

# BIBLICAL WORLDVIEW COURSE

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Class 1a: Course Introduction & Development of Western Worldview

Bill Scofield

## I. COURSE INTRODUCTION

### A. Class Objective:

The goal of this class is to recover the worldview established from Genesis to Revelation, resulting in a sound instruction regarding the hope of the church and a sojourning lifestyle in light of the coming Kingdom.

### B. Class Requirements:

1. **Class attendance:** Each class will consist of two 1- hour sessions (*approx.*). (*If you are unable to attend one class, you will receive the audio from the class and will need to bring a 2-page summary of the class.*)
2. **Required reading:**
  - a) Poised for Harvest, Braced for Backlash (*Tim Miller*)
3. **Prayer room hours:** Each week everyone participating in the class will spend 2 hours in the prayer room. This time should be spent dialoging with the Holy Spirit about the subject matter from the class. Please journal your thoughts and prayers during this time.
4. **Fasting:** In addition to time spent in the prayer room, I want to ask everyone to fast for 1 day per week.
5. **Completion of weekly assignments:** Each week will have a short assignment meant to help you process the subject matter with the Holy Spirit, develop language to communicate it, and impart boldness and confidence in sharing the Gospel.

### C. Course schedule:

\* *Each class will consist of 2 one-hour sessions.*

1. Week 1—Course Introduction & Development of the Western Worldview
2. Week 2—Introduction to Biblical Worldview
3. Week 3—A Theology of Restoration Vs Annihilation
4. Week 4—Continuance of Messianic Expectation
5. Week 5—Defining the Kingdom
6. Week 6—Defining the Gospel
7. Week 7—The Sojourning Identity of the Ekklesia
8. Week 8—The Sojourning Mission of the Ekklesia

## II. THE AIM OF THE CLASS: SOUND INSTRUCTION

- A. One of the goals of this class will be to establish you in a sound instruction, stemming from an accurate and Biblical worldview. However, accurate knowledge or understanding is not our

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aim, just like it wasn't the goal for Jesus nor the Apostles that men should simply know the truth.

***19 You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder. 20 But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless? (Jam 2:19-20 NASB)***

- B. The Pharisees were experts in the truth. In spite of the many perversions, the Pharisees really had right understanding of the promise in the Scriptures during Jesus' day. Although they the Scripture is clear that the hope that was derived from the Scriptures was accurate.

***14 ... I believe everything that agrees with the Law and that is written in the Prophets, 15 and I have the same hope in God as these men, that there will be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked. (Act 24:14-15 NIV)***

- C. However, the testimony that we have of the Pharisees is that you can have all of the key doctrines in order, and yet not allow entrance to the Spirit of Truth to transform the inward parts. At the end of the day, it is not sound doctrine that Jesus is looking for it is truth in the heart.

***6 Behold, You desire truth in the innermost being, And in the hidden part You will make me know wisdom. (Psa 51:6 NASB)***

***6 And He said to them, "Rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written: 'THIS PEOPLE HONORS ME WITH THEIR LIPS, BUT THEIR HEART IS FAR AWAY FROM ME. (Mar 7:6 NASB)***

***13 "No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth." 14 Now the Pharisees, who were lovers of money, were listening to all these things and were scoffing at Him. 15 And He said to them, "You are those who justify yourselves in the sight of men, but God knows your hearts; for that which is highly esteemed among men is detestable in the sight of God. (Luk 16:13-15 NASB)***

- D. Inward truth is ultimately measured by humility and love being formed in the heart. Believing the truth does not guarantee humility of heart, and so it must be the measuring rod to which all truth is held. We don't ever stop pursuing the truth or sound instruction, but we understand that the knowledge of the truth is not going to aid anyone on the day when we stand before the Son of Man.

