hauser writes, “[Paulus] argued that the stories of exorcisms of demons in fact refer to Jesus’ curing victims of mental disorders.”³⁵⁴ Hauser provides an example of Nominalism at work. In this case, an illness and a demon are viewed interchangeably.

Some employ philosophical arguments as trumping historicity. As an example, Bruce Lincoln has discredited demonic influence and exorcisms, fundamental parts of religious history.³⁵⁵ Many self-identifying as Christian, yet operating secular-centrally such as within non-theistic academia argue both worldviews interchangeably.

On the other hand, Theo-centric academics such as Keener think history itself is at least subject to prejudice but not necessarily biased. Keener writes, “[despite enlightened skeptics’] epistemological presuppositions of which are not guarantors of effective historical research...The majority of ancient historians...did not *a priori* decide all claims.”³⁵⁶ Of note, Langdon B. Gilkey (AD 1919–2004) acknowledged the impact of the Enlightenment on academia, characterizing the modern university as hypocritical and morally irrelevant. Gilkey provided the mirror image of the portrait the Enlightenment paints of the church onto itself. Moreover, he called for a mutually enriching relationship between academia and the church to avoid the danger of real demonic structures.³⁵⁷

³⁵⁴ Alan J. Hauser, *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*, ed. John D. Barry et al., (Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2016), s.v. “Biblical Interpretation, History of.”

³⁵⁵ Bruce Lincoln, “Cesmag, the Lie, and the Logic of Zoroastrian Demonology,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 129 no. 1 [2009]: 45–55.

³⁵⁶ Keener, *Miracles*, 93.

³⁵⁷ Langdon B. Gilkey, “Religion and the Secular University” *Dialog*, 8 no. 2 [1969]: 108–16.

Christianity is influenced by secular academia at a growing rate. Ed Stetzer writes:

As the religiously unaffiliated grow and their influence widens, a secular worldview has become the dominant influence in academia, the arts and popular media. Some Christians feel marginalized and mocked when they turn on their televisions and send their children to school. For years, Christians could assume a person with whom they struck up a conversation was probably a fellow believer. If not, the other person would at least share their cultural values. But that is no longer the case.³⁵⁸

The non-literal biblical worldview to which Stetzer refers is now accepted in Christianity. Hence, there are many Christians that reject supernatural elements contained in the Bible. This is surprising considering the pervasive relativism resident preaches tolerance over dogma.

The unseen realm is not provable by these measurements. Neither is Pi. On the one hand, Pi is accepted as real, although not viewable to its end. On the other hand, the unseen realm is neither viewable, nor provable to its end. For many, the former is accepted. For many, the latter is not. For Modernists, even those within the church, the former proof is sufficient, the latter is not. This did not happen overnight; hence Progressivism replaces Skepticism.

Skeptical Academia to Theocracy

Academic Skepticism regarding the existence of an absolute authority was aided by contemporaneous Modernist/Rationalist Friedrich Schleiermacher. Benjamin B. Warfield commented on the epistemology of Schleiermacher's theological method. Warfield's taxonomy of beliefs includes the definition of dogma as an authoritatively established truth that is not to be disputed.³⁵⁹

³⁵⁸ Ed Stetzer, "Nominal Christians are becoming more Secular, and that's creating a Startling Change for the U.S." accessed January 27, 2022, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/acts-of-faith/wp/2015/11/04/nominal-christians-becoming-more-secular-and-thats-creating-a-startling-change-for-the-u-s/>.

³⁵⁹ Benjamin B. Warfield, *The Works of Benjamin B. Warfield: Studies in Theology*, Vol. 9 (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2008), 93.

The examples include the “Romanist” (Catholic) who finds dogma in decrees of the Church. The Protestant finds dogma in Scripture.³⁶⁰ Warfield wrote, “‘Moderns’ will attenuate it into whatever general considerations exist to commend the propositions in question...and will not pause until they have transmuted dogmas into—to put it shortly—just *our* ‘religious beliefs (Italics Warfield’s).’”³⁶¹ Just as whether knowledge is derived from natural observation or from biblical revelation remains in perpetual debate between those within and outside the church, relativity regarding the difference between truth and religious beliefs cf. religious beliefs and contemporaneous cultural obscurity is afforded to anyone self-identifying as Christian.

The *either side of the fence* theological method remains remarkably simple, yet overwhelmingly a-Scriptural, feeding the thirst of the enlightened to the postmodern. Beginning with modernist deists, since realities surrounding the Devil clashed with the rationalistic goal of harmonious simplification of human experience, the Devil needed to be erased from life’s equation. G. C. Berkouwer wrote, “The Devil appeared to disrupt the harmony and balance of life. If he were done away with, a stumbling block could be taken away from the Christian faith, and life could be freed from the oppression of the demonic.”³⁶² Keener argues that Postmodernity is a backlash against the Enlightenment. He writes, “critiques from other cultures and Western postmodernism challenge the hegemonic assumptions of Western Enlightenment

³⁶⁰ Clark, *Know and Love God*, loc. 1178; In contrast to Modernists, Clark’s locus of theological method for evangelicals argues that Christian evangelical theology transcends just biblical propositions. Instead, doing good theology involves more than, and simultaneously never less than, *Scientia* or holding to biblical inerrancy. Second, Clark argues for *sapientia* or wisdom/philosophy as having an equally important role in Christian theological method. At first, Clark’s perspective would appear to comport with Allen (conscientiously), Lonergan (culturally), and Lindbeck (linguistically) in prioritizing philosophical wisdom over Logos. However, Clark argues that Scripture alone (*sola Scriptura*) maintains “sole and ultimate authority.”

³⁶¹ Warfield, “*Works*,” 93–94.

³⁶² G. C. Berkouwer, *Faith and Perseverance, Studies in Dogmatics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1958), 158–159.

tradition...they dismiss these views in favor of many Enlightenment traditions without even evaluating the bases for the different approach.”³⁶³ However, Keener holds David Hume more accountable for such foible than Berkouwer’s Schleiermacher.

Keener concurs with the findings of the early Christian apologists who describe miracles historically in terms understandable by ordinary Christians. Early Christianity does not reflect an Antisupernaturalist worldview. Instead, the opposite. Specifically, Keener provides a good outline when he writes, “In the 300s, exorcisms and miracles are the most explicit cause of conversion to Christianity...[Origen] claimed that...he had witnessed some of these incidents...Athanasius in the 350s [confronted] skeptics...to just observe Christ’s power healing them...The Middle Ages saw healings by Martin of Tours, and many others...the Reformation brought advancement in Christian Skepticism.”³⁶⁴ These evidential facts remain central to an inductive argument for continuation of the gifts of exorcism and healing beyond the limitations of modern thinking. Instead, employing text reconstruction and today, text deconstruction cloaks Antisupernaturalism denying the existence and activity of demons.

Michael Green pushes back on the Enlightenment in battling what he terms “the Pharisee spirit.” First, evil forces on human life are a real phenomenon. Unlike NT healing from disease, demons must be “driven out” (Mt 12:15, 27). Second, the Gospel term “*daimonizomai*” meaning “be demonized,” does not parse between terms of oppression or possession. Affliction is affliction (Mt 12:20).

Third, Scripture compares Satan to a thief that must be bound and then thrown out of the house (Mt 12:28–9). Fourth, generations of “widespread apostasy and rejection of the light of

³⁶³ Keener, *Miracles*, 102.

³⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 366–71.

God” yields danger of demonization (Mt 12:43–45). Fifth, reinfection by cast out demons is scripturally possible absent of Holy Spirit infilling (Mt. 12:43–45).

Finally, Jesus’ deliverance from demons remains a primary mark of “the breaking in of the kingdom” (Mt 12:28). Green concludes, “however difficult it is for us to cope intellectually with the possibility of evil forces affecting the lives of human beings, we would be unwise to rule it out and thus to ignore the plain text of the New Testament.”³⁶⁵ Yet many Christians do not view Scripture as adequate reason to arrest doubt regarding activity of demons.

Doubt in the Face of Evidence

For example, Tatian named heretics as conforming their lives to the inferior. Tatian wrote, “Such are the demons; these are they who laid down the doctrine of Fate.”³⁶⁶ Regarding matters of atheism and its connection to demonic influence, Justin argued in favor of the existence of demons. Justin wrote, “the instigation of evil demons...[who] defiled women and corrupted boys and showed such fearful sights to men...who did not use their reason...called them gods...by true reason and examination...and deliver men from the demons...whose actions will not bear comparison with those even of men desirous of virtue.”³⁶⁷ Justin additionally acknowledged the appearances of demons.

Specifically, Justin asserted that demons, taking as their ally the lust of wickedness in every man draw man to vice.³⁶⁸ In *First Apology* 14, he wrote that demons cause deception away

³⁶⁵ Michael Green, *The Message of Matthew: The Kingdom of Heaven* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2001), 149–150.

³⁶⁶ Tatian, *Oration to the Greeks*, 9–12.

³⁶⁷ Justin Martyr, “The First Apology of Justin.”

³⁶⁸ Ibid.

from Christian doctrine (cf. 56, 62) promoting activities such as “fornication” and “magical arts” (cf. Irenæus, *Against Heresies* 1.25.3). Justin makes clear that Heiser’s view of Genesis 6:1–4 *bene ha-'elohim* was preceded by Patristics.³⁶⁹

Where once the monolithic church caused interpretation and obedience to Scripture, today, like in the case of deconstructionists, the reader officiates textual meaning/author intent. James R. Edwards writes, “The Sanhedrin opts for ‘suspended judgment,’ or ‘keeping an open mind’...In reality, it [the human mind] shuffles among the options of Skepticism, unbelief, and cowardice.”³⁷⁰ Secularism, through culture, gained access to perceived authority over the text. Authority affects culture. Culture affects beliefs. Beliefs affect worldviews. Indirectly, Secularism gained access to the church and beliefs in Who it once exalted over self-interests.

Beauty in the Eyes of the Beholder: The Difference between Revelation and Enlightenment

The dissertation first proposes that there is notable difference between definitions of each word. John Van Engen writes, “we are heirs of the Enlightenment much more than we realize. The Enlightenment exalted reason, and thus repudiated revelation, faith, religious ritual, and rote learning as ignorant superstitions. That has colored our ability to appreciate the medieval religious culture, which tried to base itself on revelation as much as reason.”³⁷¹ For example, shifting Christian perspective is found in Barthian Neo-Orthodoxy.

³⁶⁹ Justin, “First Apology”.

³⁷⁰ James R. Edwards, *The Gospel according to Mark*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002), 353.

³⁷¹ John Van Engen, “Stepping into a Christian Culture,” *Christian History Magazine* 49 (Carol Stream, IL: Christianity Today, 1996). Logos

The interpretation Barth presented is one where God reveals through Scripture, but that Word requires enlightenment by the Holy Spirit. Barth wrote, “The revelation of God in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit is the judging but also reconciling presence of God in the world of human religion, that is, in the realm of man’s attempts to justify and to sanctify himself before a capricious and arbitrary picture of God. The Church is the locus of true religion, so far as through grace it lives by grace.”³⁷² Alger and Abbot write, “Revelation is not to receive an announcement; it is to perceive a truth...For this new enlightenment, sanctification, or rise of life, is what alone constitutes a true revelation.”³⁷³ However, the dividing line between the two terms is not understood by secular Christianity in this way.

Instead, the Postmodernist not only supersedes Modernist philosophy, but holds great disdain for it. Davis and Hays write, “Revelation in modern perspective...[is taken] as an enlightenment by which we believe we can finally make sense of the encompassing all...an all-embracing totality...the key change brought about by postmodernity is the reluctance of people today to give credence to the overarching and monolithic perspectives of modern rationality.”³⁷⁴ R. C. Sproul wrote, “worldviews have been developed that involve Skepticism about basic Christian tenets...agnosticism that denies God is knowable, the rationalism that denies He is incomprehensible, the idealism that denies He is transcendent, and the existentialism that denies

³⁷² Karl Barth, Geoffrey William Bromiley, and Thomas F. Torrance, *Church Dogmatics: Index, with Aids for the Preacher*, Vol. 5 (New York, NY: T&T Clark, 2004), 3.

³⁷³ William Rounseville Alger and Ezra Abbot, *The Destiny of the Soul: A Critical History of the Doctrine of a Future Life, with a Complete Bibliography of the Subject*, Tenth Edition. (Boston, MA: Roberts Brothers, 1880), 698.

³⁷⁴ Ellen F. Davis and Richard B. Hays, “Reading,” in *The Art of Reading Scripture* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), 121.

rationality...un-[biblically] and antibiblical principles seep into men's theologies."³⁷⁵ Any amount of yeast included in the dough affects the entire loaf.

A Little Leaven Ruins the Entire Loaf

Christian post-moderns' rebel against moderns in a manner not dissimilar to the way Calvinists mutineer the Roman Catholic Church. On the one hand, Enlightenment modernist thinking allowed for both knowable truth as well as faith existing in a supernatural space "above the line of despair." On the other hand, postmodernism shuns the knowability of truth, but allows for a bevy of supernatural options as a matter of preference. Thereby, existence in the supernatural or incorporeal remains no more a certainty than any other truth claim levied by Christians, the existence and activity of demons included.

For the church, whereas its history books including the epistles, gospel accounts, and Book of Acts once were ingested as God relaying reality (dogma), for many Christians Scripture morphed into what the church believes constitute reality (doctrine). Medievalism to Modernism to Postmodernism reflects the introduction of a strange wild yeast into the dough, yielding variegated results. While Postmoderns lack assuredness in any specific supernatural force, spiritual belief is permissible so long as nobody asserts being sure about anything. Nobody has an absolute license to claim that anything is knowable absolutely. This includes insertion or deletion of any other's propositions of preference regarding the incorporeal.

³⁷⁵ R. C. Sproul, *Can I Trust the Bible?* Vol. 2 in The Crucial Questions Series (Lake Mary, FL: Reformation Trust, 2009), xxvii–xxviii.

Chapter Conclusion

This chapter demonstrated that many Christians read the Bible in ways that dismiss its supernatural elements for reasons including they remain subject to the same social influencers as Secularists. Christian Secularists engage in modifying the traditional definitions of words to justify *a priori* doctrinal agendas. In recent context, Ravi Zacharias attempted to present a post-Christ example of the Christian life through examples of moral and ethical relativism. The Chapter's thesis that secular method, even in Christian theology, underhandedly alters spiritual commitments and outcomes is inductively proved. The dissertation proceeds to inductively argue the existence and activity of demons using Historian's Rules.

CHAPTER FIVE: HOW SCHOLARS CAN REFUTE SECULARISM AND DEFEND THE SUPERNATURAL WORLDVIEW INCLUDING THE EXISTENCE AND ACTIVITY OF DEMONS

Chapter Introduction

The purpose of this chapter of the is to deploy Historian's Rules in investigation of the Mount of Transfiguration episode contained in the Synoptic Gospels. The scope of the chapter is to draw conclusions making the existence and activity of demons plausible. Whereas what is "possible" is merely anything above an impossibility or zero likelihood, what is "plausible" appears most-likely, inductively true.

Thereunder, Scripture provides three independent writers' descriptions and emphasis occurring one day following a supernatural panorama that includes the casting out of a demon by Jesus. The chapter will demonstrate that those holding an Antisupernaturalist worldview, yet nonetheless self-identifying as Christian, employ changes in word definitions and meaning to support their preferred doctrine. The chapter's thesis is a supernatural worldview is plausible when the event is measured by Historian's Rules holding the same criteria Secularists apply in vetting non-biblical historicity. Specifically, historians and judges of history all share the criteria of Coherence, Dissimilarity, Eyewitness Sources, Multiple Attestation, Embarrassment, Surprise Elements, and Discontinuity in vetting historicity. The chapter will deploy these elements in vetting historicity of the Transfiguration.

