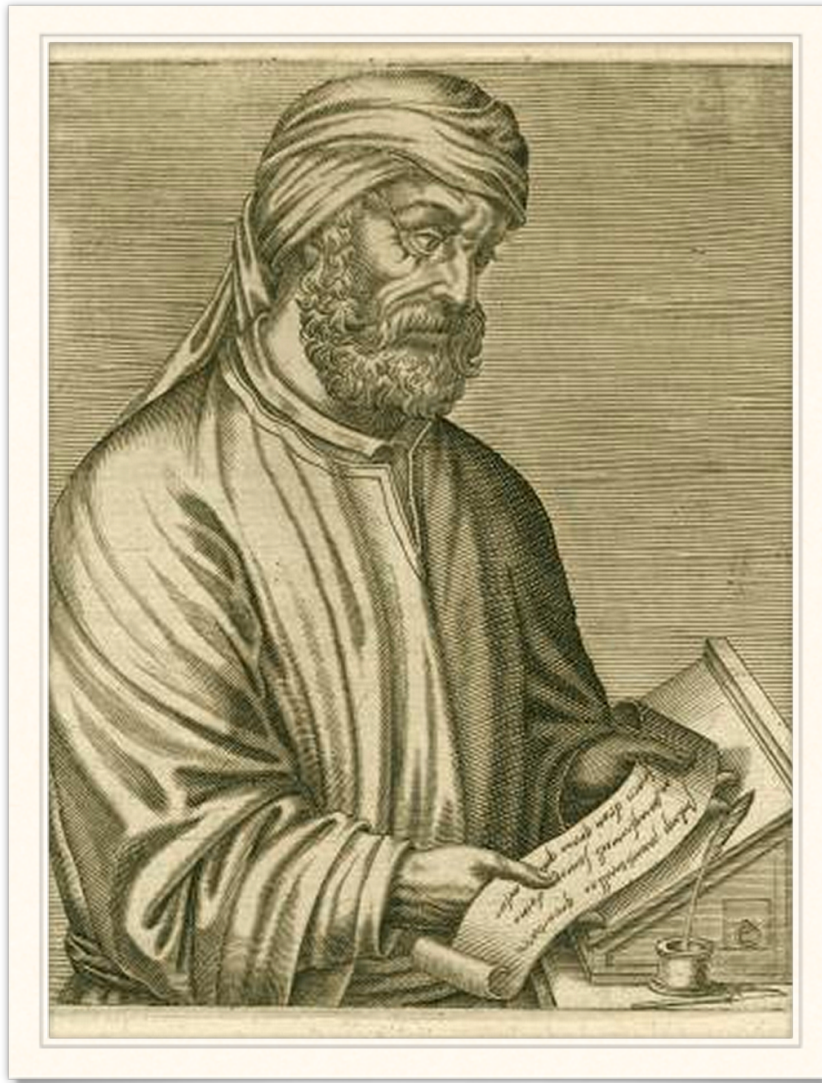


GERARD A. FIGURELLI



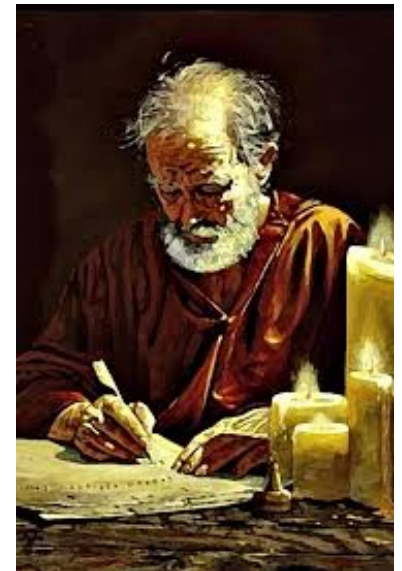
Tertullian (160-225AD)

# THE PERENNIAL QUESTION

- ❖ “What is there in common between Athens and Jerusalem?”



- ❖ What was the pagan philosopher to make of this intrusion of revelation into the world of reason?
- ❖ What was the Christian philosopher to make of the efforts of the pagan philosophers now that God had spoken?



# HOW DO YOU RESPOND?

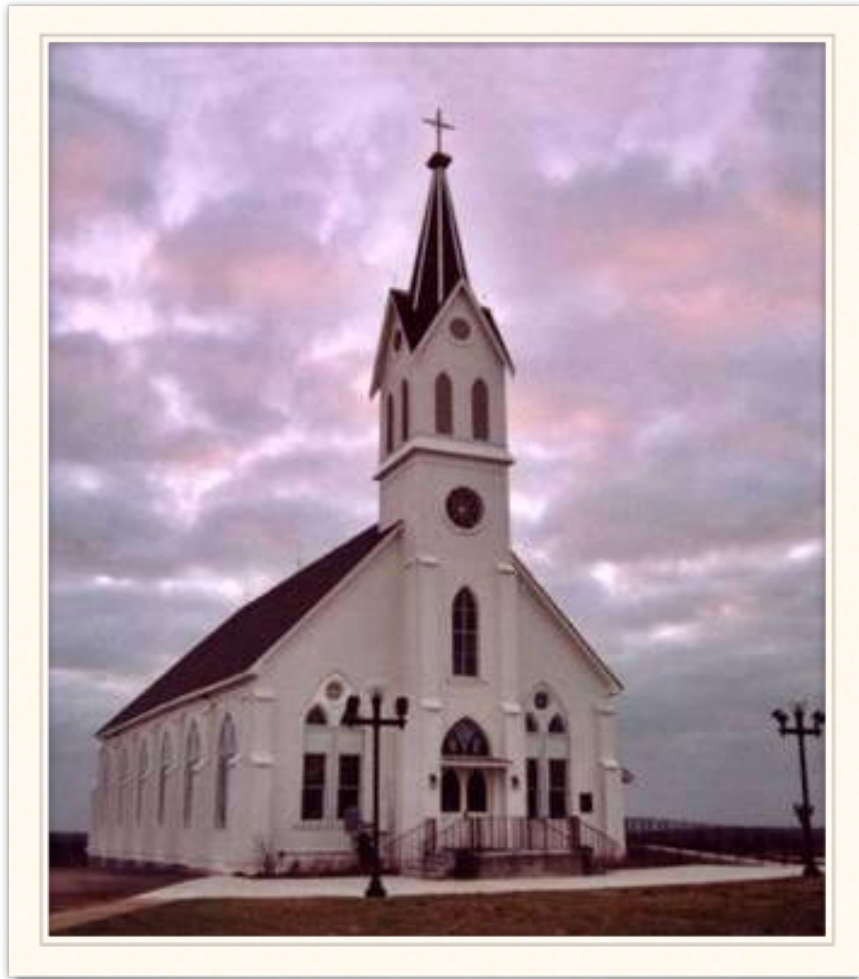
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- ❖ “The laws of nature prevent God from miraculously intervening in the world.”
- ❖ “The Trinity is a contradiction and no rational person should believe it.”
- ❖ “The plain teaching of the Bible is that God sometimes learns, changes his mind, and has regret.”