***2 ... "But to this one I will look, To him who is humble and contrite of spirit, and who trembles at My word. (Isa 66:2 NASB)***

***5 Therefore do not go on passing judgment before the time, but wait until the Lord comes who will both bring to light the things hidden in the darkness and disclose the motives of men's hearts; and then each man's praise will come to him from God. (1Cr 4:5 NASB)***

***16 on the day when, according to my gospel, God will judge the secrets of men through Christ Jesus. (Rom 2:16 NASB)***

- E. Sound instruction ought to lead us to a **lifestyle of pursuing righteousness, humility, and love**. While the Lord is primarily looking at the heart of man, the primary witness either in favor or against us will be how we walk out righteousness in this age. Walking out righteousness will be measured **by our works of righteousness and by our words**.

<sup>1</sup> **"Beware of practicing your righteousness before men to be noticed by them; otherwise you have no reward with your Father who is in heaven. ... <sup>3</sup> "But when you give to the poor, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, <sup>4</sup> so that your giving will be in secret; and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you. (Mat 6:1, 3-4 NASB)**

<sup>10</sup> **For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad. (2Cr 5:10 NASB)**

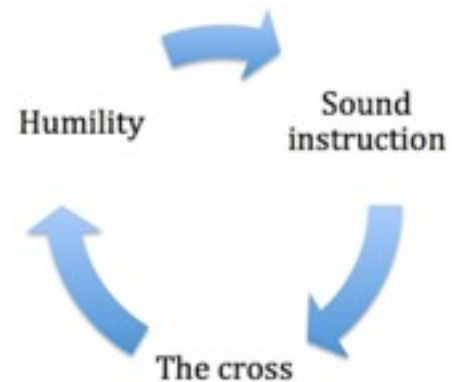
<sup>12</sup> **"Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done. (Rev 22:12 NASB)**

<sup>36</sup> **"But I tell you that every careless word that people speak, they shall give an accounting for it in the day of judgment. (Mat 12:36 NASB)**

- F. Thus, the aim of all of our instruction must be to walk out the truth in a lifestyle of righteousness with the primary goal being the working of humility, love, and Godliness in the inward parts.

<sup>1</sup> **A Psalm of David. O LORD, who may abide in Your tent? Who may dwell on Your holy hill? <sup>2</sup> He who walks with integrity, and works righteousness, And speaks truth in his heart. <sup>3</sup> He does not slander with his tongue, Nor does evil to his neighbor, Nor takes up a reproach against his friend; (Psa 15:1-3 NASB)**

- G. It is possible to have right doctrine and even works of righteousness and yet have wickedness in the heart. However, humility in the inward parts can only come through walking out the truth through a lifestyle of righteousness with the aim being to work righteousness into the heart. So, sound instruction (i.e. right hope) should lead us to a lifestyle of embracing humility and righteousness (i.e. the cross) with the aim of having truth formed in the inward parts.



<sup>27</sup> **"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which on the outside appear beautiful, but inside they are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness. (Mat 23:27 NASB)**

<sup>9</sup> **And He also told this parable to some people who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and viewed others with contempt: <sup>10</sup> "Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. <sup>11</sup> "The Pharisee stood and was praying this to himself: 'God, I thank You that I am not like other people: swindlers, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. <sup>12</sup> 'I fast twice a week; I pay tithes of all that I get.' <sup>13</sup> "But the tax collector, standing some distance away, was even**

***unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, the sinner!' <sup>14</sup> "I tell you, this man went to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted." (Luk 18:9-14 NASB)***

- H. The fruit of the process of having the affections and values of our hearts conformed to the truth inside is that the Father releases the joy of the Holy Spirit into our hearts to anchor us with perseverance in a lifestyle of walking out the cross.