Background

Each synoptic writer and his work are worthy of a brief background investigation including the dating and target audience whom each writer intended to affect. John A. Broadus writes, "Raphael's great picture, of which everybody has seen engravings, represents the effort of the apostles to heal the child as going on at the same time with the Transfiguration scene...[as]

they descended into the midst of human suffering and of human unbelief,”³⁷⁶ Secularists and theists generally agree upon some historical perspectives, including the legendary Broadus depicts. The authenticity of each synoptic will first be reviewed in terms of conservative and liberal scholarship.

Matthew

Brian Chilton thinks internal evidence resident within Matthew’s account indicate authenticity. Chilton writes, “[Matthew] is thoroughly entrenched in Judaism and quotes from the OT, particularly its Messianic prophecy...why ascribe the First Gospel to a tax-collector unless there was at least some merit to the claim?”³⁷⁷ Moreover, Chilton argues that external sources are compelling for Matthean authorship.

Pantænus (AD 120–200) along with Eusebius (died c. AD 329) each engaged with the Hebrew translation of Matthew’s gospel and concur that Matthew is the author. Chilton writes, “[with] Origen and Irenæus’s acceptance of Matthew writing the First Gospel, one is hard-pressed to dismiss their claims.”³⁷⁸ Alternatively, liberal scholarship dissents.

For example, Heinrich August Wilhelm Meyer (AD 1800–1873) viewed evidence as indicating non-Matthean authorship. Meyer wrote, “In the form...the Gospel now exists, it cannot have originally proceeded from...Matthew...the living recollection of an apostolic eye-

³⁷⁶ John A. Broadus, *Commentary on the Gospel of Mark* (Philadelphia, PA: American Baptist, 1905), 72; Broadus writes, “**Were greatly amazed**, probably because they had been all the morning seeking Jesus, and even the nine could give no idea where he was, and now they suddenly saw him coming. The idea that the Saviour’s face still shone, like that of Moses (Exod. 34:29–35), is possible, but fanciful, and such an appearance would not have made the multitude run to him, but rather shrink from him. They would have feared him rather than been attracted to him (emphasis Broadus’s).”

³⁷⁷ Brian Chilton, “Who wrote the Gospel of Matthew?,” accessed October 5, 2022, <https://crossexamined.org/wrote-gospel-matthew/>.

³⁷⁸ Ibid.

witness and a participator in the events...the preliminary history with its legendary enlargements, which far oversteps the original beginning of the gospel announcement...and its original contents...presents a later historical formation, added to the original gospel history.”³⁷⁹ John Nolland charges that the original writer cannot be knowable. Nolland writes, “Those who first read Matthew undoubtedly knew who wrote it, but as its usage became widespread and its authority established the matter of authorship seems to have dropped from sight. For convenience I will continue to speak of the author as ‘Matthew’, but the use of the name is no more than a convenience.”³⁸⁰ Moreover, Matthew’s manuscript is not autographed, adding to the fray.³⁸¹

The Dating of Matthew’s Gospel

The dating of Matthew is likewise controversial between conservative and liberal scholarship. Generally, traditional scholarship dates Matthew earlier than liberal commentators. On the one hand, Chilton writes, “It is certainly reasonable to accept that Matthew was written in the 50s due to the reasonable assumption that Acts was finished before AD 64, with Luke coming before Acts, and Matthew writing his Gospel before Luke’s.”³⁸² Conversely, Nolland thinks publication of Matthew is attributed to sometime in the second century AD via Papias and Eusebius based upon translation of original Hebrew and Aramaic sayings into NT Koine

³⁷⁹ Heinrich August Wilhelm Meyer, *Critical and Exegetical Handbook to the Gospel of Matthew*, ed. Frederick Crombie, trans. Peter Christie, Vol. 1, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* (Edinburgh, Scotland: T&T Clark, 1880), 3–4.

³⁸⁰ John Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005), 4.

³⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 2.

³⁸² Chilton, “Matthew”

Greek.³⁸³ Meyer however, placed Matthew's publication "AD 41 based upon Eusebius of Caesarea, in the *Chronicon*. But the outcome of a desire to place the Gospel as early as possible...the determination of the time within the 60 years has been for the most part rightly adhered to."³⁸⁴ Later in the dissertation it will become apparent that dating of accounts, especially in context of linear proximity to an event, is important to historians vetting accounts. For now, Matthew's target audience is important to consider.

Matthew's Intended Audience

It is commonly agreed that regardless of his original manuscript being extant, unsigned, or dating in controversy, Matthew's target audience is not in question. According to J. K. Brown, "Most scholars consider that Matthew was writing to a Jewish audience that had been persuaded that Jesus was God's Messiah. The frequently used fulfillment quotations, emphasis on Jesus as fulfilling the Torah, and the omission of explanation of Jewish customs from Mark (e.g., Mt 15:2 // Mk 7:3–4), provide some of the rationale for the determination of a Jewish audience (although, for the view that Matthew's audience is largely Gentile in composition."³⁸⁵ Similarly, Meyer wrote, "Matthew...intended for *the Jewish Christians of Palestine*...the Hebrew Gospel also...confirmed by... Irenæus...Origen...Eusebius, Jerome, and others...quotations from the O. T. [all] to prove that the history of Jesus is the fulfilment of Messianic prophecy...*to demonstrate Jesus to be the Messiah*...by means of the history and teaching of Jesus...*He who was promised*

³⁸³ Nolland, *Matthew*, 2.

³⁸⁴ Meyer, *Matthew*, 26–27.

³⁸⁵ J. K. Brown, *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels, Second Edition* ed. Joel B. Green, Jeannine K. Brown, and Nicholas Perrin (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2013), s.v. "Matthew, Gospel of,".

in the O. T....the premature thought of a Jewish Christian. [italics Meyer's]"³⁸⁶ There are additional clues to conclude that Matthew intended his gospel for a Jewish ANE audience.

Louis A. Barbieri Jr. agrees that Matthew's gospel is written to a Jewish audience as evidenced by several factors. First, Barbieri notes Matthew's inclusion of numerous OT quotations and events. Second, Matthew emphasizes that Jesus Christ is the Messiah of Israel and central in God's "kingdom program;" the Messiah comporting with the OT narratives. Barbieri writes, "The Book of Matthew includes some 'mysteries' about the kingdom, which had not been revealed in the Old Testament. These 'mysteries' show that the kingdom has taken a different form in the present Age, but that the promised Davidic kingdom will be instituted at a future time when Jesus Christ returns to earth to establish His rule."³⁸⁷ Moreover, Barbieri makes a third point.

Barbieri cites the first verse of Matthew. He writes, "David's name appear[s] before Abraham's...Would not Abraham, the father of the nation, be more significant to a Jewish mind? Perhaps Matthew listed the name of David first because the King who would rule over the nation was to come through David (2 Sam. 7:12–17)."³⁸⁸ Additional basis undergirding Barbieri's claim of Matthew as writer is that Matthew finishes his gospel with the Great Commission to "go and make disciples of all nations" (Mt 28:19).³⁸⁹

³⁸⁶ Meyer, *Matthew*, 22–23.

³⁸⁷ Louis A. Barbieri Jr., "Matthew," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, Vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor, 1985), 16–17.

³⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

Literary Distinctives of Matthew's Gospel

Barbieri observes two literary distinctives inherent to Matthew. First, great emphasis is placed upon Jesus's teaching ministry. While this may be considered more theological in nature than literary, Barbieri clarifies the difference when he writes "Matthew has the largest blocks of discourse material. No other Gospel contains so much of Jesus' teachings."³⁹⁰ Such includes the Sermon on the Mount (Mt 5–7), Jesus's instructions to His disciples embarking on ministry (Mt 10), presentation of the parables regarding the kingdom (Mt 13), Jesus's admonition of Israel's religious leaders (Mt 23), and Matthew's account of His Olivet Discourse explaining future events (Mt 24–25).

Second, some of Matthew's material is arranged logically rather than chronologically. Barbieri writes, "As examples, the genealogical tables are broken into three equal groups, a large number of miracles are given together, and the opposition to Jesus is given in one section. Matthew's purpose is obviously more thematic than chronological."³⁹¹ While in some respect the nature of content is key to distinguishing Matthew from the two other synoptics, the ordering of content also sets Matthew apart.

Theological Distinctives of Matthew's Gospel

Matthew is centered upon concepts that are not foreign to the two other synoptic writers, nonetheless unique considering Mark and Luke. William Klassen argues, "The motivation for Matthew is the same as for Luke: becoming a child of God. 'Only so can you be children of your heavenly Father' (Matt 5:45a). Instead of stressing the gentleness and compassion of God,

³⁹⁰ Barbieri Jr., "Matthew," 16–17.

³⁹¹ Ibid.

Matthew stresses God's impartiality. The sun rises on good and bad alike; the rain is sent on the just and the unjust alike. An insight appearing in Jewish wisdom literature."³⁹² Mark as second gospel has a different background both in influence and intent than Matthew.

Mark

Traditional Commentators such as Chilton view Mark's Gospel as written by John Mark in transcribing accounts of the epistle writer and Apostle Peter. Chilton writes, "John Mark was the son of a widow woman named Mary (Acts 12:12–17)...John Mark was also the cousin of Barnabas (Colossians 4:10)...[accompanying] Paul and Barnabas on their missionary journeys...Paul added that Mark was useful for the ministry (Colossians 4:10)."³⁹³ Regarding external evidence, Chilton cites Patristics as sources.

Chilton specifically notes Papias of Hierapolis (AD 60–130) as providing the identity of the writer as John Paul. Papias wrote, "Mark having become the interpreter of Peter, wrote down accurately whatsoever he remembered. It was not, however, in exact order that he related the sayings or deeds of Christ. For he neither heard the Lord nor accompanied Him. But afterwards... he accompanied Peter...with no intention of giving a regular narrative of the Lord's sayings."³⁹⁴ Irenæus (AD 130–200) also provides external evidence for Markan authorship.

³⁹² William Klassen, *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman, (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1992), s.v. "Love: NT and Early Jewish Literature,".

³⁹³ Brian Chilton, "Who wrote the Gospel of Mark," accessed November 30, 2022, <https://bellatorchristi.com/2017/06/12/who-wrote-the-gospel-of-mark/>.

³⁹⁴ Chilton, "Mark;" Papias, "Fragments of Papias," in *The Apostolic Fathers with Justin Martyr and Irenaeus*, ed. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe, Vol. 1, The Ante-Nicene Fathers (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Company, 1885), 154–155.

Such comes in the form of the Patristics' writings. Irenæus wrote, "After their departure, Mark, the disciple and interpreter of Peter, did also hand down to us in writing what had been preached by Peter."³⁹⁵ Thus, the early church unanimously concurred that John Mark was the writer of the Gospel named after him.³⁹⁶

The Dating of Mark's Gospel

Like authorship, Markan dating also is based upon evidence. As an example, James R. Edwards writes, "a combination of external and internal data appears to point to a composition of the Gospel of Mark in Rome between the great fire in [AD] 64 and the siege and destruction of Jerusalem by Titus in [AD] 70, that is, about the year [AD] 65."³⁹⁷ Chilton thinks that based upon Irenæus' reference to Peter's "departure" and Peter's martyrdom, Mark was written in the mid to late AD 60s or possibly earlier. Chilton writes, "Most scholars hold that Mark was written first, while others hold that Matthew was the first to be written. Good evidence suggests a date for Mark's Gospel at some time in the 50s, with some even suggesting a date to the late 40s." Carsten Peter Thiede analyzes the same data.

Thiede in considering Irenæus's importance in dating Mark also employs external evidence inherent to proper dating. Thiede writes, "Irenaeus never uses *exodus* when he means 'death.' For 'death,' he always employs the unequivocal Greek word *thanatos*. Thus, Mark's Gospel was probably written not after the *deaths* of Peter and Paul but after their *departure* from

³⁹⁵ Chilton, "Mark;" Irenaeus of Lyons, "Irenæus against Heresies," in *The Apostolic Fathers with Justin Martyr and Irenaeus*, ed. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe, vol. 1, The Ante-Nicene Fathers (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Company, 1885), 414.

³⁹⁶ Chilton, "Mark."

³⁹⁷ Edwards, *Mark*, 7–12.

Rome—some time before.³⁹⁸ Jordan Smith calculates the precise date of Peter’s and James’ execution precisely as June 29 AD 57.³⁹⁹ Thus evidence dates Mark’s gospel on or after AD 57 and circa AD 65 and AD 70.

Nonetheless, some liberal scholars such as Bart Ehrman place Mark in the second century. Ehrman writes, “We shouldn’t think that there were basically FOUR [gospels], and everything else was dependent...on the four. There were lots floating around all at the same time...by the end of the second century at the earliest. Just as Matthew and Luke used Mark, so other Gospels used other Gospels. And some of these other Gospels used Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John...Papyrus Egerton 2 has close ties...to Mark.”⁴⁰⁰ There is less dispute between conservative and liberal scholarship regarding Mark’s intended audience, however.

Mark’s Intended Audience

It is commonly agreed by both conservative and liberal scholarship that Mark wrote for benefit of a Roman audience.⁴⁰¹ Joseph A. Grassi writes, “Mark writes for an audience oppressed and persecuted by abusive Roman authority.”⁴⁰² Scott Hafemann principally agrees. Hafemann writes, “For Mark’s Roman audience the emperor who led the triumphal procession in his

³⁹⁸ Carsten Peter Thiede, “A Testament Is Born,” *Christian History Magazine* 43 (Carol Stream, IL, 1994). Logos.

³⁹⁹ Jordan Smith, “Bible & Archaeology,” accessed November 9, 2022, <https://bam.sites.uiowa.edu/faq/peter-and-paul-martyrdoms>.

⁴⁰⁰ Bart Ehrman, “The Messy World of Second Century Gospels,” *The Bart Ehrman Blog*, accessed December 1, 2022, <https://ehrmanblog.org>.

⁴⁰¹ Chilton, “Mark;” Chilton writes, “the author writes with a Latin audience in mind as he explained Jewish customs and used Latin terms...Latinisms include the terms census (Mark 12:14), centurion (15:39, 44, 45), (and) denarius (a Roman coin...(and) the author describes the man who carried Jesus’s cross as Simon of Cyrene who is identified as the father of Alexander and Rufus. Alexander and Rufus were known to the believers in Rome.”

⁴⁰² Joseph A. Grassi, *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1992), s.v. “Child, Children.”

attempts at self-glorification and even deification... ‘Mark is presenting an *anti*-triumph in reaction to the contemporary offensive self-divinization efforts of Gaius and especially Nero’...the same Roman soldiers who first mocked Jesus as a triumphant king is the one who joins God himself in confessing Jesus’ lordship.”⁴⁰³ While context is key to such inductive conclusion, it is content that adds to the conversation.

Literary Distinctives of Mark’s Gospel

James R. Edwards names three principle literary distinctives inherent to Mark. These include Mark’s use of “Sandwich Technique,” “*Allegro*,” and Irony.⁴⁰⁴ With respect to the first, Edwards writes, “[Mark] frequently interrupts a story or pericope by inserting a second, seemingly unrelated, story...a comparison of Mark with the other Synoptics reveals that he employs the sandwich technique...to underscore the major themes.”⁴⁰⁵ Second, Edwards writes, [Mark’s] *Allegro* narrative leaves the impression of close proximity to the events described, and his pericopes are set side-by-side like building blocks with virtually no editorial mortar between them...so as to focus unwavering attention on Jesus.”⁴⁰⁶ Finally, regarding irony as a distinctive within Mark, Edwards writes, “[Mark depicts] Jesus as one who challenges, confounds, and sometimes breaks conventional stereotypes, whether religious, social, or political...The religious and moral leaders, as represented in the scribes and Sanhedrin, as an example, are in running

⁴⁰³ Scott Hafemann, *Dictionary of New Testament Background: A Compendium of Contemporary Biblical Scholarship* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000), s.v. “Roman Triumph,”.

⁴⁰⁴ Edwards, *Mark*, 7.