# THE CHURCH

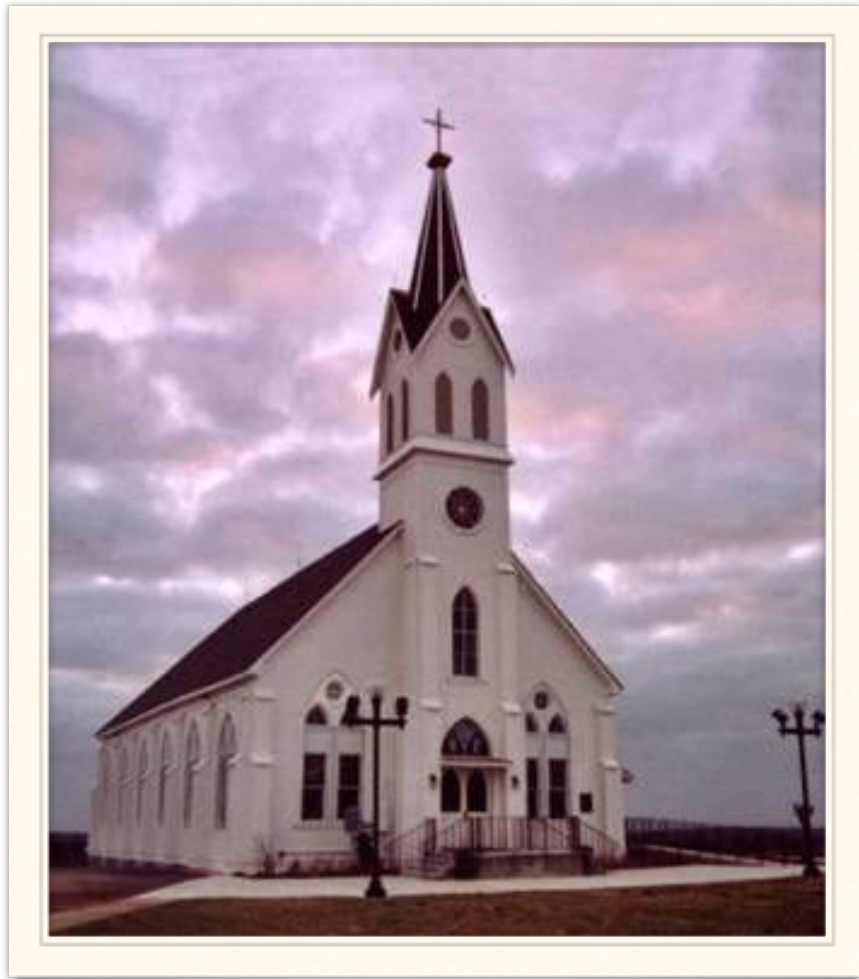
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- ❖ pillar and ground of the truth (1 Tim. 3:15)
- ❖ that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. (Eph 3:10)

# THE CHURCH

---



- ❖ Sheep
- ❖ personal trials
- ❖ doctrinal confusion
- ❖ listless hearts
- ❖ need for equipping, edification
- ❖ unconvinced kids

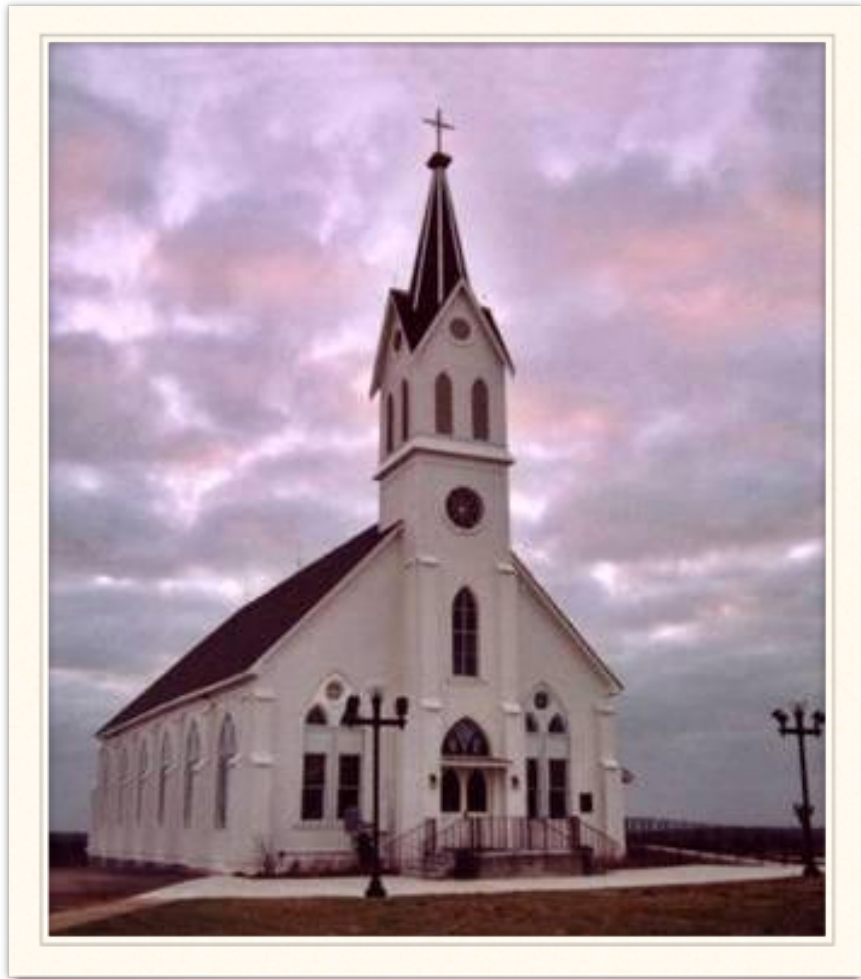
# WHEN DO DOUBTS BEGIN?