***<sup>9</sup> "YOU HAVE LOVED RIGHTEOUSNESS AND HATED LAWLESSNESS; THEREFORE GOD, YOUR GOD, HAS ANOINTED YOU WITH THE OIL OF GLADNESS ABOVE YOUR COMPANIONS."* (Hbr 1:9 NASB)**



### III. THE MECHANICS OF WORLDVIEW

- A. The primary challenge when communicating the truth to someone is the issue of worldview. So, when you communicate the Gospel, your words always land within an existing worldview and they are processed only within the assumptions of this worldview.
- B. Words are simply 'symbols' which attempt to communicate about realities to which they point. The problem being that these symbols land within previously constructed worldviews. They are then interpreted as valid or useful only as they coincide with the values of the worldview.
- C. This is why there are so many interpretations of the Scriptures now, and yet the early Church had near undivided agreement on almost every key point of Scriptural interpretation. The Church, being born into the Jewish community, was thus introduced into—and ultimately through—a Hebraic worldview. It wasn't until the spread of the Gospel into—and ultimately through—Hellenistic cultures that there were many various other interpretations of Scripture. The crazy condition of the Church now (+38,000 Protestant denominations) is primarily due to a perversion in the worldview within the Western mind.
- D. **Definitions of Worldview:**
1. *"the culturally structured assumptions, values, and commitments/allegiances underlying a people's perception of reality and their responses to those perceptions."<sup>1</sup>*
  2. *"the fundamental cognitive orientation of an individual or society encompassing natural philosophy; fundamental, existential, and normative postulates; or themes, values, emotions, and ethics."<sup>2</sup>*
- E. All worldviews are holistic in nature, meaning that the various points of any given worldview all rest on one another to some extent. While some elements within the worldview are more

<sup>1</sup> Charles Kraft, *Anthropology for Christian Witness* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1996), 52

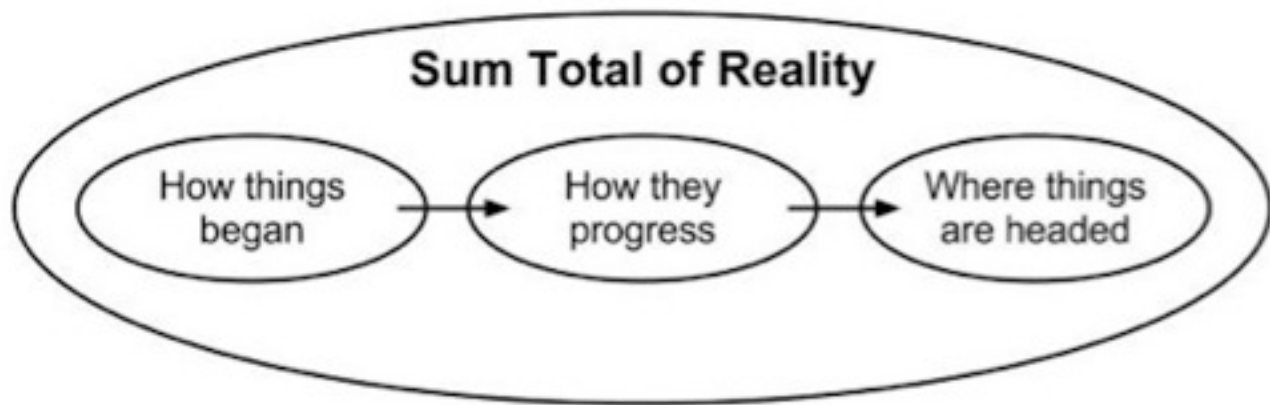
<sup>2</sup> Gary B. Palmer, *Toward A Theory of Cultural Linguistics* (University of Texas Press, 1996), 114.

essential to its existence, **typically the lesser values, assumptions, and ideas are communicated to re-enforce the two or three bedrock assumptions which undergird the whole worldview.**

- F. While worldviews are often developed over time as a holistic explanation of existence, once acknowledged as 'reality' they are passed down to younger generations through various forms of communication, propaganda, and the education system. Paul, explaining his ministry within a highly developed Hellenistic<sup>3</sup> (Greek) culture, said these assumptions are like military strongholds that wage war and deny access to the knowledge of God.