⁴⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 11.

⁴⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 10–11.

combat with Jesus throughout the Gospel.”⁴⁰⁷ Mark’s gospel also includes its own theological distinctives from Matthew’s and Luke’s accounts.

Theological Distinctives of Mark’s Gospel

In Mark’s Christology of Jesus, he employs “Christ” and “Son of God” while Jesus self-referes as “**Son of Man.**”⁴⁰⁸ Edwards writes, “Mark refers to Jesus by various titles—teacher, rabbi, Son of David, Christ, Lord, Son of Man, and Son of God...Son of God [Mk 9:7, 15:39] defines both the beginning and end of the Gospel.”⁴⁰⁹ G. H. Twelftree also notes Mark using the title of Prophet.⁴¹⁰

Additionally, Mark first underlines Jesus as Messiah and later Suffering Servant in his points of focus (Mk 8:27ff.). David M. Reis writes, “For the first eight chapters of Mark Jesus was shown as a messiah...establishing that Jesus had power over sickness and malevolent spirits (which caused sickness)...Starting with 8:27 Mark’s expression of Jesus changed...his role as the Son of God/Messiah...Mark was wanting to identify the Messiah with the oppressed...their own suffering and servile status would be sanctified by the sufferings and...status of Jesus.”⁴¹¹

⁴⁰⁷ Edwards, *Mark*, 10–12.

⁴⁰⁸ Felix Just, “Christology in Mark’s Gospel,” accessed December 1, 2022, <https://catholic-resources.org/Bible/Mark-Christology.htm>.

⁴⁰⁹ G. H. Twelftree, *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, Second Edition, ed. Joel B. Green, Jeannine K. Brown, and Nicholas Perrin (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2013), s.v. “Miracles and Miracle Stories”; Graham H. Twelftree, *Jesus the Miracle Worker: A Historical and Theological Study* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1999), 95; “Lecture 11: Distinctive Theologies in the Gospels of Mark and Matthew,” accessed November 9, 2022, <https://www.biblicaltraining.org/transcriptions/lecture-11-distinctive-theologies-gospels-mark-and-matthew>.

⁴¹⁰ William Rich, *Jesus: Servant and Prophet (Mark 9:14-13:37)*, accessed November 27, 2022, <https://www.trinitychurchboston.org/blog/jesus-servant-and-prophet-mark-914-1337>; “The Gospel in Mark,” accessed November 27, 2022, <https://www.crossway.org/articles/the-gospel-in-mark/>.

⁴¹¹ David M. Reis, *The New Testament*, The University of Oregon, [Spring 2015], accessed December 1, 2022, <https://blogs.uoregon.edu/rel223s15drreis/2015/04/09/jesus-and-the-messiah-in-the-gospel-of-mark/>.

Mark also held an imminent view of end times, use of the word “Gospel” in referring to Jesus’s life story.⁴¹² Luke’s Gospel, considered a Synoptic, differs in emphasis however.⁴¹³

Luke

Traditionally, Luke is credited with writing his Gospel’s namesake. Chilton writes, “Despite the cynicism of critical scholarship, good reasons exist to hold to the traditional view of authorship for the four canonical Gospels (that is, that Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John were the Four Evangelists).”⁴¹⁴ Thereunder, each writer expresses tendencies. Luke is no exception.

In his gleaning of data, it is apparent that Paul holds prominence. Chilton writes, “Luke was not an eyewitness as admitted in the opening verses of the Gospel. The detail and level of complexity in the Greek validates that a highly-educated man wrote the Third Gospel. Luke was a physician. Thus, it stands to reason that Luke was the author of the Third Gospel.”⁴¹⁵

⁴¹² “Lecture 11: Distinctive.”

⁴¹³ David H. Stern, *Complete Jewish Bible: An English Version of the Tanakh (Old Testament) and B’rit Hadashah (New Testament)*, 1st ed. (Clarksville, MD: Jewish New Testament, 1998), Logos; Stern writes, “The first three are known as the Synoptic Gospels (the word “synoptic” means “same viewpoint”), since many of the same incidents are reported in two or three of them, often in similar or even identical language. Scholars have attempted to explain the differences and similarities in the Synoptics, often by postulating that one writer copied from another, or, more sophisticatedly, that two or all three of them had direct or indirect access to some of the same oral or written sources.”

⁴¹⁴ Brian Chilton, “Reasons Why One Should Accept the Traditional Authorship of the Gospels,” accessed December 4, 2022, <https://pastorbrianchilton.wordpress.com/tag/gospel-of-luke/>; John M’Clintock and James Strong, *Cyclopædia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature* (New York, NY: Harper, 1882), 550; M. G. Easton, *Illustrated Bible Dictionary and Treasury of Biblical History, Biography, Geography, Doctrine, and Literature* (New York, NY: Harper, 1893), s.v. “The Synoptists”; Easton wrote, “It is probable that he was a physician in Troas, and was there converted by Paul, to whom he attached himself. He accompanied him to Philippi, but did not there share his imprisonment, nor did he accompany him further after his release in his missionary journey at this time (Acts 17:1). The last notice of the “beloved physician” is in 2 Tim. 4:11.”

⁴¹⁵ Chilton, “Traditional Authorship,” accessed December 4, 2022, <https://pastorbrianchilton.wordpress.com/tag/gospel-of-luke/>; John M’Clintock and James Strong, *Luke*, 550–555; M’Clintock and Strong wrote, “The Second Epistle to Timothy (4:11) gives us the latest glimpse of the “beloved physician,” and our authentic information regarding him beautifully closes with a testimony from the apostle’s pen to his faithfulness amidst general defection, A.D. 64.”

Accordingly, it is prudent to further investigate Luke considering controversial dating and internal distinctives, particularly in light of “the Synoptic Problem.”⁴¹⁶

The Dating of Luke’s Gospel

The dating of Luke’s Gospel and his commonly argued writing of Acts are inter-related. M’Clintock wrote, “All that can be with certainty known of Luke must be gathered from the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistles of Paul. The result is but scanty.”⁴¹⁷ Paul L. Maier writes, “Eusebius (*Hist. Eccl.* 2.22) assumes that...Acts, was written prior to Paul’s trial at Rome...the composition would date to c. 61–62. Luke’s Gospel, accordingly, would necessarily have preceded it...supported by traditionalist scholars.”⁴¹⁸ In any event of narrowing the date of writing or not, it is the historicity of Pauline tradition that trumps the exactness of date of writing.

There is a tradition of scholarship and contemporaneous writings aid in perspectives on Luke as Paulist. M’Clintock wrote, “the almost unanimous consent of the fathers as to the Pauline origin of Luke’s Gospel... [are] Tertullian...Irenæus...Origen...Eusebius... [and]

⁴¹⁶ Carson and Woodbridge, *Scripture and Truth*, 120; Carson and Woodbridge write, “The synoptic problem was widely recognized in the early church...The synoptic problem, however conceived, involves some literary dependence; that is, some New Testament authors are using literary sources...Luke (1:1–4) tells us as much, and there is solid evidence of literary dependence elsewhere...Assured that there were literary sources, modern critics of the past one hundred years or so have expended enormous amounts of energy on retrieving literary sources whose independent existence is not attested anywhere. Source criticism became one of the dominant interests of many New Testament critics at the turn of the century; and this, coupled with the prevailing rationalism, prompted many to date the Gospels (especially Matthew and Luke) rather late and to assess their historical trustworthiness as minimal (by conservative standards).” (See Chapter 4).

⁴¹⁷ John M’Clintock and James Strong, “Luke,” *Cyclopædia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature* (New York, NY: Harper, 1882), 550.

⁴¹⁸ Paul L. Maier, *Dictionary of the Later New Testament and Its Developments*, ed. Ralph P. Martin and Peter H. Davids (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1997), s.v. “Chronology,”.

Jerome.”⁴¹⁹ Furthermore, until Modern scholarship, Luke is accepted as the writer.”⁴²⁰ It is important to consider also for whom Luke intended to influence.

Luke’s Intended Audience

Given Luke’s Pauline background and influence, he partnered with Paul in his missiology. Stephen E. Fowl writes, “Paul even sees the preaching of the gospel to the Gentiles as one of God’s ultimate ends in restoring Israel...Paul cites Isaiah 49:6 ‘I have appointed you as a light for the Gentiles’...For an attentive reader of Luke-Acts, however, this should come as no surprise. The citation from Isaiah 49:6 echoes the prophecy of Simeon that Jesus would become a ‘light to enlighten the Gentiles.’”⁴²¹ There are other clues evident in Luke’s word usage.

As an example, Luke is the only Synoptic that does not use the Jewish term “Rabbi.” Robert A. Kugler and Patrick J. Hartin write, “[Rabbi, is a] Title of respect meaning ‘teacher’ or ‘master.’ Jesus is so designated in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and John. In the Gospel of Luke the title is lacking because Luke’s Gentile audience would see no meaning in the use of a title so strongly rooted in Jewish culture.”⁴²² Additionally, M’Clintock noted that “when Matthew and Luke agree verbally in the common synoptical sections, Mark always agrees with

⁴¹⁹ M’Clintock and Strong, *Luke*, 551; M’Clintock and Strong wrote, “Its authorship has never been questioned until comparatively recent times, when the unsparing criticism of Germany—the main object of which appears to be the demolishing of every ancient belief to set up some new hypothesis in its stead—has been brought to bear upon it, without, however, effectually disturbing the old traditional statement...we are to suppose that during the ‘three months’ of Paul’s sojourn at Philippi (Acts 20:3) Luke was sent from that place to Corinth on this errand, the word ‘gospel’ being, of course, to be understood, not, as Jerome and others erroneously interpret it, of Luke’s written gospel, but of his publication of the glad tidings of Jesus Christ.”

⁴²⁰ Ibid.

⁴²¹ Stephen E. Fowl, *Dictionary of the Later New Testament and Its Developments*, ed. Ralph P. Martin and Peter H. Davids (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1997), s.v. “Paul and Paulinisms in Acts,”.

⁴²² Robert A. Kugler and Patrick J. Hartin, *An Introduction to the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009), xxii.

them also; and that there is not a single instance in these sections of verbal agreement between Matthew and Luke alone.”⁴²³ There are literary and theological distinctives to consider when investigating Luke.

Literary Distinctives of Luke’s Gospel

Both Easton and M’Clintock agree that the style and language of Luke are noteworthy. Easton writes, “Luke’s style is more finished than that of Matthew or Mark. There is more of composition in his sentences. His writing displays greater variety, and the structure is more complex. His diction is substantially the same, but purer, and, except in the first two chapters, less Hebraized.”⁴²⁴ M’Clintock additionally noted that, “To turn from the internal to the external characteristics of Luke’s Gospel, these we shall find no less marked and distinct. His narrative is, as he promised it should be, an orderly one (καθεξής, 1:3); but the order is one rather of subject than of time.”⁴²⁵ Namely, Luke employs stylistic contrasts instead of time chronology in his Gospel. This leads to investigation of Luke’s theological distinctives.

Theological Distinctives of Luke’s Gospel

Luke’s emphasis upon the power of Christ is theologically distinctive from the other two Synoptics. M’Clintock wrote, “[For] Luke, it has been truly remarked, is the gospel of contrasts. Starting with the contrast between the doubt of Zacharias and the trustful obedience of Mary, we find in almost every page proofs of the twofold power of Christ’s word and work foretold by

⁴²³ M’Clintock and Strong, *Luke*, 553.

⁴²⁴ M. G. Easton, *Illustrated Bible Dictionary and Treasury of Biblical History, Biography, Geography, Doctrine, and Literature* (New York, NY: Harper & Brothers, 1893), 429–430; M’Clintock and Strong, *Luke*, 550.

⁴²⁵ M’Clintock and Strong, *Luke*, 553.

Simeon (2:34).”⁴²⁶ As main points of focus, Matthew L. Skinner views Luke’s distinctives as Jesus emphasized as Lord (used to denote God in the LXX), Messiah (as prophesied by Isaiah), Savior, and Jesus the Son of God. Skinner writes, “Jesus frequently uses the expression ‘the Son of Man’ to indicate himself; no other character calls him by this name. In Luke, Jesus employs the title in contexts that clarify his identity and role, specifically as one who will suffer, one who has authority to conduct his ministry, and one who will be vindicated when he returns in glory.”⁴²⁷ These attributes of Jesus are heralded by Luke.

It is the access to His attributes of power that Matthew shares with Luke. Nonetheless, M’Clintock argued that ultimately, “Luke delights to bear witness that none are shut out from God’s mercy—nay, that the outcast and the lost are the special objects of his care and search.”⁴²⁸ The dissertation now proceeds to analyze the Transfiguration episode contained in the Synoptics.

The Synoptic Accounts surrounding the Transfiguration Episode Exegeted by Traditional/Conservative Scholarship, Liberal Scholarship, and Historian’s Rules

Jesus’s Recitation of “Sayings”: Matthew 16:28, Mark 9:1 and Luke 9:27

Good analysis of the Transfiguration narratives commences by analyzing verses preceding the Transfiguration scene. All three accounts describe Jesus’s recitation of sayings. Matthew 16:28 reads, “Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here, **which** shall not taste of death, till they **see** the Son of man coming in his kingdom.” Mark 9:1 reads, “And he [Jesus]

⁴²⁶ M’Clintock and Strong, *Luke*, 554.

⁴²⁷ Matthew L. Skinner, “Theological Themes in Luke,” accessed December 6, 2022, <https://enterthebible.org/courses/luke/lessons/theological-themes-in-luke>.

⁴²⁸ M’Clintock and Strong, *Luke*, 554; M’Clintock and Strong wrote, “Most naturally also in Luke we find the most frequent allusions to that which has been one of the most striking distinctions between the old and modern world—the position of woman as a fellow-heir of the kingdom of heaven.”

said unto them, Verily I **say** unto you, That there **be** some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have **seen** the kingdom of God **come** with power.” Luke 9:27 reads, “But I tell you of a truth, there be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the kingdom of God.” Conservative and liberal scholarship differ on elements of historicity that Historian’s Rules aims resolve.

The Conserve/Traditional View of the “Sayings”

G. Campbell Morgan (AD 1863–1945) argued that Jesus must be identified by His people and His people must be identified by Him in what he terms “The Foundation principle.” Morgan wrote, “The foundation principle is that of identification with Jesus in death and resurrection, and the whole experience of Christian service is described in the words, ‘If we endure, we shall also reign with Him.’ To understand these things is to feel the force of the warnings, ‘If we shall deny Him, He also will deny us.’”⁴²⁹ The sayings serve as both revelation and disclosure of a standard of God’s impending judgment.

John Monroe Gibson (AD 1838–1921) emphasized such standard as being a “test.” Gibson wrote, “It is not enough to discover what they have learned from their intercourse with Him in the past; He must find out whether they have courage enough to face what is now impending in the future...how that He must go unto Jerusalem and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed.”⁴³⁰ J. D. Jones (AD 19386–) thinks Mark’s meaning at the outset of the passage is Jesus signifying the beginning of the future.

⁴²⁹ G. Campbell Morgan, *The Analyzed Bible: Matthew to Revelation*, Vol. 3 (New York, NY: Fleming H. Revell, 1908), 230.

⁴³⁰ John Monroe Gibson, “The Gospel of St. Matthew,” in *The Expositor’s Bible: Jeremiah to Mark*, ed. W. Robertson Nicoll, Vol. 4, Expositor’s Bible (Hartford, CT: S. S. Scranton, 1903), 753–754.

Jones supports legitimacy of the sayings via his pragmatic approach. Jones writes, “The very difficulty of the saying argues strongly for its authenticity, for the early church would scarcely have attributed what appeared to be an unfulfilled prophecy to Jesus. The saying asserts that the arrival of the kingdom of God in power will transpire within the lifetime of the persons addressed. This saying is often combined with sayings of similar effect in the NT.”⁴³¹ As will be shown, while conservative/traditional scholarship employs tenets of Historian’s Rules, liberal exegesis takes a far different approach.