- Grade School: 4%
- ***Middle School: 40%***
- ***High School: 44%***
- College: 11%



# THE CHURCH

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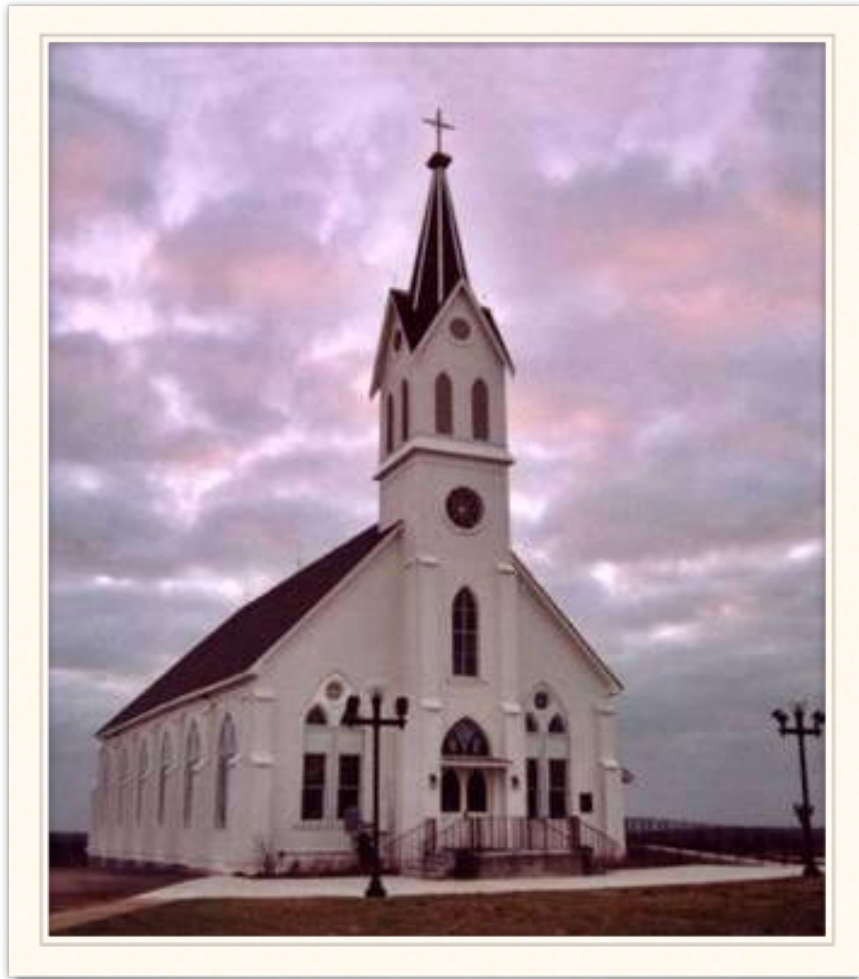


- ❖ Shepherds (Titus 1:9)
- ❖ *conserve* the truth
- ❖ *convey* the truth
- ❖ *contend* for the truth
- ❖ Eph. 4:11-16
- ❖ Heb. 13:17



# THE CHURCH

---



- ❖ I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus...preach **the word.** (2 Tim. 4:1-2)
- ❖ **Him** we preach. (Col 1:28)

# PHILOSOPHY & THEOLOGY

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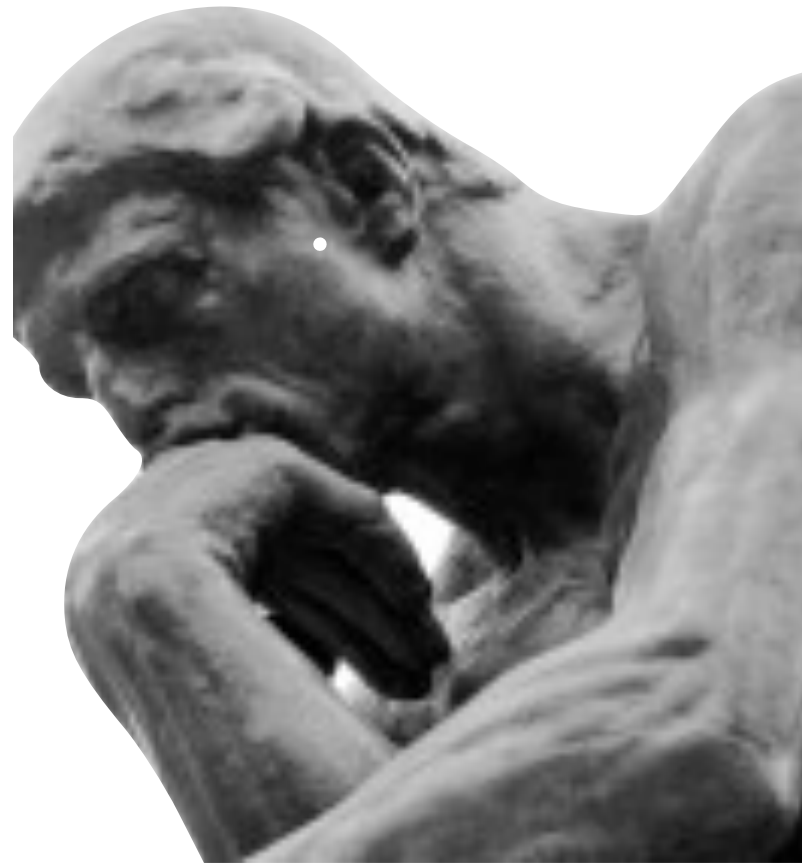
- ❖ Theology - “the queen of the sciences”
- ❖ Philosophy - “the handmaiden of theology”
  - ❖ grounded in reality; talks about reality
  - ❖ exists for the sake of theology
  - ❖ *ministerial* use