***<sup>4</sup> The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. <sup>5</sup> We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ. (2Cr 10:4-5 NIV)***

- G. Worldviews can either be strongholds which war against us obtaining the knowledge of God in truth, or—if established by the Holy Spirit—a worldview can set strongholds which keep us in the love of the truth.
- H. All worldviews have a set of assumptions upon which their importance and relevance is based. These assumptions or values attempt to define reality in a way that explains pain, suffering, and injustice. After the explanation of reality and its origin are presented, the solution and desired benefit are presented. There are four essential assumptions to almost all worldviews:



- I. **The framework that we, as believers, have for existence will determine where we assume God to be now, what we assume Him to be doing, and what outcome we expect from His activity.** So, before we begin to tackle the issue of Biblical theology (the study or the knowledge of God) we have to tackle the issue of worldview.
- J. Discussing the topic of worldview with someone is always challenging. When discussing some of these issues, I have encountered hostility, anger, confusion, and even head aches. Stephen

<sup>3</sup> "Hellenistic" is the common term referring to Greek culture after the time of Alexander the Great; from Gk. *Hellenikos*, from the root *Hellen*, meaning "a Greek [person]." (*Online Etymology Dictionary*, Douglas Harper ed., "Hellenic," available from [http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=Hellenic.](http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=Hellenic))



Venable said that it is like explaining to a man wearing dirty glasses—NOT that his glasses are dirty—but rather that he is wearing glasses at all.

***The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost. <sup>16</sup> But I received mercy for this reason, that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience as an example to those who were to believe in him for eternal life. <sup>17</sup> To the King of ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen. (ESV 1 Timothy 1:15-17)***

***After they (Paul and Silas) had been severely flogged, they were thrown into prison, and the jailer was commanded to guard them carefully. <sup>24</sup> Upon receiving such orders, he put them in the inner cell and fastened their feet in the stocks. <sup>25</sup> About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them. (NIV Acts 16:23-25)***

#### IV. DEFINING THE WESTERN WORLDVIEW

- A. The most fundamental question within the Western worldview is “What is the sum total of reality?” The answer to this question—which ultimately lays the foundational bedrock for any worldview—has created the framework through which Western Christianity has been interpreted the Bible for nearly 1,700 years.
- B. Around 300 years before Jesus’ ministry a worldview—mostly devised by a small group of Greek philosophers—was formed. This worldview—know as Hellenism—was developed primarily by two philosophers named Socrates and Plato. The bedrock of Hellenism is a form of ***metaphysical dualism***, which divides reality into two radically different ‘realms’ of existence.
- C. The first being the ‘*intelligible*’ realm, or the realm of ideals. Plato taught that this ‘realm’ was an ethereal, immaterial realm where every perfect ‘form’ or ideal exists. Ultimately the ideals within the intelligible realm are presented as the solution for the problems of humanity. This realm is ethereal and immaterial by nature, although it can be accessed by the development of the human mind.
- D. The other realm, according to Plato, is the ‘*perceptual*’ realm. Everything that can be seen or touched (*and thus material*), in this view, is fallen and corrupt. The distinguishing element of these two realms is that which can be seen is physical and material—therefore inherently corrupt.
- E. The importance of the radical division of existence into two realms within this worldview cannot be overstated. The intelligible realm—being such a pristine existence—could only be interacted with through the development of the intellect or the soul due to our fundamentally corrupt (*i.e. physical*) nature.
- F. Thus, the worldview which Plato devised explains existence this way:
  1. **Metaphysics:** There are two distinct ‘realms’ of existence—one material and corrupt, the other immaterial and pure.

2. **Cosmology:** First, the intelligible, immaterial, and pure realm of ideal forms was created—after it was the corrupt perceptual realm which was simply a realm of corrupt copies of the ineligible realm.
3. **Soteriology:** We transcend our existence within the perceptual realm through the development of the intellect—thus, interacting with the pristine intelligible realm from which we all came.
4. **Eschatology:** The ultimate goal individually is to achieve freedom through death.<sup>4</sup> Collectively, the end of existence is the destruction of the perceptual realm.