The Liberal View of the “Sayings”

Meyer thought biblical sayings should be viewed as preferred prolegomena instead of a historical account.⁴³² In his exegesis of John’s Gospel, as an example, Meyer thought the narrative regarding the woman caught in adultery (Jn 7:53–8:11) “sayings” are redactions. Meyer wrote, “The Jews understood Him to speak of *natural* death...It is in their view a senseless self-exaltation for Jesus to ascribe to His word, and therefore to Himself, greater power of life than was possessed by Abraham and the prophets, who had not been able to escape death (Italics Meyer’s).⁴³³ Wright writes that contemporaneously, “These would almost certainly have been heard as coded warnings about the need to risk all to bring in the kingdom.”⁴³⁴ Language under

⁴³¹ J. D. Jones, *The Gospel according to St. Mark: 6:7–10:31*, ed. A. R. Buckland Vol. 2, A Devotional Commentary (London, U.K.: Religious Tract Society, 1914), 187; Edwards, *Mark*, 259, 260; Edwards writes, “The insertion appears to be governed by two reasons: (1) that it is compatible with the theme of glory and angels in v. 38; and, more importantly, (2) that the saying introduces the subsequent transfiguration narrative. All three Synoptic Gospels, in fact, preface the account of the transfiguration with the saying (Matt 16:28; Mark 9:1; Luke 9:27).”

⁴³² Meyer, *Matthew*, 291–292.

⁴³³ Heinrich August Wilhelm Meyer, *Critical and Exegetical Handbook to the Gospel of John*, ed. Frederick Crombie, Vol. 2, Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Edinburgh, Scotland: T&T Clark, 1875), 51.

⁴³⁴ Wright, *The Resurrection*, 405.

the lens of form criticism are key to understanding Scripture via liberal exegesis as is shown throughout this section.

Accordingly, both Nolland and Wright employ linguistic interpretation in exegeting Luke. As an example, Nolland writes, “‘seeing’ need not imply impending death.”⁴³⁵ Likewise, Wright thinks “power,” “glory,” “Father,” “Son,” and “seeing” are all linguistic devices used in anticipation of the upcoming Transfiguration narrative “language.”⁴³⁶ Nolland agrees when he writes, “[Luke] 9:21–50 will be identified as a transitional section preparing the reader for the ‘Travel Narrative’ which begins in 9:51.”⁴³⁷ What cannot be overlooked is the liberal perspective of Luke’s reliance upon Mark for gleaning his material.

This leads them to additional vetting of historicity via source criticism. Both Wright and Dibelius reveal the matters in their analysis of the “Sayings.” Wright writes, “Once again in v 27, Luke reproduces his Markan source (=Mark 9:1), but with a number of significant changes, none of which, however, point to any second source.”⁴³⁸ Dibelius held that in analyzing the historicity of sayings the writer’s personal agendas must be dismissed, as well as reader preference. Dibelius wrote, “In the interpretation of unconnected sayings I had to disregard arguments based upon a merely postulated connection of the individual sayings...[otherwise] analysis of an entire section must precede the interpretation of each individual passage.”⁴³⁹ This leads the dissertation to view the passage from an alternate method of analysis.

⁴³⁵ John Nolland, *Luke 1:1–9:20*, Vol. 35A, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas, TX: Word, 1989), 119.

⁴³⁶ John Nolland, *Luke 9:21–18:34*, Vol. 35B, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas, TX: Word, 1993), 485.

⁴³⁷ Nolland, *Luke* 35A, 448.

⁴³⁸ Nolland, *Luke* 35B, 480.

⁴³⁹ Martin Dibelius and Heinrich Greeven, *James: A Commentary on the Epistle of James*, Hermeneia—a Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1976), xi–xii.

The View of the “Sayings” according to the Historian’s Rule of Coherence

The Transfiguration narratives cohere with three individual accounts of the same event occurring. Each account commences with Jesus’s recitation of sayings to his disciples.

Coherence

Coherence (being coherent) is the quality of a historical account being both logical and consistent. Logic and consistency allow the reader to make good sense of the text. Coherence creates a unified whole when considered in context of its parts. Coherence and cohesion are devices that serve to promote connectivity in a treatise. Walter R. Bodine et al. write, “ellipsis, anaphora, definite articles, lexical substitution, conjunctions, tenses, etc....enhance the hearer’s natural inclination to make inferences that will lead to the perception of coherence in a discourse...a surface structure notion, and coherence is a semantic one...often enhanced by cohesive devices.”⁴⁴⁰ Sidney Greidanus provides, “A saying or act of Jesus may be considered as authentic when it is in strict conformity not only with the epoch and environment of Jesus (the linguistic, geographic, social, political, religious environment), but also and above all closely coherent with the essential teaching, the heart of the message.”⁴⁴¹ Coherence provides glue to historical themes.

As some secular examples, running a marathon coheres with reports of the runner experiencing tired or sore feet. Reports of eating excessive amounts of sweets or spicy foods coheres with following reports of procuring a stomachache.

⁴⁴⁰ Walter R. Bodine et al., *Linguistics and Biblical Hebrew* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1992), 165–166.

⁴⁴¹ Greidanus, *The Modern Preacher*, 44.

As scriptural examples outside the accounts surrounding the Transfiguration, there is coherent evidence of Jesus being touched by both sexes during his ministry. A woman wiping His feet with her hair coheres with accounts in Matthew 26:7; Luke 7:37; Mark 14:3; and John 12:3. There often exist examples of more than one Historian's criteria simultaneously evidencing an event.

As an example, in ANE cultural context, a woman touching a Rabbi is a Surprise Element and an Embarrassment (both criteria covered later as occurring within context of the Transfiguration narratives). For now, a review of both conservative and liberal scholarship yields relatively little controversy regarding Jesus's sayings, and the subject of "sayings" is not germane to the historicity of demons and the Antisupernaturalist worldview, the Historian's Rule of Coherence is nonetheless simple and direct. Coherence appears in every passage surrounding the synoptic Transfiguration accounts.

Although His speech occurring immediately prior to the journey and supernatural events of the Transfiguration is not provocatively challenged by Antisupernaturalists it is fitting place to begin the analysis. Habermas argues that "Critical criteria such as these are very helpful in establishing especially the historicity of separate Gospel accounts. Viewing the texts from various angles helps indicate that many of Jesus' stories and sayings are historically grounded."⁴⁴² Keener adds, "Historians did not normally invent "events" in their sources. (Even those that accused others of extensive embellishment rarely accused them of inventing battles, deaths, and so forth.) events tend to remain among different writers even as interpretations of

⁴⁴² Gary R. Habermas, "Recent Paths," accessed April 10, 2019, http://www.garyhabermas.com/articles/crj_recentperspectives/crj_recentperspectives.htm.

those events vary.”⁴⁴³ The dissertation helps draw inductive conclusions regarding the probability of historicity supernatural events using Coherence as but one valid criterion.

Beyond “Sayings” to a Physical and Spiritual Journey: Matthew 17:1, Mark 9:2, and Luke 9:28

Matthew 17:1 reads, “And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart.” Mark 9:2 reads, “And after six days Jesus taketh with him Peter, and James, and John, and leadeth them up into an high mountain apart by themselves: and he was transfigured before them.” However, beyond coherence of participants (Jesus, Peter, and John), place (a mountain), and purpose (to pray) there exists a Dissimilarity between the number of days between the sayings and journey events.

Simply, the three accounts differ in some specifics. Luke 9:28 reads, “And it came to pass about an eight days after these sayings.” While exegesis and historicity differ between the scriptural literalist conservative and Antisupernaturalist liberal point of views, Historian’s Rules offer compelling criteria to vetting the accounts. Specifically, the three evangelists were not plagiarists.

The Conserve/Traditional View of the Journey

Gibson sets the scene of the disciples to be a dark place. Gibson writes, “even after the vision on the mount, the favoured three questioned with each other what the rising from the dead might mean (Mark 9:10). To the Master the awful prospect must have been much more definite and real; yet even to His human soul it could not have been free from that namelessness of

⁴⁴³ Craig S. Keener, *The Historical Jesus of the Gospels* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009), 96.

mystery that must have made the anticipation in some respects as bad as the reality.”⁴⁴⁴ On the journey, Jesus brings but three of His twelve disciples.

The three have become known by the Church as Jesus defining His “inner circle.” Edwards writes, “Concerning the names of the Twelve, Peter’s name heads every NT apostolic list, followed by the Zebedee brothers (usually James followed by John). Peter, James, and John form an inner circle among the Twelve that accompany Jesus on special occasions ([Mt] 5:37; 9:2; 14:33).”⁴⁴⁵ Of equal importance is conservatives’ traditional identifying location of the Transfiguration scene of Mount Hermon. Moreover however, is that the Transfiguration is a different kind of miracle.

Specifically, there is a reversal in the giver and receiver of divine grace. J. D. Jones writes, “The great event that took place on one of the slopes of Mount Hermon is, of course, to be regarded as a miraculous, supernatural occurrence. But it differs from every other miracle the Gospels record for us...in every other miracle Christ is the Giver of grace; in this He is the Receiver of glory.”⁴⁴⁶ This includes Jesus’s heavenly identity.

That identity trumps liberal scholarship’s arguments the writers of **the gospel accounts as desirous to** dispel Jesus as a mere Hellenistic god-figure temporarily coming down from heaven⁴⁴⁷ or a “prophet-like-Moses” of Deuteronomy 18.⁴⁴⁸ Simon J. Gathercole writes, “The importance of the transfiguration for our argument here lies in the fact that it gives ample

⁴⁴⁴ Gibson, “St. Matthew,” 755.

⁴⁴⁵ Edwards, *Mark*, 115.

⁴⁴⁶ Jones, *St. Mark*, 189–190.

⁴⁴⁷ E. Lohmeyer, “*Die Verklärung Jesu nach dem Markus-Evangelium*,” *ZNW* 21 [1922], 185–215.

⁴⁴⁸ J. Marcus, *The Way of the Lord: Christological Exegesis of the Old Testament in the Gospel of Mark* (Louisville, KY: John Knox, 1992), 80–93.

evidence for Jesus' transcendence of his earthly existence, such that he is also envisaged simultaneously as a heavenly figure. The opening of the transfiguration in Mark 9:2–4 (and parallels), and the voice in v. 7 are the key elements here.”⁴⁴⁹ While both the journey and the event are inductively evidenced by Historian's Rules, it is important to first review the findings of liberal scholarship.

The Liberal View of the Journey

What Barclay described as “The Mountain Top of Glory” regarding Luke 9:28–36, he marginalized as supernaturally unclear. He did this while simultaneously acknowledging the existence of God. Barclay wrote, “What happened on the Mount of Transfiguration we can never know...Jesus had gone there to seek the approval of God...there Moses and Elijah. It was as if the princes of Israel's life and thought and religion told Jesus to go on. Jesus could set out to Jerusalem now, certain that at least one little group of men knew who he was...what he was doing was the consummation of all the life.”⁴⁵⁰ Wright's emphasis is likewise upon non-supernatural elements of the narrative.

For Wright, exegesis of the Transfiguration principally includes parallels to the Resurrection but in an unconvincing form. Wright writes, “In fact...these stories become...a further element of early Christianity in need of historical explanation...to what extent, any of the gospel writers have consciously modified their sources in the interests of their own theology or other agendas [is unknown]. There are, however, tell-tale signs of the evangelists' particular

⁴⁴⁹ Simon J. Gathercole, *The Preexistent Son: Recovering the Christologies of Matthew, Mark, and Luke* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006), 47–48; Gathercole's theology is more attuned to the Antisupernaturalism of Wright's. His quotes are utilized herein to reflect the traditional conservative view, but not to imply that he personally holds them.

⁴⁵⁰ William Barclay, *Luke*, 146–148.

interests.”⁴⁵¹ Those indicators are neither best argued from conservative nor liberal points of view.

On the one hand, Liberals, such as Barclay and Wright, weigh what they deem as purposefully constructed by the evangelist. Barclay wrote, “the Twelve thought of Jesus’ kingdom...that they should be in competition...Jesus had taken Peter, John and James up into the mountain top with him and the others were jealous...for *prestige*...for *place*. for *prominence*.”⁴⁵² Conservatives derive moral lessons from literal interpretation of the same text from a differing worldview. On the other hand, for Historian’s Rules, it is neither the job of exegesis to judge the emotion of humanist jealousy nor theological views of the Evangelist writer. Instead, exegesis by Historian’s Rules endeavors to judge veracity of historicity. It accomplishes this, in part, by employing the criteria of Dissimilarity.

The View according to the Historian’s Rule of Dissimilarity

Luke reports a longer time distance between the sayings and journey in setting up his account of supernatural events to yet occur. Differences in the reporting is but one focus of Historian’s Rules.

Dissimilarity

Much of one individual synoptic account coheres (and specifically concurs) with the balance of the others. However, there are differing elements of the accounts to consider in measuring historicity. Namely, while the three evangelists concur that following speaking these “sayings” Jesus took only three of His twelve disciples with him up a “high mountain” to pray

⁴⁵¹ Wright, *The Resurrection*, 597–598.

⁴⁵² Barclay, *Luke*, 151–153.

(Mt 17:3; Mk 9:2), Luke, known for his Physician-like detail, unilaterally omits the descriptive “high” in his account (Lk 9:28).⁴⁵³ More prominently however, while Matthew and Mark report Jesus taking the three to the mountain six days following the “sayings,” Luke reports the journey occurring “about eight days after these (Lk 9:28).” The Historian’s Rule of Dissimilarity proves useful in proofing historicity of the accounts.

The first outcome of Dissimilarity is mitigating a charge of mere *copycatting*. The second is drawing distinction between the one acknowledged by historians as revealing truth and revealing doctrinal preferences. Motivation for such latitude, an alternative to the contemporary device commonly known as spin, provides a fruit salad of interpretation despite the true birthing seed of factual historicity.⁴⁵⁴

Dale C. Allison Jr. offers a downside to the criteria. He writes, “Whatever be thought of contemporary methods and plain historical probability, one thing is manifest: the criterion of dissimilarity has unfairly eliminated eschatological elements from the Jesus tradition.”⁴⁵⁵ Nonetheless, Luke diverges from accounts in the two remaining synoptics regarding the time distance between Jesus’s recitation of “sayings” and embarkation upon the journey. While

⁴⁵³ William Barclay, *The Gospel of Matthew*, Third Ed., The New Daily Study Bible (Edinburgh, Scotland: Saint Andrew Press, 2001), 183; Barclay wrote, “It cannot have been on the very summit of the mountain that this happened. The mountain is too high for that...H. B. Tristram, who explored the Bible lands, tells how he and his party ascended it. They were able to ride practically to the top, and the ride took five hours...Tristram says: ‘We spent a great part of the day on the summit but were before long painfully affected by the rarity of the atmosphere.’ It was somewhere on the slopes of the beautiful and stately Mount Hermon that the transfiguration happened. It must have happened in the night. Luke tells us that the disciples were weighed down with sleep (Luke 9:32)...It was some time in the sunset, or the late evening, or the night, that this amazing vision took place.”

⁴⁵⁴ Geza Vermes, Walter P. Weaver, Daniel F. Moore, et al., “Section 1: Methodologies in Jesus Research,” in *Jesus Research: New Methodologies and Perceptions: The Second Princeton-Prague Symposium on Jesus Research*, ed. James H. Charlesworth, Brian Rhea, and Petr Pokorný, Princeton-Prague, Symposia Series on the Historical Jesus (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2014), 86.

⁴⁵⁵ Dale C. Allison Jr., “A Plea for Thoroughgoing Eschatology,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 113 [1994]: 666.

biblical literalists cannot definitively reconcile the fact outside of Lukan source selection, non-theists discounting the accounts use the example to invalidate scriptural veracity instead of strengthening it.