# PHILOSOPHY & THEOLOGY

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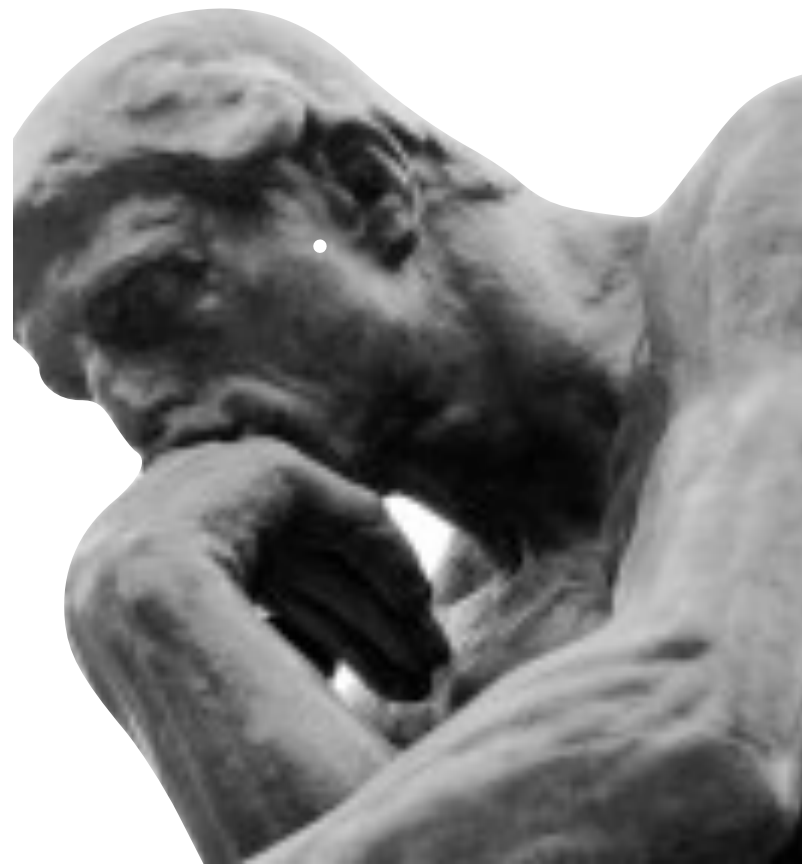
- ❖ How does philosophy *compare* with theology?
- ❖ both can deal with the same subjects (“God”)
- ❖ both use language, logic & other common tools



# PHILOSOPHY & THEOLOGY

---

- ❖ How does philosophy *contrast* with theology?
- ❖ Philosophy recognizes no authority except reason itself
- ❖ Theology recognizes authority of revelation



# FAITH & REASON

---

❖ “[Christ] wants a child’s heart,  
but a grown-up’s head.”

❖ C.S. Lewis

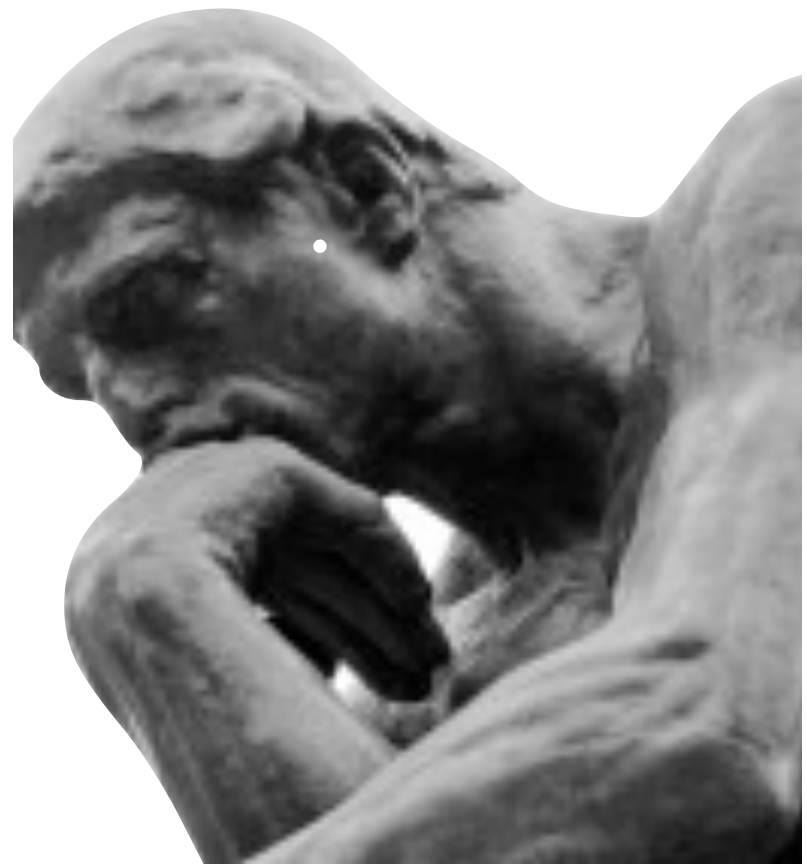




# THE PLACE OF PHILOSOPHY

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- ❖ Two wrong answers:
  - ❖ ignore the Bible
  - ❖ ignore philosophy



# WHAT ABOUT COLOSSIANS 2:8?

---

- ❖ See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty *deceit*, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and *not according to Christ*.



# WHAT ABOUT COLOSSIANS 2:8?

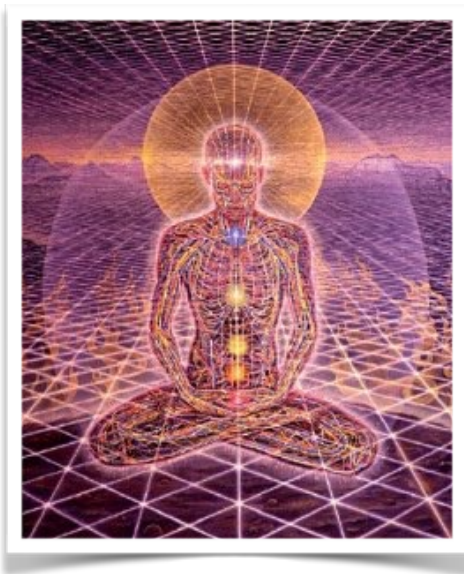
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- ❖ if you're going to avoid the potential dangers of something, it is not a winning plan to know as little as possible about it.
- ❖ infectious disease
- ❖ gun safety



# WHAT ABOUT COLOSSIANS 2:8?

---



- ❖ Paul fully aware of pro-gnostic philosophy threatening Colossian church
- ❖ “Don’t form doctrine on basis of philosophical system hostile to Christ.”

# WHAT ABOUT 1 COR. 2:1-2

---



- ❖ “And I, when I came to you, brothers, did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God with lofty speech or wisdom. I determined to know nothing among you except Christ and him crucified.”
- ❖ Paul did not allow the message to be lost in a contest over rhetoric and eloquence
- ❖ Today, “substance, not merely style or special effects”



# WHAT ABOUT 1 COR. 8?

---

❖ “Knowledge puffs up.”

❖ In context:



- ❖ We can have knowledge that idols are nothing
- ❖ But such knowledge exercised without due regard to the well-being of another is egotistical (“puffs up”)
- ❖ Such knowledge fails to edify

# THE BIBLE'S HIGH REGARD FOR THE PURSUIT OF KNOWLEDGE

---

- ❖ Col. 1:10 – “walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to Him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the **knowledge** of God.”
- ❖ 2 Pet 1:5 – “make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with **knowledge**”
- ❖ 1 Cor. 14:20 – “do not be children in your thinking. Be infants in evil, but in your **thinking** be mature.”