## V. HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE WESTERN WORLDVIEW

**“The safest general characterization of the European philosophical tradition is that it consists of a series of footnotes to Plato.”<sup>5</sup>**

- A. This commentary on the philosophies which have completely formed Western thought is extremely revealing. There is a reason why the explanations of Platonism in the prior section did not seem terribly alarming. The truth is that we have all been raised into these assumptions, and we interpret all of reality this way.
- B. While we enjoy thinking of the Church as separate from the Western worldview—we have to turn to history to remind ourselves that Western civilization was developed largely by the Church. Once we dive more into the history of its development, we will find that this demonic<sup>6</sup> worldview—once assimilated into Christianity—was actually introduced to the Western world by the Church.
- C. While Socrates and Plato were the two who developed the fundamentals for the worldview, these two names—along with their lofty ideas—would be almost completely unknown to us if it weren't for a few events that would take place within just a few decades of Plato's death.
- D. One of Plato's chief pupils was Aristotle—who tutored a young man named Alexander. Alexander having become thoroughly convinced that Hellenism was the solution to the problems of the world, and made it his mission in life to advance this worldview. Alexander “the Great” set out on a campaign to advance the Greek worldview through military might. Within 10 years, he had conquered most of the known world.

<sup>4</sup> *The death of Socrates (commonly understood by modern historians as suicide) was a strange scene which included several of his pupils surrounding his bed as he drank poison. The record (cf. Plato's Phaedo) of his death is a dialog where he is explaining that death is actually the highest good as he was liberated from the wicked confines of matter.*

<sup>5</sup> [Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality: An Essay in Cosmology* (1929); corrected edition, ed. David R. Griffin and Donald W. Sherburne (Free Press, 1979).]

<sup>6</sup> *Though few frame Western philosophy as essentially demonic, Tertullian (c. 160-230) speaks of the demonization of Socrates as though it were widely known and commonly understood, “Socrates, as none can doubt, was actuated by a different spirit. For they say that a demon clave to him from his boyhood...” (Tertullian, “It is Not to the Philosophers that We Resort for Information about the Soul But to God,” A Treatise on the Soul, Chapter 1; available from <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf03.iv.xi.i.html>.) This no doubt refers to the “inner voice” that Socrates frequently relied upon, which he referred to as the “Daimonion” but has been modernly equated with the conscience. However, Socrates claimed divine inspiration from the Daimonion (Phaedrus, 242) and related to it as a “monitor” assigned uniquely to him among humanity (Republic, 496). Having never heard of the Daimonion, Socrates' fellow Athenians regarded it as a new divinity, and Xenophon equated it to divination (Memorabilia, IV.3.12). (John Harrigan—Biblical Theology of Mission Course: IHOPU '09 course notes Session 4)*