A good example of Dissimilarity of historical accounts resides in the assassination of then President John Fitzgerald Kennedy (J. F. K.) in Dallas, Texas on November 22, 1963. Following the event, accounts were divergent regarding where eyewitnesses heard the shots emanate. Remaining however, were that eyewitnesses did hear shots fired and saw them strike the President. Additionally, 8mm silent color film footage was captured by Abraham Zapruder.⁴⁵⁶

There is no credible Dissimilarity in the “if” the assassination occurred. Instead, all theories of J. F. K.’s death reside in the “why” he was assassinated and “how” the bullets could have struck the President from the angle they were allegedly fired. Moreover, “who” fired the rounds in context of the evidence yield the improbability of a single shooter wielding a bolt-action firearm. Nonetheless, while inductive reasoning can conclude that J. F. K. was most probably assassinated, it cannot deductively conclude that Lee Harvey Oswald worked alone or fired the weapon that killed the President. No matter. Dissimilarity adds to the probability the event occurred since so many were focused on their personal accounts of the same event. For Historian’s Rules, this includes inductive evidence delivered via both the Historian’s Rules of Eyewitness Attestation, Multiple Attestation and additional criteria explored in context of a supernatural Transfiguration.

⁴⁵⁶ Ron Rosenbaum, “What Does the Zapruder Film Really Tell Us?” *Smithsonian Magazine* [October 2013] (Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 2009).

Jesus's Transfiguration and Supernatural Visitation: Matthew 17:2, Mark 9:30, and Luke 9:4

The scene provides Coherence between the first and third gospel writer's accounts. They are nearly identical. Mathew specifically states "[Jesus] was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment **was** white as the light...And as he prayed, the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment *was* white *and* glistening (Mt. 17:28–29 KJV)." Luke concurs, "And his raiment became shining, exceeding "white as snow; so as no fuller on earth can white them (Lk 9:29 KJV)." The accounts suddenly shift into a supernatural occurrence.

Namely, Matthew, Mark, and Luke all report the sudden appearance of Elijah and Moses (Mt 17:3, Mk 9:30, Lk 9:4) talking with Jesus. Luke, in his account, specifies that, "They appeared in glory and spoke about His departure, which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem (Lk 9:31 KJV)." These scriptures are hotly debated between conservative cf. liberal Christianity due to their supernatural content Historian's Rules seeks to prove plausible.

The Conserve/Traditional View of a Supernatural Transfiguration

Conservatives accept a literal view of the episode of Christ's glorification and comment accordingly. The facets of God's stature of Jesus are obviated by the Transfiguration accounts.

Barnes wrote:

We see the great glory of Christ, ver. 2. No such favour had been granted to any prophet before him. We see the regard in which he was held by Moses and Elias—among the greatest of the prophets. We see the honour which God put on him, exalting him far above them both, ver. 5. The glory of heaven encompasses the Lord Jesus, and all its redeemed pay him reverence. In him the divine nature shines illustriously; and of him and to him the divinity speaks in glory as the only begotten Son of God.⁴⁵⁷

⁴⁵⁷ Albert Barnes, *Notes on the New Testament: Matthew & Mark*, ed. Robert Frew (London, U.K.: Blackie & Son, 1884–1885), 182.

Gathercole argues the Transfiguration narratives identify Jesus as the Preexistent Son of God. Gathercole writes, “In Matthew, Mark, and Luke, Jesus is regarded *already in the earthly, pre-Easter situation* as having a heavenly identity...who is not merely firmly planted on earth but is also operating at the same time in the heavenly sphere (italics Gathercole’s).”⁴⁵⁸ Edwards thinks Jesus’s commanding silence of his disciples regarding the matter, along with His solitude, indicate His desire to continue their undistracted teaching.⁴⁵⁹ Michael Wilcock agrees with Edwards, accentuating the disciples relative immaturity at the time of and immediately following the scene.⁴⁶⁰

The Liberal View of the Transfiguration

Liberal commentary de-emphasizes the supernatural element of the Transfiguration. Meyer focused instead upon form and source criticism. Meyer wrote, “As in the case of the Sermon on the Mount...Luke’s parallels are irregular in their connection in...as much as the contents of the passage...are undoubtedly taken from his collection of our Lord’s sayings...which for this very reason we should be the less inclined to regard as having taken place.”⁴⁶¹ Inductive evidence of the scene’s location is also of interest to liberal scholars.

Contrary to tradition regarding the location of the episode occurring atop Mount Tabor, Barclay thought it unrealistic. Barclay wrote, “The top of Mount Tabor was an armed fortress...almost impossible that the transfiguration could have happened on a mountain...more

⁴⁵⁸ Gathercole, *The Preexistent Son*, 47–48.

⁴⁵⁹ Edwards, *Mark*, 217–218.

⁴⁶⁰ Michael Wilcock, *The Savior of the World: The Message of Luke’s Gospel*, *The Bible Speaks Today* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1979), 111.

⁴⁶¹ Meyer, *Matthew*, 291–292.

likely, the scene of the transfiguration was Mount Hermon...fourteen miles from Caesarea Philippi...9,400 feet high, 11,000 feet above the level of the Jordan valley...It was somewhere on the slopes of...Hermon.”⁴⁶² Debating the physical location of a supernatural event that did not occur aside, liberal scholarship has found the accounts either fiction, myth, or a misplaced Resurrection stories.

Wellhausen, then Dibelius and Bultmann as well as subsequent liberal scholarship coheres around the Transfiguration’s non-literal historicity.⁴⁶³ Accounts of the supernatural appearance of a cloud and voice (Mt 17:5, Mk 9:7, Lk 9:33–35) are treated with the same source copyist lack of historical veracity perspective by liberals.

⁴⁶² Barclay, *Matthew*, 182–185; Meyer, *Matthew*, 434.

⁴⁶³ Peter Anthony, “Interpreting Vision: A Survey of Patristic Reception of the Transfiguration and its Earliest Depiction, with Special Reference to the Gospel of Luke” (DPhil diss., University of Oxford, 2014) 69, 71, 74, 75, 85, 87, 96–97, <https://ora.ox.ac.uk/objects/uuid:7f76f633-e2bf-4319-90ff-c5f87dd7f1c3>; Anthony cites the following resources: Julius Wellhausen, *Das Evangelium Marci* (Berlin, Germany: Reimer, 1909), 71; Rudolf Bultmann, *The History of the Synoptic Tradition*, 2nd ed. (Oxford, U.K.: Blackwell, 1968), 259–261, 432–433; Hans Conzelmann, *An Outline of the Theology of the New Testament* (London, U.K.: S. C. M., 1969), 128ff.; Martin Dibelius, *Die Geschichte der urchristlichen Literatur* (Munich, Germany: Christian Kaiser, 1975), 84; Werner Georg Kümmel, *The Theology of the New Testament: according to its Major Witnesses, Jesus, Paul, John* (London, U.K.: S. C. M., 1974), 123; D. Zeller, “Die Menschwerdung des Sohnes Gottes im Neuen Testament und die antike Religionsgeschichte,” in *Menschwerdung Gottes–Vergöttlichung von Menschen*, ed. D. Zeller (Göttingen, Germany: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1988), 141–176; Gerd Theissen, *The Miracle Stories of the Early Christian Tradition* (Edinburgh, Scotland: T. & T. Clark, 1983), 96–97; Anthony writes, “Other elements such as the mountain setting (Mt 28:16–20; Acts 1:12), the disciples’ fear (Mk 16:8) and Jesus’ luminosity (Acts 9:3, 22:6, 26:13) were further proof of this for Bultmann, along with evidence from the *Apocalypse of Peter* with its conflation of Resurrection, Ascension and Transfiguration motifs. Bultmann’s theory grew considerably in popularity and also spawned a number of variant theories–Theissen, as an example, agreed with Bultmann in seeing the Transfiguration as a misplaced Easter story, but judged it to be an ascension account. Weeden thought Mark knowingly intended to subvert the *theios anēr* tradition evident in Resurrection accounts by placing this narrative earlier in Jesus’ ministry. However, an influential article by Stein convincingly undermined many of these theories and reasserted that whatever the narrative’s historical origins, the pre-Markan.”

The View according to the Historian's Rules of Eyewitness Sources and Multiple Attestation

Aside from Coherence and Dissimilarity of the synoptic accounts, there are additional Historian's Rules to consider when measuring the historical veracity of a supernatural manifestation occurring. First, there are eyewitnesses. Second, there are multiple eyewitnesses.

Eyewitness Sources

Eyewitnesses consist of those persons who were both alive at the time of an event and connected to the affected community.⁴⁶⁴ Keener argues, “the miracle reports in the Gospels and Acts are generally plausible historically and need not be incompatible with eyewitness tradition. Similar claims, often from convinced eyewitnesses, circulate widely today, and there are no *a priori* reasons to doubt that ancient eyewitnesses made analogous claims.”⁴⁶⁵ Specifically, under both ancient and contemporary rule of law as considered in a courtroom, eyewitness accounts remain the most persuasive evidence, especially when deemed credible and corroborated by others.

For example, Frank Bartleman (AD 1871–1936) gave an account of his eyewitness experiences at Azusa Street. Bartleman's account includes details that may be judged as truthful or biased. Judgment of veracity also includes bias based upon personal experience or worldview. such as a woman speaking in tongues at Burbank Hall, the New Testament Church on Sunday

⁴⁶⁴ Richard Bauckham, Werner H. Kelber, Kathy Ehrensperger, et al., “Section 5: Sources,” in *Jesus Research: New Methodologies and Perceptions: The Second Princeton-Prague Symposium on Jesus Research, Princeton 2007*, ed. James H. Charlesworth, Brian Rhea, and Petr Pokorný, Princeton-Prague Symposia Series on the Historical Jesus (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2014), 490–491.

⁴⁶⁵ Keener, *Miracles*, 7.

morning April 15, 1906, preceded by a similar experience occurring at Bonnie Brae Street on April 9.⁴⁶⁶

Despite floating a pre-supposition that these phenomena don't occur, thus Bartleman was lying or imagining things, eyewitness sources are more reliable than hearsay.

Humanists/Naturalists think supernatural events be simply material thought psychosis delivered by either the actors or audience thereto. Christian Antisupernaturalists think it is the work of agenda, not reality. The courts of both public and religious opinion bring their bias, albeit this occurs amidst eyewitnesses having their own bias. Both conservative Literalists and liberal Antisupernaturalists attempt to fit personal doctrine into what they deem as historically occurred. However, Eyewitness Accounts are the strongest evidence available in drawing inductive conclusion.

Multiple Attestation

Multiple Attestation occurs when either there exists a cross-section of sources or varieties in literature or genre as emanating from divergent traditions.⁴⁶⁷ Erickson thinks two or more sources are “considered a sign of authenticity.”⁴⁶⁸ Essentially, whether directly eye witnessed or second-hand, Multiple Attestation strengthens the likelihood that an event most probably occurred. Conversely, S. E. Porter argues that many criteria are errantly centered around the

⁴⁶⁶ Frank Bartleman, *How Pentecost Came to Los Angeles: As It Was in the Beginning* (Los Angeles, CA: F. Bartleman, 1925), locs. 649–665. Kindle.

⁴⁶⁷ S. E. Porter, ed. Joel B. Green, Jeannine K. Brown, and Nicholas Perrin, *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, Second Edition (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2013), 153–159, s.v. “Criteria of Authenticity,” ; J. Lanier Burns, *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*, ed. John D. Barry et al., (Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2016), s.v. “Jesus Christ,”.

⁴⁶⁸ Millard J. Erickson, *The Word Became Flesh* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1991), 403–404.

actions and sayings of Jesus, however.⁴⁶⁹ It is noteworthy that Porter leans towards Nolland's Antisupernatural worldview (as does Gathercole with Wright's work) in professionally editing Nolland's work "Luke and Acts." Nolland invalidates the sayings of Jesus as mere myth.

Nonetheless, a good secular example of Multiple Attestation is the signing of the U. S. Declaration of Independence from England. First, based upon the fifty-six signers that appear on the document, there exists fifty-six eyewitnesses co-opted, not including those non-signers present in the room also ascribed the rank of eyewitness. Since, no Historian's criterion stands by itself, it is fitting that Multiple Attestation strengthens the rule of Eyewitness Sources.

In any event, the signing of the Declaration of Independence remains multiply attested. First, there is written record of one Richard Henry Lee of Virginia dated June 7, 1776, to the Second Continental Congress introducing "that these United States are and of right ought to be Free and independent States, that they are absolved from all allegiance to the British Crown."⁴⁷⁰ Second, on July 19th, 1776, Congress ordered an engrossed copy of the Declaration on vellum. Timothy Matlack was the Congressional Scribe penning the engrossed document.⁴⁷¹ Third, the document is currently housed and displayed at the National Archives in Washington DC. Fourth, Congress commissioned 200 broadside copies of the original document from John Dunlap.⁴⁷² Congress additionally ordered copies from William J. Stone as evidenced by the only known

⁴⁶⁹ S. E. Porter, *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, 2nd ed, ed. Joel B. Green, Jeannine K. Brown, and Nicholas Perrin (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2013), s.v. "Criteria of Authenticity,".

⁴⁷⁰ "Lee Resolution (1776)," accessed May 31, 2021, <https://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?flash=false&doc=1>.

⁴⁷¹ Mary Lynn Ritzenthaler and Catherine Nicholson, "The Declaration of Independence and the Hand of Time," accessed June 22, 2022, <https://www.archives.gov/publications/prologue/2016/fall/declaration>.

⁴⁷² "Broadside printed by John Dunlap," accessed May 31, 2021, <https://www.ushistory.org/declaration/document/dunlap.html>,

remaining “privately held” specimen selling at Sotheby’s auction for \$975,000.⁴⁷³ Both the original and copies of the original contain slight differences (Dissimilarity) including New York’s late signing of the document. Dissimilarity strengthens cases made for arguing historicity.

Matthew is a gospel writer and stands as a witness to the eyewitness to multiple testimonies. Matthew 17:19ff. and Mark 9:28 are multiply attested via each other’s written testimony since the story appears in both Matthew and Mark. Both accounts are attested within the same vehicle of literary genre, a gospel, but by different sources.

Peter’s Plausible Violation of the Decalogue:
Matthew 17:4, Mark 9:5, and Luke 9:32

Both Matthew (Mt 17:4) and Mark (Mk 9:6) report Peter as saying to Jesus “it is good for us to be here [KJV]” (Coherence). Luke omits Peter’s statement (Dissimilarity). Both Matthew (Mt 17:4) and Mark (Mk 9:6) report Peter’s suggestion to build three tabernacles in honor of Jesus, Moses, and Elijah. Mark adds, “For he [Peter] wist⁴⁷⁴ not what to say; for they **were** sore afraid [KJV].” Luke does not mention Peter’s tabernacle suggestion. Instead, Luke (Lk 6:32) emphasizes the disciples “were heavy with sleep [KJV].” Matthew omits both the subjects of sleepiness and fear (Dissimilarity).

The Conserve/Traditional View of Peter, James, and John’s Reaction to the Transfiguration

On the conservative side of exegesis, focus lay upon the significance of safety and assuredness with Christ. Barnes wrote, “Christians should delight to be where God has

⁴⁷³ “Declaration of Independence,” accessed May 31, 2021, <https://www.sothebys.com/en/auctions/ecatalogue/2019/fine-manuscripts-printed-america-na-n10002/lot.2122.html>.

⁴⁷⁴ Merriam-Webster, *Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary*. (Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, Inc., 2003), s.v. “\ wist\ *verb transitive* (alteration of *wis*) 1508 *archaic*: know,”.

manifested his glory. The feeling of Peter was natural...His love of the glorious presence of Christ and the redeemed was right. He [Peter] erred only in the *manner* of manifesting that love...not be afraid of the most awful displays of deity if Christ be with us...Were we *alone* we *should* fear. None could see God and live, for he is a consuming fire (Italics Barnes).⁴⁷⁵ For Conservatives, there are different perspectives regarding the passage's emphasis between Commentators. However, Conservatives center on the actual historicity of the event.