# WHAT ABOUT ISA. 55:8-9?

---

❖ Is “human logic” different from “God’s logic”?



❖ For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.

# WHAT ABOUT ISA. 55:8-9?

---

❖ Is “human logic” different from “God’s logic”?

❖ “My thoughts”

❖ “says the Lord”

❖ “your thoughts”

❖ the wicked (55:7)



# GOD AND LOGIC

---

God exists	God does <i>not</i> exist
God is a Trinity	God is <i>not</i> a Trinity
God is love	God is <i>not</i> love
God cannot lie	God <i>can</i> lie
I am the way, the truth, and the life	I am <i>not</i> the way, the truth, and the life



**fortification**

**formulation**

**foundation**

# THREE ESSENTIAL USES OF PHILOSOPHY

---

<b>discipline</b>	<b>purpose</b>	<b>spiritual benefit</b>

# THREE ESSENTIAL USES OF PHILOSOPHY

---

<b>discipline</b>	<b>purpose</b>	<b>spiritual benefit</b>
<b>apologetics</b>	<b>foundation</b>	<b>credibility</b>

# THE CREDIBILITY OF FAITH

---

- ❖ When [Apollos] arrived, he greatly helped those who through grace believed, for he powerfully refuted the Jews in public, showing by the Scriptures that the Christ was Jesus.

Acts 18:27b-28

# APOLOGETIC USE OF PHILOSOPHY

---

- ❖ “False ideas are the greatest obstacles to the reception of the gospel.”
- ❖ 2 Cor. 10:3-5



J. Gresham Machen

# OBSTACLES TO FAITH

---

There is no God.

There are no moral  
absolutes.

Only natural causes exist.

Human language cannot  
convey divine truth.

No one knows the truth  
about reality.

Miracles are impossible.

Only what science tells us  
counts as truth.

Evil disproves God.

# CHRISTIANITY'S CREDIBLE FOUNDATION

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God exists

The opposite of true is false

Truth about reality is knowable

# THREE ESSENTIAL USES OF PHILOSOPHY

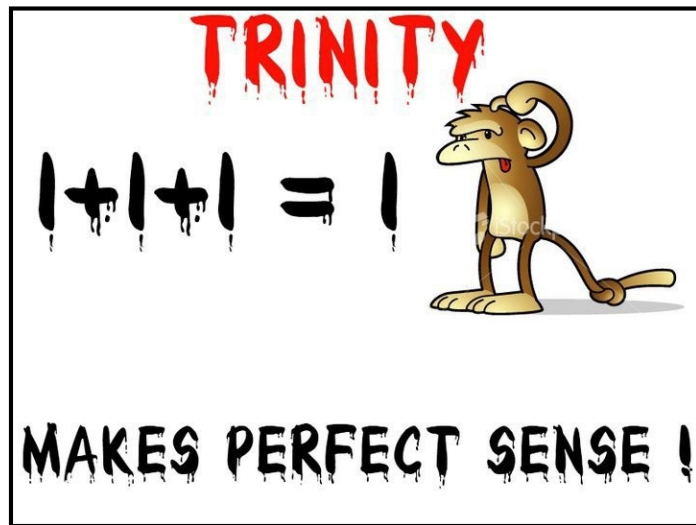
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<b>discipline</b>	<b>purpose</b>	<b>spiritual benefit</b>
apologetics	foundation	credibility
<b>theology</b>	<b>formulation</b>	<b>clarity</b>



# LOGIC & THE TRINITY

---



- ❖ Doesn't the doctrine of the Trinity contradict logic?

# PHILOSOPHY AND THEOLOGICAL CLARITY

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## ❖ Clarification of Biblical Doctrine

### ❖ Trinity

- ❖ implicit in some OT verses
- ❖ explicit in many NT verses
- ❖ but not *explained* in any verses



# PHILOSOPHY AND THEOLOGICAL CLARITY

---

- ❖ Trinitarian “equation”
- ❖ God is three Persons
- ❖ Each Person is fully God
- ❖ There is one God



# PHILOSOPHY AND THEOLOGICAL CLARITY

---

- ❖ How can monotheism be maintained but the deity of the Son and Holy Spirit be affirmed along with the Father?
- ❖ How can Father, Son, and Holy Spirit together be one eternally existing God?
- ❖ Do Father, Son, and Holy Spirit represent three beings and three persons, one being and one person, or one being and three persons? How can this be explained without assaulting logic?
- ❖ How is one divine Person related to the other?



# PHILOSOPHY AND THEOLOGICAL CLARITY

---

- ❖ “There are two types of Christians who resist the orthodox (Nicene) view. Some...are theological liberals and simply do not think that it is correct.....Many theological conservatives who believe, by contrast, that the Son indeed is fully God also object to the formulas and interpretation of Nicene orthodoxy simply because they...make use of philosophical categories and language, and are not simply biblical.” (Brown, 104)



# PHILOSOPHY AND THEOLOGICAL CLARITY

---

- ❖ “By adopting a prejudice against the use of philosophical language...many Christians who want to be conservative and orthodox deprive themselves of the tools that are necessary to build a stable doctrinal structure and ultimately will fall into some variety of heresy, very likely into one orthodox theology has already rejected.” (Brown, 104-05)



# PHILOSOPHY AND THEOLOGICAL CLARITY

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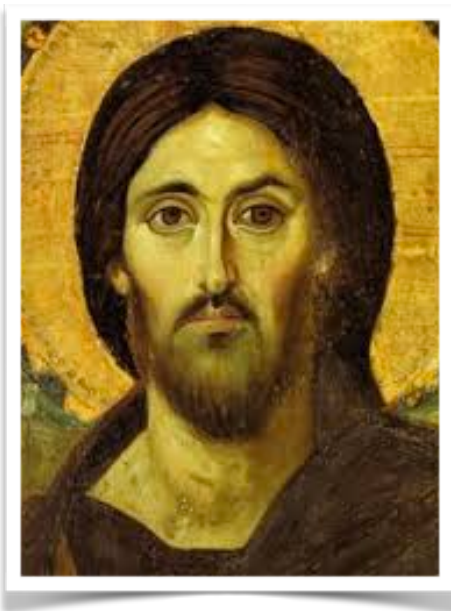
- ❖ However:
  - ❖ philosophy is *ministerial* not *magisterial*
  - ❖ “The turning point in Christian history represented by the Nicene Creed was the church’s critical choice for the wisdom of God in preference to human wisdom.”
  - ❖ Mark Noll, *Turning Points*, 51



# PHILOSOPHY AND THEOLOGICAL CLARITY

---

❖ If the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are one and the same eternal God...