- E. One of the first cities that was established by Alexander was Alexandria in Egypt. Alexandria became one of the primary sources of learning and scholasticism within the ancient world. It boasted the world's largest library and became the **global center of Hellenistic propagation**.
- F. The next stage of the Hellenization of the West really came out of this city. The primary stronghold within Western Christianity began in Alexandria when Clement (c. 150-211), then Origen (c. 182-251) founded a school in an attempt to assimilate Christianity with Greek Philosophy. The teachings from this school have been devastating to Christianity in light of the influence ultimately attributed to Origen.<sup>7</sup>
- G. The primary fruit of the Alexandrian School was the systematic allegorical or "spiritual" interpretation of the Scriptures. Origen taught that the Word of God has a body, soul, and spirit. (starting from *Platonic trichotomy*) The body being equated with the literal interpretation, the soul with the moral interpretation and the spirit with the allegorical interpretation. The soul, he stated, plays the least significant view. While the body (*the letter*) and the spirit are placed as the primary battle for the believer to be "*spiritually*" minded when reading the Scripture.
- H. The Swiss theologian Hans Urs Von Balthasar—a man with a very uncommon breadth of learning—stated, "**there is no thinker in the Church who is so invisibly all-present as Origen.**" The Bible scholar David Noel Freedman said of him, "**Origen's influence was immense...through them and others [various church fathers AFTER the Nicene Counsel] Origen became the father of scriptural study and systematic theology in the Christian tradition.**"<sup>8</sup>
- I. While Origen did produce over 6,000 works in his lifetime—like Plato—his affect on history did not come through his immediate pupils. In 386 A.D. a young philosopher named Augustine who was very influenced by Plato, was converted to Christianity. After converting he was strongly influenced by Origen's writings. St. Augustine of Hippo became the Father of all modern theological streams within the Church.<sup>9</sup>
- J. The next stage that truly cemented our foundational understanding of life within this Platonic worldview was the Renaissance. The Renaissance was a re-emergence of Hellenistic thought and culture which resulted when Constantinople fell to the Ottoman Empire in the mid fifteenth century. Several Greek lecturers and thinkers like John Argyropoulos (1415-1487) fled from Constantinople and landed in Italy where he re introduced Greek philosophy to some of Italy's most influential Universities.

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<sup>7</sup> Platonic ideas began making inroads into Christian theology through the writings of Philo (ca. 20 BC–AD 50). An Alexandrian Jew, Philo admired Greek culture and was enamored with Plato's philosophy. He was also proud of his Jewish heritage. In his desire to offer the Greeks the best of Judaism and the Jews the best of Greek philosophy, he allegorized Scripture. He did so in contrast to the literal interpretation of many rabbis. Philo's ideas caught on, and Alexandria became the home of a new school of theological thought.

<sup>8</sup> David Noel Freedman, *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1996, c1992), 5:47.

<sup>9</sup> While the Catholic, Anglican, and all Protestant denominations all take their theology from Augustine the Orthodox Church does not agree with Augustine on many key issues. However, while they disagree on various points with Augustine, the finer points of worldview and allegorical hermeneutic were presupposed as correct.



- K. Ultimately, this movement would lead to a wide spread triumph of Aristotelian thought through medieval scholasticism.<sup>10</sup> *“Aristotle, however, disagreed with his teacher concerning the world of forms, arguing that all matter is real in and of itself. He argued that the universals (i.e. “forms”) did not produce the particulars (i.e. “copies”), but rather the universals were found in each particular. This view would ultimately triumph in the resurgence of Aristotelianism during medieval scholasticism, which produced the infant form of ‘naturalism.’”*<sup>11</sup>
- L. In the aftermath of the Thirty Years’ War, widespread disillusionment and cynicism gripped Europe ushering in the “Age of Enlightenment,” in which reason was advocated as the primary source and legitimacy for authority (vs. divine right). Convinced that they were leading Europe into an ‘Enlightened Age’ of progress, the Enlightenment thinkers sought to liberate the people of Europe from the tyrannical clutches of Church ‘authority’.
- M. The Church became the advocate for a ‘supernatural’ worldview (i.e. *etherealized heavenly realm*) while the Enlightenment thinkers for a ‘natural’ worldview (i.e. *centralization of reality around human perception*)

## VI. THE IMPACT OF PLATONISM ON THEOLOGY

***All Christian theology is dependent, to an extent at least, on contemporary Greek philosophy, primarily Platonism, but some Christian thinkers fall particularly strongly under Platonic influence, and properly merit the title of Christian Platonists.***<sup>12</sup>