J. D. Jones thought that the effect upon the chosen three disciples is one of affect. Jones wrote, "Now as to the part the three disciples played at the Transfiguration, and its effect upon them...In ordinary and secular matters the order is—first see, then believe. But the opposite is the order in the spiritual realm—first faith, then vision. Seeing does not lead to believing, but believing leads to seeing...Those who cling closely to Jesus see some wonderful sights, and enjoy some unspeakable privileges...to behold the very glory of the Lord."⁴⁷⁶ For conservative scholarship, exegesis of Jesus's witnessed glorification is tantamount.

The Liberal View of Peter, James, and John's Reaction to the Transfiguration

On the liberal side of exegesis, the focus is on the side of storytelling with an agenda. Wright writes, "In these stories above all...we have a sense that the evangelists are *not* saying 'this is how it is for our own day, our own church'...[Instead writing] explicitly for a time when the church will no longer be able to see and touch the risen Jesus, but must believe without having seen (Italics Wright's)."⁴⁷⁷ Although it is clear that an Antisupernaturalist worldview

⁴⁷⁵ Barnes, *New Testament*, 182–183.

⁴⁷⁶ Jones, *St. Mark*, 200–202.

⁴⁷⁷ Wright, *The Resurrection*, 598–599.

holds significant differences from traditional scholarship, the matter may be clarified by non-theological Historian's Rules.

The View according to the Historian's Rules of Embarrassment and Surprise Elements

Albeit Coherence, Dissimilarity, Eyewitness Sources, and Multiple Attestation are present in the accounts, there are additional Historian's Rules to consider. These are the inclusion of Embarrassment and Surprise Elements. It is possible that Peter only meant to provide shade, offering the disciples to build tents for Jesus, Moses, and Elijah.

However, Peter was no stranger to committing snafus. Peter floated on water until he took his eyes off Christ, losing faith (Mt 14:22), cut off the Centurion's ear (Mt 26:47–56; Mk 14:43–50; Jn 18:3–11) and denied Jesus at His Crucifixion (Mt 26:69; Mk 14:66, Lk 22:56; Jn 18:25–27). It is also plausible that Peter's reaction, the construction of monuments for those incorporeal attendees in honor of them is heretical. Heresy exegesis enhances probability of historicity if heresy occurred.

Embarrassment

The criterion of embarrassment asserts that a historical account is more likely true when there is greater incentive for the reporter to squelch the account than invent and convey an embarrassing story.⁴⁷⁸ Habermas writes “Most people need a *sufficient* reason to report very negative things about something which they deem valuable, or someone they love dearly...especially where the purpose of the writing was to instruct the readers in holy living [italics Habermas's].”⁴⁷⁹ Rafael Rodríguez argues that Jesus's disciples “would not have

⁴⁷⁸ W. Barnes Tatum, *In Quest of Jesus* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1982), 106.

⁴⁷⁹ Habermas, “Recent Perspectives.”

embellished or created material that embarrassed them, any embarrassing material probably accurately reports history.”⁴⁸⁰ The criterion of embarrassment asserts that a historical account is more likely true when there is a greater incentive to avoid testimony regarding the event than repeat an Embarrassment.⁴⁸¹

For example, in Revelation 22:8–9 John reported his audacity to kneel before the angel that God used to reveal His truths. The angel then summarily admonished the kneeling John for practicing the behavior of worshipping any being other than God. It is less probable that John would report the incident if the event were not true. On the one hand, John wrote (some say egotistically) his Gospel with a continuously salacious self-referential self-identification as “the one Jesus loved.” On the other hand, John forfeits what some consider his egotism by self-recording the scolding he received from an angel. Like many Historian’s Rules, the occurrence exhibits not just the criterion of Embarrassment, but may also be considered a “surprise element” explained later in the chapter. For now, John’s apocalyptic narrative is suddenly, seemingly out of nowhere, not only disrupted by John’s Discontinuity, but Embarrassment enters by admitting his own doctrinal error.

A good secular historical example of Embarrassment occurred on December 7, 1941, when Japanese Navy aircraft unexpectedly attacked the United States at Pearl Harbor, Honolulu, Hawaii, killing thousands of servicemen and women. Embarrassing elements include that then President Franklin Delano Roosevelt either knew or should have known the attack was imminent. R. J. C. Butow argues that common contemporaneous assertions included Roosevelt’s

⁴⁸⁰ Rafael Rodríguez, “Criterion of Embarrassment,” <https://www.bibleodyssey.org:443/en/passages/related-articles/criterion-of-embarrassment>, (accessed April 4, 2019).

⁴⁸¹ Tatum, *Jesus*, 106.

desire to enter WWII's European Theatre. Some believed Roosevelt planned to use the tragedy as an excuse to engage. Butow writes "What is disturbing about the Pearl Harbor revisionists, however, is their tendency to disregard the rules of scholarship and to gloss over the complexities of the historical record...The revisionists have always been drawn to items that appear to cast Roosevelt in an unfavorable light."⁴⁸² For Secularists, whether Butow is using Historian's Rules for what happened at Pearl Harbor, or historians employs the same standards to prove the existence and activity of demons, the goal and outcomes remain the same. Aside from Coherence providing the glue between the two accounts, the Dissimilarity of Luke's account, and Embarrassments of Peter's behavior as indicators of enhance probability of historicity, Embarrassment often accompanies the criterion of Surprise Elements.

Surprise Elements

Habermas categorizes certain events as examples where embarrassing circumstances point to real historical events. As a scriptural example, it is certainly surprising in contemporaneous cultural context that all four Gospels report that women were first to discover the empty tomb (Mt 28:1–10; Mk 16:1–10; Lk 24:1–10; Jn 20:1–3) given their contemporaneous social stature and legal status women at the time of the event. Moreover, all four gospel writers could have simply lied and recorded an initial and more credible male witness.⁴⁸³ Secular examples in history abound.

⁴⁸² R. J. C. Butow, "How Roosevelt Attacked Japan at Pearl Harbor," *Myth Masquerading as History*, 28 no. 3 [Fall 1996], accessed May 23, 2021, <https://www.archives.gov/publications/prologue/1996/fall/butow.html>.

⁴⁸³ Gary Habermas, "The Empty Tomb of Jesus," accessed February 28, 2022, <https://www.namb.net/apologetics/resource/the-empty-tomb-of-jesus/>.

Warren Thomas Smith uses Surprise Elements in his historical proof of slavery. Smith comments of Wesley, “for many white English people...there had been so little tragedy in it [slavery]...execrable villainy...the sum of all villainies...the vilest that ever saw the sun.”⁴⁸⁴ The surprise element of Wesley’s brashness and counter-racism increases the likelihood Wesley’s countercultural stature occurred. Goen comments “[the] book also offers...that even in the relatively unenlightened eighteenth century there were a few whites who cared about what was happening to enslaved blacks.”⁴⁸⁵ There are myriad examples of surprise elements occurring throughout history.

As a scriptural example, both Embarrassment and a Surprise Element arrives via Peter’s lack of an OT understanding of Mosaic Law, possibly violating the first two commandments of the Decalogue when proposing to build tabernacles. Joe M. Easterling argues, “Peter may have violated the first and second commandments...Peter’s proposal to build tabernacles for Jesus, Moses, and Elijah suggests he equated all three as equally divine.”⁴⁸⁶ In this case, two Historian’s criteria increase the historical likelihood of the Transfiguration episode occurring.

⁴⁸⁴ Warren Thomas Smith, *John Wesley and Slavery* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1986), 160.

⁴⁸⁵ G. C. Goen, “Review of *John Wesley and Slavery* by Warren Thomas Smith,” ed. Beverly Roberts Gaventa, *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* [1988], 336.

⁴⁸⁶ Joe M. Easterling, Email Correspondence Inquiry Sent: Monday, Sept. 26, 2022 To: Easterling, Joe (Rawlings School of Divinity Instr) <jeasterling2@liberty.edu> Subject: Dissertation Email Quote; “Dr. Easterling, would you kindly respond to a claim you made at our personal meeting: Both Matthew (Mt 17:4) and Mark (Mk 9:4) report that Peter expressed desire to build tabernacles for Jesus, Elijah, and Moses...At this juncture it is important to discuss the Historian’s Rule of Embarrassment.” Reply: Wed. Oct. 12, 2022, 4:33 PM: “If I am understanding your question correctly, Peter may have violated the first and second commandments. First commandment – ‘You shall have no other gods before me.’ Second commandment – ‘You shall make no graven image of me.’ In both instances, Peter’s proposal to build tabernacles for Jesus, Moses, and Elijah suggests he equated all three as equally divine.”

The Descent into a Crowd, and an Afflicted Son, Healed by Jesus: Matthew 17:14–19, Mark 9:14–29, and Luke 9:38–43

Matthew (Eyewitness) introduces the believing father seeking his self-destructively behaving (“for he is lunatick” [KJV]) son’s deliverance (Mt 17:14–15) into the narrative. Mark immediately speaks of Jesus’s interaction with attendant scribes (Surprise Element) being among the (“greatly amazed” [KJV]) many gathered to see Him (Mk 9:14–16) before speaking of the afflicted son “which hath a dumb spirit” (Mk 9:17 [KJV]). Luke (Lk 9:38–39) also describes the believing father and afflicted son (Multiple Attestation) to the crowd’s amazement (Lk 9:43). All three synoptic gospels (Mt 17:18; Mk 9:25–26; Lk 9:42) report Jesus’s healing of the boy via removal of a demon (Multiple Attestation).

The Conservative/Traditional View of a Son’s Deliverance

Conservative scholars such as R. T. France liken Jesus’s descent from the mountain to that of Moses descending with the Decalogue. France wrote, “When Moses came down from the mountain he was confronted by Israel’s apostasy (Exod. 32); so on Jesus’ return from the mountain he enters a scene of spiritual conflict (v. 18) and unbelief (vv. 17, 20).”⁴⁸⁷ While conservatives converge on literal interpretation, they diverge on exegetical priorities.

For example, Leon Morris finds scriptural emphasis placed upon the crowd(s) in all three synoptic accounts. Morris writes, “Matthew does not tell us where this incident happened; he simply says that *they...came to the crowd* (Matthew prefers to speak of ‘crowds,’ but on this occasion he has used the singular; Mark and Luke both note that it was a great crowd). He says that a man *came* to Jesus and fell on his knees, a piece of information found in this Gospel only.

⁴⁸⁷ R. T. France, *Matthew: An Introduction and Commentary*, Vol. 1, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1985), 268.

The attitude is that of one who is respectful and who is seeking a favor [*Italics Morris's*].”⁴⁸⁸

However, it is reverence by the crowd he finds noteworthy.

Specifically, it is the demeanor of the father in seeking, Morris finds notable. He writes, “[the father] addresses Jesus respectfully as ‘*Lord*,’ ...asks Jesus to *take pity*...speaks of the boy as *a lunatic*, which most modern interpreters take to mean ‘epileptic’...[However] Mark and Luke both speak of the boy as possessed by ‘a spirit’ (Mark adds that it is a ‘dumb’ spirit)...that he falls into *fire* or *water*. These falls are cited as indicating epilepsy, which, of course, they might; but they are also congruous with lunacy (*Italics Morris's*).”⁴⁸⁹ Liberals take a much different view as stemming from either Antisupernaturalist theology or linguistics in their process of diagnosing a condition as if they are medical doctors.

The Liberal View of a Son's Cure

One of the most frequent pieces of evidence for Antisupernaturalist scholarship is the replacement of scriptural words and their meanings. For example, Ulrich Luz thinks Matthew 17:17 points to Israel's coming judgement. Luz writes:

In literary terms the function of this notably irritating foothold in our story is not so much on the surface level of what is reported but on its deeper level where the issue is the separation of the Jesus community from Israel and God's judgment on Israel. The clearest indication of that is that “this generation” has not done anything here that warranted Jesus' rebuke...not of concrete guilt on the surface of his story but in general of Israel's unbelief.⁴⁹⁰

⁴⁸⁸ Leon Morris, *The Gospel according to Matthew*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: InterVarsity, 1992), 445.

⁴⁸⁹ Morris, *Matthew*, 5–446.

⁴⁹⁰ Ulrich Luz, *Matthew: A Commentary*, ed. Helmut Koester, Hermeneia—a Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 2001), 408.

Closely related is liberal affinity to conflate spiritual conditions and circumstances with mechanical medical diagnosis. Specifically, is antinaturalism replacement of demonic affliction with physical ailment diagnosis is common.

Meyer was among such scholars. Meyer wrote, “The lunatic, whose malady was regarded as the result of demoniacal possession...was evidently suffering from epilepsy, and, according to Mark, deprived of the power of speech as well.”⁴⁹¹ Luz and Nolland also linguistically attribute the son’s affliction to a diagnosis of mental illness.⁴⁹² Conservatives such as France linguistically dispute the mental illness interpretation.⁴⁹³ Exegesis by Historian’s Rules ameliorates such argument.

The View of the Historian’s Rule of Discontinuity Evidencing the Exorcism

Discontinuity

The term “discontinuity” is frequently mis-applied by theologians to justify a divergence from one doctrinal system to another. For example, John S. Feinberg argues that as a

⁴⁹¹ Meyer, *Matthew*, 442.

⁴⁹² Nolland, *Matthew*: 711–712; Luz, *Matthew*, 407–408; Luz writes, “on sickness is *epilepsy*, the ‘holy illness’ that according to a widespread view in antiquity could be caused by the moon goddess Selene and be connected with the phases of the moon. In antiquity epilepsy was explained either as a supernatural phenomenon—as ‘being possessed’ (ἐπιληψία) by a divine power (= “ἐπὶ νόσος”) or by demons—or in medical literature as a natural illness that ‘does not seem to be more divine or holy than other illnesses.’ Mark 9:14–29 par. holds the demonological view...Origen represents an important turning point. As the first to confront the natural, medical explanation of illness on the basis of the biblical text, he (Origen) expressly rejects it by appealing to scripture. After late antiquity Saints replaced physicians.” Nolland writes, “Omitting mention of the instrumental role of a demon, Matthew speaks of the boy falling rather than of how the demon cast him. The destructive impulses of demons become the rapid onset of an epileptic fit in dangerous settings. But while the role of the demon loses its prominence, it is not to be totally lost; it will surface in Mt. 17:18–19.”

⁴⁹³ France, *Matthew*, 268–269; France wrote, “*Is an epileptic* is an interpretation of the rare verb *selēniazomai* (lit. ‘to be affected by the moon’), which in secular Greek would more normally be translated ‘lunatic’. The symptoms recorded here (esp. in the fuller account in Mark) resemble what we would call epilepsy, but v. 18 will indicate that this is in fact a case of demon-possession [italics France’s].”

contemporary example of employing Discontinuity beyond its limitations is attempts to prove the general distinctives of Dispensationalism from alternate theological systems.⁴⁹⁴

For both secular and church historians alike however, Discontinuity means how writers unexpectedly and suddenly migrate from the expression of one story or idea to another. For example, the Apostle Paul suddenly shifts gears in Philippians 2:6–11 that discontinues his personal testimony of contemporaneous **experience** to a poetic expression of his spiritual beliefs. While identification and analysis of such creeds in ascertaining the beliefs comprising the primitive church remain a relatively understudied phenomena in academia, creeds do offer historicity of what happened and how biblical scholars identify them, not dissimilar to secular philosophy.

On December 13, 2003, then deposed Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein was discovered hiding in a hole following his goading comments made to then American president George W. Bush. On April 30, 1945, Adolf Hitler was found dead by apparent suicide alongside his girlfriend Eva Braun by World War II allied forces. The “what” that occurred either prior or after these notable events remains insignificant insofar as the study at hand. Instead, **something** occurred that suddenly disrupts the narrative to aid in convincing an audience that an event in fact occurred. Discontinuity of a supernatural scene as interrupted by Peter’s surprising and embarrassing suggestion of building tabernacles strengthens the case for a historical supernatural event occurring.