❖ How are we to understand the union of divine and human natures in the Person of Christ?

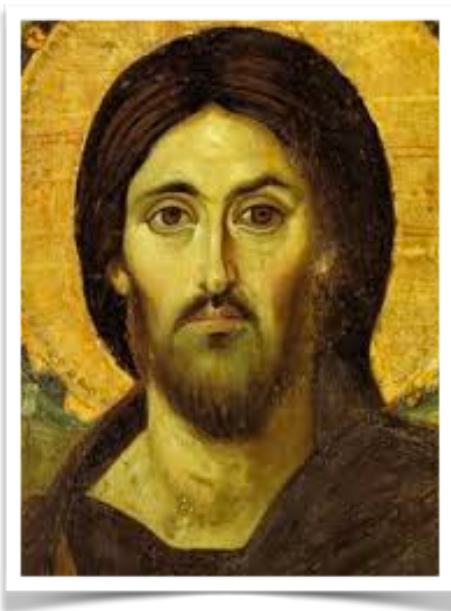
❖ In what way is Christ human?

❖ How did His deity affect His life on earth?



# PHILOSOPHY AND THEOLOGICAL CLARITY

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- ❖ “**Chalcedon** showed that it was possible, through judicious use of one era’s dominant forms of thought, to define critical aspects of Christianity as handed down in the Scriptures.”
- ❖ Mark Noll, *Turning Points*, 61

# PHILOSOPHY AND THEOLOGICAL CLARITY

---

- ❖ Christ is "perfect in Godhead and also perfect in manhood; truly God and also truly man, of a reasonable soul and body; consubstantial with the Father according to the Godhead, and consubstantial with us according to the manhood"

P<sub>1</sub>

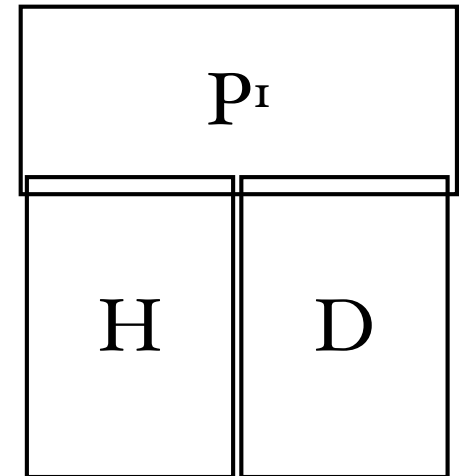
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H + D = ?



Nestorianism

Monophysitism

Chalcedon

# THREE ESSENTIAL USES OF PHILOSOPHY

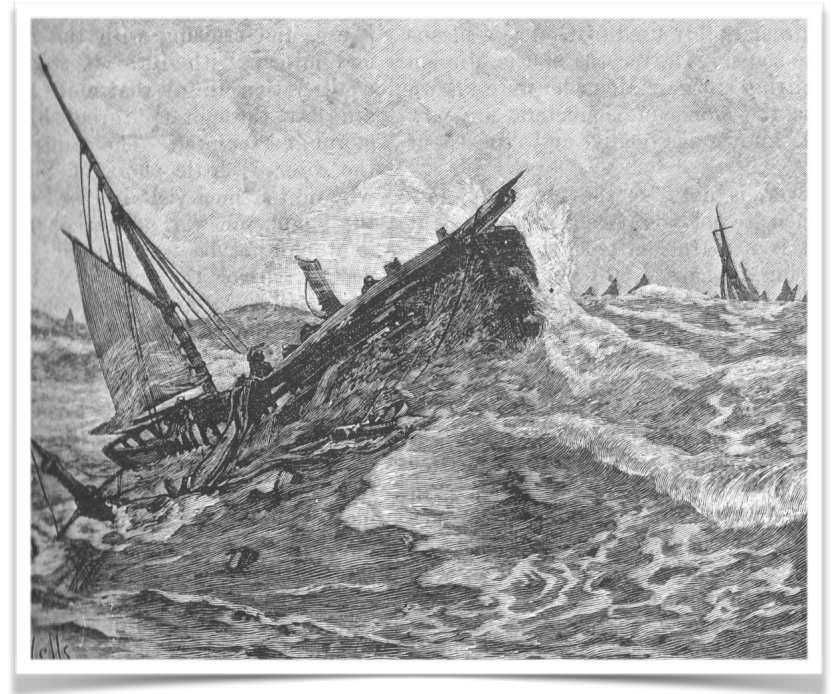
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<b>discipline</b>	<b>purpose</b>	<b>spiritual benefit</b>
apologetics	foundation	credibility
theology	formulation	clarity
<b>polemics</b>	<b>fortification</b>	<b>constancy</b>

# FORTIFYING THE SAINTS

---

- ❖ Do not be led away by diverse and strange teachings (Heb. 13:9)
- ❖ that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes (Eph. 4:14)



# CORRUPTIO OPTIMI PESSIMUM EST

---

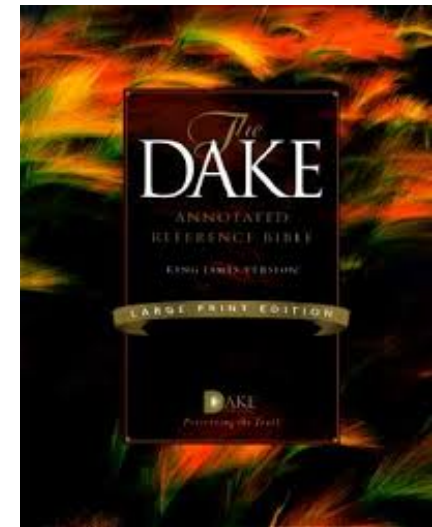
- ❖ *“the corruption of the best is the worst.”*
- ❖ Early Christians considered corruption from within a greater danger than persecution or martyrdom



# DOES GOD HAVE A BODY?

---

- ❖ “God has a spirit body with bodily parts like man.”
- ❖ “If man was made in the image and likeness of God bodily, then God must have a body, and an outward form and shape.”
- ❖ John 4:24?



# “NEO” THEISM

---



- ❖ God learns new information and changes His mind in light of changing circumstances or as a result of prayer.
- ❖ God expresses regret and is sometimes surprised
- ❖ God sometimes asks non-rhetorical questions about the future

# DOES GOD KNOW THE FUTURE?

---



❖ “God experienced the events of the world He has created. . . as they happen, rather than all at once in some timeless, eternal perception. This also means that not even God knows the future in all its details.”

❖ Richard Rice, *God's Foreknowledge & Man's Free Will*, 10.