- A. While this idea may be new to some of you, it may actually be understated. The impact of Plato, Origen, and the Daimonion of Socrates is felt in every Christian tradition on some level. The most tragic part isn’t even that Platonism infiltrated the church, but rather that ***it has been established as the unseen bedrock upon which Western theology rests.***<sup>13</sup>
- B. Practically speaking, the impact of Platonism on Western theology begins—like our Bibles—with Genesis. Cosmogony (i.e. *thoughts/doctrines about the origin of the universe*) became interpreted as the creation of two realms. One material, the other ethereal and immaterial. ***Platonic/Gnostic cosmogony then birthed a gnostic Eschatology (i.e. thoughts/doctrines about the end of this age), which ultimately lead to a gnostic Soteriology (i.e. thoughts/doctrines about salvation).***
- <sup>1</sup> In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. (Gen 1:1 NASB)***
- C. ***Cosmogony:*** The Alexandrian school was ultimately successful in it’s synthesis of Christianity with Greek philosophy in that it was able to ***relegate heaven to the intelligible realm***. Heaven was then transformed into the ethereal, abstract, detached reality that we know today having

<sup>10</sup> The practical impact of Hellenistic metaphysical dualism is a radical change in the nature and functioning of that which is invisible to human perception. Ontologically, that which is unseen became ethereal, abstract, insubstantial, intangible, impalpable, etc. Functionally, it became uninvolved with that which is visible, having no practical relation with it. It became irrelevant.

<sup>11</sup> John Harrigan (Biblical Theology of Mission: course notes—Session 04, pg. 1)

<sup>12</sup> David Noel Freedman, *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1996, c1992), 5:380.

<sup>13</sup> Yet again, in other words, we find people capitulating to the prevailing disease of western Christianity, which refuses to look the New Testament’s teaching in the face and prefers to play the tune of the story of Jesus while filling in the harmony from Plato’s philosophy.—N. T. Wright (*Jesus the Risen Judge and Forgiver—transcript from a sermon in Durham Cathedral at the Eucharist on Easter Morning April 8<sup>th</sup>, 2007*)

no actual interaction with the material realm. While most Christians would claim to believe that heaven interacts with the earth, it doesn't actually affect the way we relate to one another.

- D. The other affect on the Ontology of the church was the relegation of **the earth to the 'evil' perceptual realm**. It's existence became inherently evil and corrupt, and even physical matter itself became evil. This fundamental change in the ontological framework for existence ultimately paved the way for many early heresies in the early church.<sup>14</sup>
- E. **Soteriology**: Within this framework **the metaphysical end of redemption was turned from the earth to heaven**. Just as the intelligible realm is the goal of Platonism, so heaven became the goal of Christianity.

*"And again he says, 'We shall be caught up in the clouds to meet Christ in the air, and so shall we ever be with the Lord.' We are therefore to suppose that the saints will remain there [in their progress to heaven] until they recognize the twofold mode of government in those things which are performed in the air... If any one indeed be pure in heart, and holy in mind, and more practiced in perception, he will, by making more rapid progress, quickly ascend to a place in the air, and reach the kingdom of heaven, through those mansions, so to speak, in the various places which the Greeks have termed spheres, i.e., globes, but which holy Scripture has called heavens; in each of which he will first see clearly what is done there, and in the second place, will discover the reason why things are so done: and thus he will in order pass through all gradations, following Him who hath passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, who said, 'I will that where I am, these may be also.' And of this diversity of places He speaks, when He says, 'In My Father's house are many mansions.'"<sup>15</sup>*

- F. This dramatic departure from the faith and hope of the Apostles and Patriarchs—namely, the restoration of creation with God dwelling on the earth—lead to countless perversions of the Scripture. Death—always understood to be the primary enemy of salvation—became the goal of salvation. As in Platonism, Gnostic Christianity taught that death was the individualized end of salvation, thus escaping the perceptual realm. Justin Martyr wrote about this belief early in Church history:

*"Moreover, I pointed out to you that some who are called Christians, but are godless, impious heretics, teach doctrines that are in every way blasphemous, godless, and foolish... For I choose to follow not men or men's doctrines, but God and the doctrines delivered by Him. For if you have fallen in with some who are called Christians, but who do not admit this truth, and venture to blaspheme the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob; who say there is no resurrection of the dead, and that their souls, when they die, are taken to heaven; do not imagine that they are Christians... But I and others, who are right-minded Christians on all points, are assured that there will be a resurrection of the dead, and a thousand years in Jerusalem, which will then be built, adorned, and enlarged, as the prophets Ezekiel and Isaiah and others declare."<sup>16</sup>*