⁴⁹⁴ John S. Feinberg, “*Sistemas de discontinuidad* (Systems of Discontinuity) Part I” *Kairos* 18 [1996]: 7–26; R. L. Sturch, “ON DISCONTINUITY,” *Evangelical Quarterly*, 51 no. 4 [1979]: 214–21.

**The Disciples' Fail to Cast out a Demon and Query Jesus:
Matthew 17:16–21, Mark 9:18–29, and Luke 9:40–41**

All three synoptic writers (Mt 17:16; Mk 9:18; Lk 9:40) affirm that the disciples were unable to cast out a demon (Multiple Attestation, Surprise Elements, Embarrassment). Matthew 17:17 records Jesus's negative verbal response to their failure followed by (Mk 9:19; Lk 9:41) His command to bring the son to Him (Multiple Attestation, Surprise Elements, Embarrassment). All three accounts (Mt 17:19; Mk 9:28; Lk 9:41) records the disciple's wonderment regarding their failure (Multiple Attestation, Embarrassment)

The Conservative/Traditional View of the Disciples Failure and their Query

At issue for the dissertation's purpose and specifically this passage is whether Jesus's cure of the son is deliverance of a malignant spiritual entity (demon or devil) or of a physical condition of disease. Conservatives believe in the former, Liberals believe the latter. With regards to the former it is the nature of the complaint deserving of proper exegesis. France wrote, "The description is clearly of an exorcism, but the addition of *the boy was cured* suggests that a physical disorder (probably epilepsy) was involved as well as demon-possession; accounts of exorcisms do not usually refer to 'healing' of the person concerned...The disciples should have been able to deal with the case...their failure illustrates the too-frequent combination of a divinely-given authority with a lack of the faith needed to exercise it."⁴⁹⁵ Gibson instead described a continued condition of the world attempting to live without Jesus in the passage.

For Gibson, the conditions and dilemmas for contemporaneous ANE and contemporary society are coterminous. Gibson wrote, "Here are we groaning and travailing in this late age of the world and of the Church, the worst kind of demons still working their will in their poor

⁴⁹⁵ France, *Matthew*, 269.

victims, the cry of anxious parents going up for lost children, disciples blundering and failing in well-meant efforts to cast the demons out, wise and learned scribes pointing at them the finger of scorn, [and] excited and angry multitudes demanding satisfaction which they fail to get.’⁴⁹⁶

Liberal commentators holding an Antisupernaturalist mechanical worldview differ from Conservatives in their exegesis of the disciples failure.

The Liberal View of the Disciples Failure and their Query

For liberals, focus is generally seated upon form and source criticism. Nolland writes, “Away from the vision of glory on the mountain the situation is less than ideal. The left-behind disciples have failed to fulfil their Mt. 10 mandate. In the failure of their faith they are like their contemporaries, who are repeating the pattern of unbelief of their ancestors in the Exodus period...shared features between Mt. 17:14–18 and Lk. 9:37–43 make it likely that Matthew also had access to a simpler second source.”⁴⁹⁷ Nolland’s emphasis is upon being a better human.

W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison Jr., think similarly. For them, the failed deliverance sets up opportunity for fifth expansion then dive into source criticism. They write, “[Matthew’s account] is largely composed of standard miracle story motifs...on its way to becoming a pronouncement story. The tale is told primarily for the sake of Jesus’ provocative declaration on disciples...hip and faith. In Matthew the lesson is not what Jesus can do but what his followers can do. Matthew has altered his Markan source in a multitude of ways.”⁴⁹⁸ **The operative word**

⁴⁹⁶ Gibson, “St. Matthew,” 758–821.

⁴⁹⁷ Nolland, *Matthew*, 710.

⁴⁹⁸ W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison Jr., *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to Saint Matthew*, Vol. 2, International Critical Commentary (New York, NY: T&T Clark, 2004), 719.

is “**tale.**” Nonetheless, Liberal’s do hold one thing in common with Conservatives in their versions of Christianity.

The principle of faith connects Christians regardless of whether Christian Literalists, Nominalists or Antisupernaturalists. Regarding Mark 9:19–24, Barclay, an Antisupernaturalist wrote, “from the heart of Jesus...It was as if Jesus said, ‘The cure of your boy depends not on me but on you’...This is not a specially theological truth; it is universal. To approach anything in the spirit of hopelessness is to make it hopeless...the spirit of faith is to make it a possibility.”⁴⁹⁹ It is replacement of supernatural causation with natural causation: belief in physical disease instead of malevolent entities, curing physical disease instead of faithfully exercising divine spiritual authority that gathers the interest of Antisupernaturalists assigning causation for human failure.

View of the Disciples Failure and Query from Historian’s Rules

Coherence is evidenced within the balance of the Transfiguration narratives as resident in all three synoptic accounts. Dissimilarity is evidenced by disciples casting out demons elsewhere in all three Synoptic gospels yet failing in the scene. Eyewitness Sources are evidenced by the presence of all the twelve disciples along with Matthew. Multiple Attestation is evidenced by all three Synoptic accounts. The criteria of Embarrassment and Surprise Elements are viewable in both the disciples’ perplexion and request of clarification following the supernatural scene three of them recently experienced. Discontinuity is evidenced by the sudden shift in the narrative from glory to failure. The presence of all seven criteria of Historian’s Rules increases the probability of historicity over myth.

⁴⁹⁹ William Barclay, *The Gospel of Mark*, The New Daily Study Bible (Edinburgh, Scotland: Saint Andrew Press, 2001), 251–253.

Additional Evidence Liberals Must either Debunk or Disregard to Maintain an Antisupernaturalist Worldview

Demons Exist and Remain Active in the Epistles, Apocalyptic, and Apocrypha

Demons appear in various genres of the Bible (Multiple Attestation). Each writer confirms their existence to different audiences. Nonetheless, society and culture has taken liberties with what the text means outside of contemporaneous author intent (see Derrida). For example, Revelation 9:20 reveals that it is not riches themselves that remain the eschatological problem for humanity. Instead, it is a written biblical imperative against the serving (worshipping, idolatry) of Mammon (riches) according to Matthew 6:24, Luke 16:9–13 (cf. 1 Cor 10:20–21; Lv 17:17; Dt 17:2–5, 32:17; Ps 106:37; Bar 4:5–7; 1 Tm 4:1; Jas 2:19, 3:15). Scholars can refute Secularism, including Skepticism regarding demons via historical accounts having Multiple Attestation within different genres of literature as made evident by the vastness of OT cf. NT attestation.⁵⁰⁰

The Bible, particularly the NT makes connections between Spirit, God’s Word (Scripture), and deceiving spirits. This is best exemplified by Paul’s first epistle to Timothy instructing him on the right and righteous behavior of a Pastor. 1 Timothy 4:1 reads, “The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons.” Some commentators note that while spirits lie, the Holy Spirit can also be heard and trusted.

⁵⁰⁰ All Scripture referenced in this note is from the NIV. Additional evidence is made available in the Apocalyptic. Namely, Revelation 16:14 reads “for they are spirits of demons, performing signs, which go out to the kings of the entire world, to gather them together for the war of the great day of God, the Almighty.” Revelation 18:2 reads “And he cried out with a mighty voice, saying, ‘Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great! She has become a dwelling place of demons and a prison of every unclean spirit, and a prison of every unclean and hateful bird.’”

For example, Raymond F. Collins thinks the successive mention of the Spirit in the successive verses of 1 Timothy 3:16 and 4:1 remains significant. Collins writes, “Spirit speaks clearly and distinctly (*rhētōs*)...In the final times ‘some’ (*tines*) will give up the faith. Instead of following the warnings of the Spirit who speaks about the end times, they will follow deceiving spirits and the teaching of demons.”⁵⁰¹ Significantly, demons not only speak to Christians, but remain spatially aware of material and time concepts.

James writes regarding these realms and their relatedness to biblical historicity. Specifically, James quantifies a minimal knowledge held by the incorporeal when he writes, “You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder (Jas 2:19).” James expounds on his understanding of demons and their nature. In James 3:14–15 the head of the Jerusalem Council writes, “If you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth. Such ‘wisdom’ does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice.” Commentators provide traditional perspective on James’ words as it pertains to advocating “good works.” The dissertation leaves that debate to other theologians pursuing solutions to other arguments.

However, Paul is clear and direct with the first century Corinthians. In 1 Corinthians 10:20 he writes, “No, but I say that things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons and not to God; and I do not want you to become partners with demons.” Thereunder, demons are real things, real entities, and may be communicated with as if they could be a partner, such as in business. The apocalyptic text does not deny their contemporary existence as Secularists and many Christians assert by dismissing the Bible’s supernatural elements.

⁵⁰¹ Raymond F. Collins, *1 & 2 Timothy and Titus: A Commentary*, ed. C. Clifton Black, M. Eugene Boring, and John T. Carroll (Louisville, KY: John Knox, 2012), 112–113.

The epistles cohere with Apocrypha. Paul attests in 1 Corinthians 10:21 “No, but I say that things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons.” Multiple Attestation is multiplied when considering the Apocalyptic and alternate writer beyond Paul and James. John writes in Revelation 9:20–21, “The rest of mankind who were not killed by these plagues still did not repent of the work of their hands; they did not stop worshiping demons, and idols of gold, silver, bronze, stone and wood—idols that cannot see or hear or walk. Nor did they repent of their murders, their magic arts, their sexual immorality or their thefts.” The primary goal of the dissertation remains to remind its audience that historically, idols are not material things but deities.

For the Secularist or those who read the Bible in ways that dismiss its supernatural content, things do not make sacrifices, especially to other things. The reader is reminded of this when reading John in Revelation 16:14 that reads, “for they are spirits of demons, performing signs, which go out to the kings of the entire world, to gather them together for the war of the great day of God, the Almighty.” Based upon the historical evidence, the dissertation concludes that demons exist. The unanswered question remains what to do about them.

Deliverance Authority or Exorcism of Demons Exists in the Synoptics, Acts, Patristic, and later Writings

Neither demons nor their exorcism is mentioned by John. Conversely, the Synoptic writers address both extensively. John, instead, deals with the matters in the Book of Revelation. Luke makes much reference to Gentiles and contemporaneously Greek Pagans (existing as contemporary Secular Naturalists/Humanists worshipping the created instead of the Creator). These people groups, like their Israelite cousins, were delivered and healed by Jesus. Paul both

reflected and defended this ministry as being “Apostle to the Gentiles,” (Acts 9:15; 13:47; 15:19; 22:21 cf. Ro 11:13; Col 1:27).⁵⁰²

According to Graham H. Twelftree, Mark gives significant prominence to exorcism as being Jesus’s primary ministry, while Luke seeks more of a balance between Jesus’s exorcism and other “aspects of his ministry.”⁵⁰³ Carson inquires similarly. Carson writes:

How much of the presentation of demonic activity in the Synoptic Gospels is bound up with the dawning of the kingdom and the coming of the King? How is such activity related to the End? How much of the proper confrontation of the demonic is bound up with gospel solutions—as in Ephesians 6 and Revelation 12? This is not to say that there is no place for explicit exorcism. It is to say, rather, that the framework of the discussion and the priorities that emerge look rather different when the Bible’s story-line, climaxing in Christ and his cross-work, resurrection, exaltation and reign, are taken into account.⁵⁰⁴

De-emphasis is not coterminous with disappeared, however. The tradition of exorcism carried over to the Patristics and beyond. The patristics confirm the gospel writers with their own contemporaneous accounts and perspectives. Like Tatian, Tertullian specifically affirmed Christian authority over demons in “The Apology” 22.23.15ff.⁵⁰⁵ The Roman Catholic Church additionally published instruction regarding exorcism centuries later.⁵⁰⁶

⁵⁰² Cornelius Van Til and Eric H. Sigward, *The Pamphlets, Tracts, and Offprints of Cornelius Van Til*, Electronic ed. (New York: Labels Army, 1997) Logos.

⁵⁰³ Twelftree, *Jesus*, 175–176.

⁵⁰⁴ Carson, *The Gagging*, 546–547.

⁵⁰⁵ Tertullian, *A Treatise on the Soul* 27.5, 27.8ff., 57.4; Tertullian argued demons cause human bodily injury and death including accidents and murder as “every man is attended by a demon.” He asserted that demons’ economic proposition engages in human fear and remain ubiquitous dispensers of anxiety even by influencing dreams.

⁵⁰⁶ Ferguson, *Baptism*, 752–755; Ferguson argues that “Scapula Instruction” for administering the rite of exorcism by the church was written as late as AD 790 in the “Barberini Euchologion MS.” This document remains the most recent work of the “Ordo of Constantinople” and persists in use today by the Eastern Orthodox Church.

There are Contemporary Empirical Examples of Demonic Affliction

Thus far, inductive proof of the Transfiguration event is arguable via Historian's Rules. There is also inductive evidence of contemporary demonic occurrences provable via anecdotal evidence. On the one hand, Keener writes, "the feelings of a tired and nervous man...passing a night in a large empty country house at the end of a journey on which he has been reading a ghost-story, are no evidence that ghosts exist."⁵⁰⁷ On the other hand, however, Keener writes, "Empirical proof is a spiritual necessity...a matter of faith...You will, I think, only deceive yourself by trying to find special evidence."⁵⁰⁸ Pragmatic observation has value, particularly when acknowledging most persons have never knowingly either visibly or audibly encountered a demon. Others have. The following examples provide contemporary empirical evidence.

A Teenage Girl Receives Contemporary Psychological Diagnosis of Affliction by a Spirit and Consequent Relegation of her Treatment to Spiritual Healers

Psychological doctors reported an incident of a "previously-well" 15-year-old girl from metropolitan Melbourne, Australia being brought by police to a psychiatric facility. The subject expressed bellicosity towards her school principal. Eyewitness accounts described the girl as "disoriented," "agitated," and "aggressive." Eyewitnesses included the Judge, police, and clinicians, and orderlies connected with the incident. This constitutes Multiple Attestation according to the standards of Historian's Rules.

The medical professionals also witnessed that despite the subject's vital signs remaining within normal range, and *sans* neither any indication of infection, nor history of drug or alcohol consumption, PhD's historical investigation unearthed some interesting conclusions. The subject

⁵⁰⁷ Keener, *Miracles*, loc. 2420.

⁵⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 2606.

was visiting relatives when a non-medical but spiritual event occurred. MacKay et al. discovered “a curse had been placed on her during her mother’s recent trip to visit family in Ethiopia and that she was now possessed by a ‘djinn.’”⁵⁰⁹ The “djinn” is a Hindu spirit.

However, despite the presence of eyewitnesses, and Multiple Attestation with a story that coheres with what otherwise could be dismissed as mere cocktail of folklore combined with psychosomatic agreement, other Historian’s Rules are present.

It is embarrassing for even one academic, no matter several, with five unique University credentials at stake, to conclude that the mental, thought-derived, materialism of scientific naturalism remains sufficient to explain the event. Yet for these scientists to conclude the subject’s condition indeed was caused by spiritual forces, which explanation remains far less likely than the PhDs drawing a safer academic occlusion, is an example of Embarrassment. So much so, the subject was relegated from the psychiatric facility to the care of “spiritual healers.”⁵¹⁰

There is academic support for crediting of the demonic for psychological/psychotic episodes. Fanhao Nie and Daniel V. A. Olson write, “among young adults, believing in demons is one of the strongest (negative) predictors of mental health...belief in demons can lead to lowered mental health...the negative effect size of belief in demons on mental health is larger in magnitude than all other religion-related predictors.”⁵¹¹ Science attempts to talk Academia out of the existence and activity of demons, instead charging belief as the scapegoat.