# THEOLOGICAL DOMINO EFFECT

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❖ If God “learns,” then God changes



❖ Does he also grow in power? love? justice? or just knowledge? If God grows in knowledge, what about virtue?

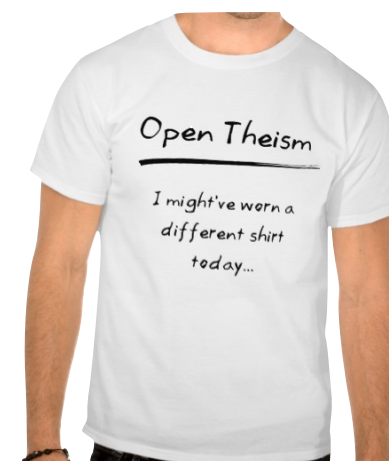
❖ If God can change, then God is composed

❖ When was he composed? Who composed him?

# COMPETING PHILOSOPHIES

---

- ❖ “The debate is not about the scope and perfection of God’s knowledge, for both open theists and classical theists affirm God’s omniscience. God always knows everything. The debate, rather, is about the content of the reality God perfectly knows. *It comes down to the question of whether or not possibilities are real.*”



- ❖ Greg Boyd; <http://reknew.org/2015/07/how-people-misunderstand-open-theism/#sthash.eIItYLIU.dpuf>

# COMPETING PHILOSOPHIES

---

<b>classical theism</b>	<b>open theism</b>
compatibility of free will and divine sovereignty	incompatibility of free will and divine sovereignty
God is infinite, eternal, unchanging	God is finite, temporal, changing
Omniscience includes future choices of free creatures	Future choices of free creatures are unknowable

# PHILOSOPHICAL FOUNDATIONS OF CLASSICAL THEISM

---

- ❖ If time, space, matter all had a beginning
- ❖ Then the Beginner (God) must be:
  - ❖ Eternal (no before and afters)
  - ❖ Non-spatial (omnipresent)
  - ❖ Spirit (indivisible, immaterial essence)
  - ❖ Necessary, Infinite, Immutable

# DOES THIS EVEN MATTER?

---

- ❖ “When a two-month-old child contracts a painful, incurable bone cancer that means suffering and death, it is pointless evil. The Holocaust is pointless evil. .. **God does not have a specific purpose in mind of these occurrences.**”
- ❖ John Sanders, *God Who Risks*, 261-262

# OPEN THEISM UNDERMINES:

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- ❖ God's immutability, specific sovereignty, infallible foreknowledge
- ❖ Confidence in God's promises and ability to answer prayer
- ❖ Our ability to test false prophecies
- ❖ God's ability to defeat evil

# PHILOSOPHY UNAVOIDABLE

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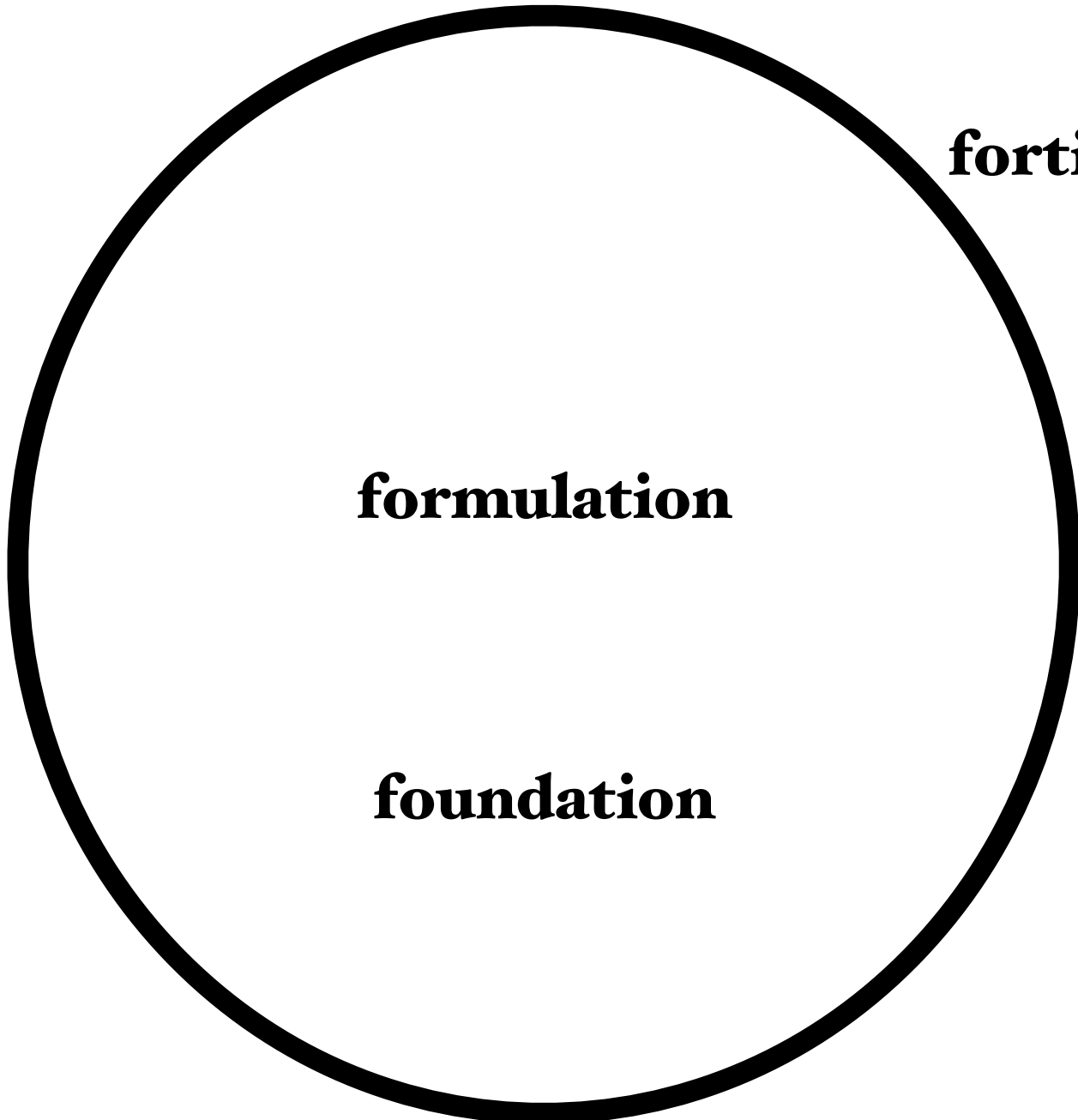
- ❖ The question is not **whether** philosophy will inform your reading of Scripture, but **which** philosophy.
- ❖ If you say, “I have no use for any philosophy” you are only betraying your implicit commitment to a particular philosophy (pietism, etc.)