<sup>14</sup> Gnosticism, being the most well known of the early heresies, was dramatically influenced by Platonic dualism. They attempted to explain reality, and even the teachings of Jesus through the lens of Platonism. Marcionism (rejection of God of OT), Docetism (Jesus' 'body' was incorporeal, an illusion of materiality), and Manichaeism (spirit realm of light was gradually removed from the physical world of darkness over the course of human history) were simply an outworking of Gnosticism.

<sup>15</sup> Origen, *De Principiis*, Book II, chapter 11

<sup>16</sup> Justin Martyr (103-165), *Dialogue with Trypho*, Chapter 80

- G. **Eschatology**: In addition to the end, and thus the means, of salvation being altered for the individual, it was also altered collectively. The end of the redeemed and of the cosmos itself was perverted to accommodate the gnostic worldview.
- H. Following the relegation of the heavens to the intelligible realm and the earth to the perceptual realm, the ascension of Jesus was then interpreted as His return to an etherealized (and thus holy) state. Thus, He shed His physical body, ridding Himself of the corrupt perceptual realm forever.
- I. The plain logic behind a physical second coming to the earth was undermined since Jesus was too holy to return to dwell in the wicked and corrupt physical realm. In this way, a new eschatology was first introduced into the church.<sup>17</sup>
- J. **Historic Premillennialism was the only view of the early church for at least 200 years after the ascension of Jesus**. The eschatology taught by the apostles to the next generation was unanimous in its expectation, hermeneutic, and hope.
- K. After Origen's hermeneutic became widespread by the 4th century, this belief came under scrutiny, but Augustine was the first to take Hellenism to its logical conclusion within the interpretation of Scripture as a whole.<sup>18</sup> While the effects upon the theology of the church were significant, there was perhaps no alteration in the life of the church as significant as the fundamental change in hope and eschatological expectation.
- L. **Since it was impossible for Christ to return to a corrupt physical earth, the millennial kingdom must then be reinterpreted as a "spiritual reign" of Christ. So, Christ was then presented as reigning in heaven for 1,000 years, after which He would return for His people, judge the world, and destroy the earth. Thus, 'Postmillennialism' was born.**
- M. Separate from the actual ins and outs of the theological scheme, remaining from this fundamental distortion in the hope of the church is a common understanding of what will take place. Typically, the current expectation is that **we are now in the "church age" in which the whole earth will be Christianized, soon followed by the 2nd coming and a resurrection of the dead which will catch us up to 'heaven' to await to last judgment in which the material heavens and earth are destroyed, and finally the recreation of an immaterial heaven and earth.**

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<sup>17</sup> "Though generally a follower of Origen's allegorical interpretation (cf. *On Christian Doctrine, Preface*), Augustine toned down the system to make it less objectionable to orthodox Christians (see Phillip Schaff, "Preface to Augustine's *The City of God*," in *The Post Nicene Fathers, Vol. 2, p.5*). On many points Augustine seems orthodox, and though giving lip-service to the resurrection of the body (cf. *City of God, 20.6-14; 22.5-21; On Christian Doctrine, 1:19-21*), he sees heaven as the ultimate end of salvation (cf. *City of God, 11.1; 14.28; 19.10-11; 20.14-27*) and thus assumes a heavenly resurrection (cf. *City of God, 13.22-23; 22.3-4*). Heaven as the ultimate destiny of the saints is the staple of the amillennial view that grew out of Augustine's allegorical approach to Scripture." (John Harrigan BTOM)

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- N. The primary aim of this class is the re-establish us in a Biblical worldview, thus restoring a sound doctrine and right hope. Next week, we will begin to use the Scripture and the writings of the early church fathers to re-establish a Biblical worldview.