⁵⁰⁹ I. Aleisha Anderson MacKay, Matthew O’Brien, Lana Bell, Asha C. Bowen, Anita J. Campbell, “Purulent and Crusted Scalp Lesions in an Infant,” *Journal of Paediatrics and Child Health*, The Royal Australasian College of Physicians 55 [2019], 723–725.

⁵¹⁰ MacKay et. al, “Scalp Lesions.”

⁵¹¹ Fanhao Nie and Daniel V. A. Olson, “Demonic Influence: The Negative Mental Health Effects of Belief in Demons,” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 55 no. 3 [September 2016]: 498–515.

Church-going Christian Antisupernaturalists are happy to agree with them. Modernism and Antisupernaturalism prefers *a priori* dismissal of the non-material to conclusions drawn from supposed supernatural causation. Like the Transfiguration episode, a natural explanation (myth, agendas) trumps the plausibility of a supernatural occurrence. However, like contemporary events, the anecdotal informants are difficult to dismiss.

A Baptized (christened) Woman in the Roman Catholic Church Sought
Medical Attention for Anemia and Low Blood Pressure:
Culture Decides if it is Demonic

The thesis of Igor Jacob Pietkiewicz and Mylene Lecoq-Bamboche argue childhood trauma can leave a lasting effect on both the personality and daily functioning of a person that leads to “dissociative changes in behavior and identity” interpreted and “handled” relative to custom and culture including exorcism. Thereunder, traumatic experiences in the process of handling feelings includes engaging “separate mental systems” that would “normally” encompass a person’s coordinated personality. Consequently, that personality or part of a personhood disassociates from such reality that avoids “traumatic memories.”⁵¹² An Antisupernaturalist worldview holds belief more dear than inconvenient fact.

Accordingly, common outcroppings of dissociative phenomena are a phobia regarding traumatic memories, as well as profound shame regarding their own personal behavior. Igor Jacob Pietkiewicz and Mylene Lecoq-Bamboche write, “Their experiences and fail to distinguish between ‘me’ and ‘not me’...[as] survivors of chronic traumatization often report problems with...self-esteem, sleep, eating, substance abuse, sexuality, establishing and maintaining satisfactory relationships with others...so a comprehensive, thorough mental state examination is

⁵¹² Igor Jacob Pietkiewicz and Mylene Lecoq-Bamboche, “Exorcism Leads to Reenactment of Trauma in a Mauritian Woman,” *Journal of Child Sexual Abuse*, 26 no. 8 [2017]: 971.

necessary.”⁵¹³ Such symptoms are met with resultant conclusions entirely dependent upon cultural guardrails, however.

On the one hand, there are multiple eyewitness accounts of a person behaving in a way that is considered outside the customary bounds as defined by the same observers judging both that prior and present behavior. On the other hand, what is more acceptable normatively in one culture proves either routine or outlandish in another. Empirical accounts extend to multiple MD diagnosis as well. Any number of MD’s can agree on a psychological diagnosis of physical manifestations and remain bound by culture and personal experience.

In the case of the woman exhibiting what doctors diagnosed as “dissociative disorder” in the face of “childhood trauma” or child abuse is levied upon Multiple Attestation by “multiple witnesses” or observers viewing an “eighty-minute interview.” Moreover, “the interviewer’s acceptance and interest of her story gave her relief.”⁵¹⁴ Most interestingly, even when Multiple Attestation of an event having occurred, or collective diagnosis of what historically occurred during that event, many unavoidably remain subject to cultural bias.

For Moderns, it is a culture of Antisupernaturalism. The authors of the article conclude that, “Cultural beliefs about spirit possession affect how people perceive changes in behavior or identity...education about psychological effects of trauma and related symptoms should be implemented for the general public, health care professionals, and clergy.”⁵¹⁵ Ultimately, the existence and activity of demons can be logically evidenced to Secularists who must *a priori* reject the existence and activity of demons to maintain an Antisupernaturalist worldview.

⁵¹³ Pietkiewicz and Lecoq-Bamboche, “Exorcism,” 970–92.

⁵¹⁴ Ibid.

⁵¹⁵ Ibid.

Exorcism is Performed in Europe, the Philippines, and the Americas Today

Mike Mariani reports that the medieval patristic practice of exorcism is now “widespread” amidst modern Western culture. In 2016, a thirty-three-year-old female subject named Louisa Muskovits “appeared to be having a panic attack” and associated hyperventilation. Her therapist Amy Harp along with the subject’s closest friend each noted empirically, a change in Louisa’s “demeanor.” Mariani writes, “Normally friendly and open, she started screaming and pulling out clumps of her hair. She growled and glared. Her head flailed from side to side, cocking back at odd angles. In jumbled bursts, she muttered about good and evil, God and the devil...to vacillate between this unhinged state and her normal self. One minute she would snarl and bare her teeth, and the next she would beg for help.”⁵¹⁶ Occurrences such as these are more among the norm than anomaly as ministry demands for solutions increase.

Accordingly, Father Vincent Lampert, “official exorcist for the [Roman Catholic] Archdiocese of Indianapolis” IN, claims he received over seventeen hundred exorcism requests in the first ten months of 2018 alone. To meet global demand, “The Church has been training new exorcists in Chicago, Rome, and Manila...In 2011 the U.S. had fewer than 15 known Catholic exorcists. Today...there are well over 100...The inescapable question is: Why? Or rather: Why now?”⁵¹⁷ The article cites Roman Catholic Church ministers reporting as many as eighty percent of those seeking an exorcism are sufferers of sexual abuse.

Nevertheless, ministry decisions are made contingent upon spiritual discernment instead of quantifiable examination scores. Mariani writes:

⁵¹⁶ Mike Mariani, “American Exorcism,” accessed March 10, 2023, <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2018/12/catholic-exorcisms-on-the-rise/573943/>.

⁵¹⁷ Ibid.

According to catholic doctrine, in order to take possession of a person in the first place, demons rely on doorways—what the priest in Orlando warned Louisa about. These can include things like habitual sin and family curses—in which an act of violence or iniquity committed by one generation manifests itself in subsequent generations. But the priests I spoke with kept coming back, over and over, to two particular doorways. Nearly every Catholic exorcist I spoke with cited a history of abuse—in particular, sexual abuse—as a major doorway for demons...sexual abuse is so traumatic that it creates a kind of ‘soul wound,’ as Thomas put it, that makes a person more vulnerable to demons. The exorcists—to be clear—aren’t saying sexual abuse torments people to such an extent that they come to believe they’re possessed; the exorcists contend that abuse fosters the conditions for actual demonic possession to take hold. But from a secular standpoint, the link to sexual abuse helps explain why someone might become convinced that he or she is being menaced by something sinister and overpowering...[Additionally], according to Catholic teaching, engaging with the occult involves accessing parts of the spiritual realm that may be inhabited by demonic forces...Today’s increased willingness to believe in the paranormal, then, seems to have begun as a response to secularization before spreading through the culture and landing back on the Church’s doorstep—in the form of people seeking salvation from demons through the Catholic faith’s most mystical ritual.⁵¹⁸

Mariani notes that according to his research, although some Protestant denominations [presumably charismatic] and non-denominational churches embrace the reality of demonic possession and need for exorcism, Protestantism does not generally engage the demonic as aggressively as the Roman Catholic Church. Additional examples are worthy of review.

Roman Catholicism holds to a Scriptural approach to the Demonic while many Protestant Denominations are influenced by Secularism

Nicole M. Bauer and J. Andrew Doole argue that many modern exorcists seek to interact with modern medicine and psychology reflecting exorcism as a source of healing whenever modern medicine fails. They write, “The three major differences between the exorcisms performed by Jesus in the Gospels and by Roman Catholic priests today can be divided into the following three areas: the role of Satan and the names of demons, Jesus’s name and religious

⁵¹⁸ Mariani, “American Exorcism.”

objects, and the signs or ‘symptoms’ of possession.”⁵¹⁹ Some key differences between gospel accounts of exorcisms and modern Roman Catholic Method do occur, nonetheless.

These differences depend upon decisions made by the individual exorcist. Bauer and Doole write, “Gospel exorcisms are ‘quick and easy,’ use only a simple command, and do not cast out Satan. Modern exorcisms are either very psychologised and medicalised or supernatural and dramatic, or indeed both...What sets the exorcism of the Catholic Church apart from other similar religious healing practices is the clear inclusion of psychiatric, medical, and psychological expertise.”⁵²⁰ Regardless, the experiences of both exorcist and recipient of exorcism are multi-denominational and studied by World Religion academics.

There is a Multi-Cultural Connection between Trauma and Demonic Affliction

Andrea De Antoni argues that it was only following his personal purification at he accepted the reality of an existent incorporeal realm. He writes, “While demonic possession and exorcisms, or so-called religious and spiritual healing practices, have been observed from ancient times, there remain many phenomena we experience in our physical bodies that modern science still struggles to explain...where Western medicine has become institutionalized, spiritual and religious healing still persists and has efficacy.”⁵²¹ For example, De Antoni discovered at *Kenmi Shrine*, Tokushima, Japan many sufferers of disease including headaches, stomachaches, lower back pains, heaviness in their shoulders, and coughing, the majority proved untreatable at

⁵¹⁹ Nicole M. Bauer and J. Andrew Doole, “The (Re)Invention of Biblical Exorcism in Contemporary Roman Catholic Discourses,” *Religion and Theology* 29 [2022]: 22.

⁵²⁰ Bauer and Doole, “Biblical Exorcism,” 28.

⁵²¹ Andrea De Antoni, “Cross-Cultural Comparison of spirit/demonic Possession and Exorcisms,” *College of International Relations* [July 16, 2019], accessed March 12, 2022, <https://www.ritsumeai.ac.jp/research/radiant/eng/connect/story7.html/>.

the local hospital. However, most were alleviated at the shrine by the exorcism of a “dog-spirit.”⁵²²

In comparison to Italy, where from many of the shrine attendees emanate having a Roman Catholic background, De Antoni reports a different “version” of exorcism observing a young woman “groaning loudly in a voice that was very different from her own as she struggled so violently that five men were barely enough to restrain her...that seemed to belong to someone else the reality of demons and possessions is upheld through the experience of such phenomena.”⁵²³ Empirical knowledge is key to recognizing demonic affliction.

Chapter Conclusion

The chapter’s thesis that a supernatural worldview is plausible when the event is measured by Historian’s Rules holding the same criteria Secularists apply in vetting non-biblical historicity is proved. Specifically, historians and judges of history all share the criteria of Coherence, Dissimilarity, Eyewitness Sources, Multiple Attestation, Embarrassment, Surprise Elements, and Discontinuity in vetting historicity. Biblical and contemporary exegesis of events by Historian’s Rules, as well as outstanding non-quantitative data empirical data inductively proves a supernatural worldview is plausible.

Dissertation Conclusion

This dissertation has shown that the historical existence and activity of demons is inductively demonstrable by non-circular arguments which are superior to the *a priori* arguments of Secularists that seek to justify Materialism.

⁵²² De Antoni, “Cross-Cultural Comparison.”

⁵²³ Ibid.

First, the introductory chapter shows that reality transcends one own personal experience and worldview. The dissertation assumed that belief and fact are not necessarily synonymous. Moreover, *a priori* conclusion to the contrary wrecks honest vetting of historical assertions. The chapter defends a historical facts theorem in that there is some rational basis for belief in what has historically occurred, albeit bias is inevitable for both Theist and non-Theist historians and their sources. Good historical method trumps either folk theology or speculation.

The dissertation's *apologia* answers why the Secular Humanist/Naturalist world rejects the supernatural, why many Christians read the Bible in ways that dismiss its supernatural elements, and how scholars can refute Secularism's Skepticism regarding the existence and activity of demons. It asserts that there is a common set of seven objective components that both Theists and non-Theists should apply to determine the truth or falsity of historical claims, yielding the criterion of Historian's Rules.

The seven Historian's Rules defined and employed by the dissertation for vetting historical veracity are: Coherence, Dissimilarity, Eyewitness Sources, Multiple Attestation, Embarrassment, Surprise Elements, and Discontinuity. The introductory chapter's thesis was concluded as having been substantiated.

Second, in query of why Secular Humanists/Naturalists reject the supernatural, works by René Descartes, Immanuel Kant, and John Locke, C. S. Lewis, Victor Reppert, Lesslie Newbigin, Francis A. Schaeffer, and Charles Taylor were reviewed. In query of why many Christians read the Bible in ways that dismiss its supernatural elements, works by Julius Wellhausen, Rudolph Bultmann, and Martin Dibelius was reviewed. Works by Michael S. Heiser, Norman L. Geisler and Douglas E. Potter, Francis Schaeffer, Millard J. Erickson,

Bernard Lonergan, George Lindbeck, Paul Allen, David K. Clark, and Carl F. H. Henry were reviewed.

In query of how scholars can refute Secularism, including Skepticism regarding the existence and activity of demons, the OT Books of Genesis, Enoch, Job, and Habakkuk; the Ugaritic text cf. the OT Books of Deuteronomy, 1 Kings, 2 Kings, 1 Chronicles, 2 Chronicles, Jeremiah, Judges, Hosea, and Micah; the NT Synoptic Gospels, Epistles, and Revelation; Patristic texts of Barnabas, Evagrius of Pontus, Minucius Felix, Hippolytus, Tertullian, Ignatius of Antioch, Irenæus, Tatian, and Theodoret of Cyrus as primary sources. Works by D. A. Carson, Douglas R. Groothuis, Leslie Newbigin, C. Fred Smith, Kevin Vanhoozer, Nancy Pearcey, and Walter Wink as secondary sources. The introductory chapter's thesis was concluded as having been substantiated.

Third, why Secular Humanists/Naturalists reject the supernatural generally, and specifically, the existence and activity of demons was investigated. The chapter's thesis was that "material" reason (thought conclusions) became the god of the Moderns leading to greater epistemological conundrums for its philosophies, philosophers, and associated historical periods. A timeline of evolving perspectives was identified analyzed.

The following views and associated foundations of philosophy were historically-linearly tracked and analyzed: Plato, the Medieval Period, Scholasticism, Realism, Nominalism, Skepticism, the Premodern Period, the Modern Period, Humanism, and Epistemology. The dissertation concluded that .Secular Humanist/Naturalists consider human thought as entirely material in nature. Philosophy outside of Theology dismissed the supernatural. Human Reason became the god of the Moderns and led to greater epistemological conundrums.

Fourth, why many Christians read the Bible in ways that dismiss its supernatural elements including the existence and activity of demons is due to the theological and cultic descendants of Cartesian Skepticism. The following views and associated foundations of philosophy and theology were historically-linearly tracked and analyzed: source criticism (Wellhausen), form criticism (Meyer, Dibelius, and Bultmann), Liberal and Progressive Christianity (Barclay, Berkhof, Wink, Nolland, and Wright), and modification of traditional biblical/linguistic definitions. This chapter concludes that many Christians read the Bible in ways that dismiss its supernatural elements because they experience the same social influencers as Secularists, and likewise, engage in modifying traditional word definitions to justify *a priori* doctrinal agendas.

Fifth, how Secularism may be refuted, and a supernatural worldview is best defended by Historian's Rules. A supernatural worldview is plausible when an event is measured by Historian's Rules holding the same criteria Secularists apply in vetting non-biblical historicity.

The Synoptic accounts surrounding the Mount of Transfiguration and associated exegetical commentaries were researched and analyzed from: the conservative/traditional view, the liberal view, and defense from the view of Historian's Rules. The dissertation closed with additional evidence from: the Epistles, Apocalyptic, Apocrypha, Patristic Writings, and contemporary examples of demonic affliction that Liberals must either debunk or disregard to maintain an Antisupernaturalist worldview. The chapter's thesis was concluded as having been substantiated. Thus, the dissertation's thesis statement is substantiated. Further study is needed regarding whether Postmodernism has a greater propensity to include a traditional Judeo-Christian worldview than Modernism has demonstrated.

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