# THREE ESSENTIAL USES OF PHILOSOPHY

---

<b>discipline</b>	<b>purpose</b>	<b>spiritual benefit</b>
apologetics	<b>foundation</b>	credibility
theology	<b>formulation</b>	clarity
polemics	<b>fortification</b>	constancy





**formulation**

**foundation**

**fortification**

# THE END OF FAITH

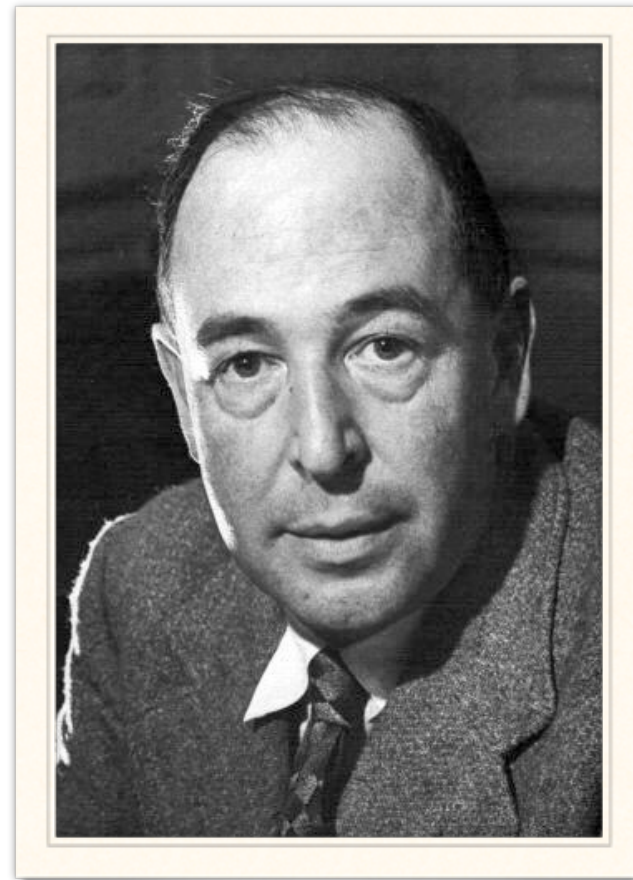
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- ❖ until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of god, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. (Eph. 4:13)
- ❖ But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen. (2 Pet. 3:18)

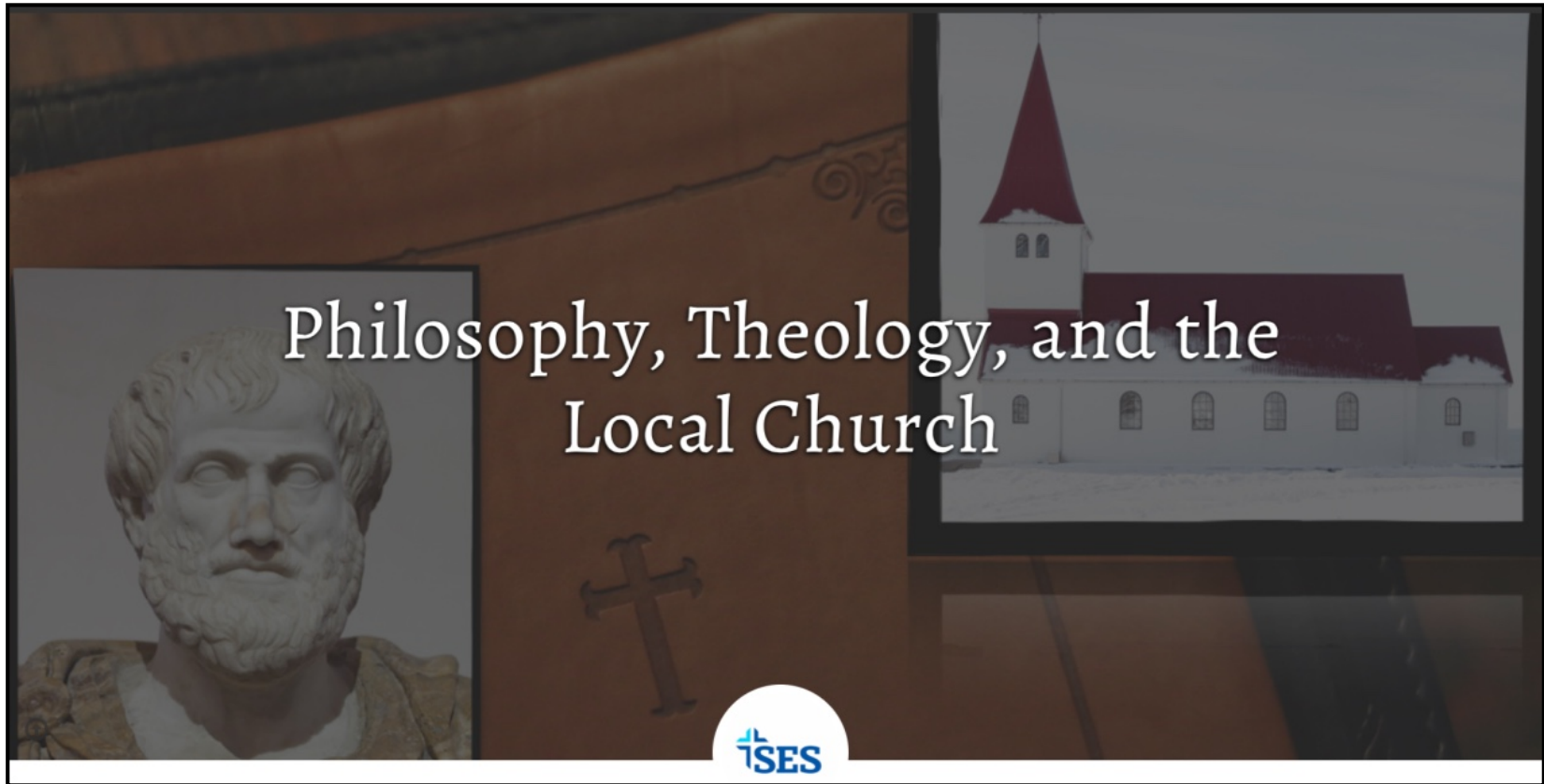
# THE PERENNIAL ANSWER

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- ❖ “Good philosophy must exist, if for no other reason, because bad philosophy needs to be answered.”



C.S. Lewis



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