

Popper. The course ends with the defense of tradition put forth by Alasdair MacIntyre and Robert Nozick's defense of libertarianism.

Lecture Thirteen

Introduction

Phillip Cary, Ph.D.

Scope: The two major strands of the Western tradition come from Athens and Jerusalem: from the classical Greek and Roman world of Plato, Aristotle, and Cicero and from the Biblical world of Moses and Jesus. These two worlds came together intellectually in the writings of Church Fathers, such as Augustine, and the medieval period saw the flowering of the synthesis between biblical faith and philosophical reason that they had effected. Both scholastics, such as Aquinas, and mystics, such as Eckhart, were heirs of this wedding of Athens and Jerusalem. Modernity represented a fundamentally new relation to both these sources of Western thought.

Outline

- I. The anatomy of the West.
 - A. The right leg represents biblical tradition.
 1. The traditions of Athens and Jerusalem are not simply in our past but are fundamental motivating forces in Western thinking and politics to this day.
 2. The biblical tradition is on the right, because for most of Western history, Christianity meant respectability and power.
 3. The right leg is (even today) the strong one. Especially at the popular level, the thinking that set Western society in motion has typically been rooted in the Bible (e.g., the anti-slavery campaign).
 4. Although it is generally conservative, the religious tradition also underlies the reforming tendencies of the West.
 - B. The left leg represents classical tradition.
 1. Intellectuals without strong religious allegiances tend to be on the "left" side of the body.
 2. The critical, questioning spirit of Socrates is the guiding light of this tradition.
 3. Would we really want philosophers to be king?
 - C. The torso represents Christendom (the "Middle Ages").
 1. The Middle Ages can be seen as the era that embodied Plato's *Republic*, when contemplatives were dragged back into the cave to rule (e.g., Pope Gregory I was dragged from a contemplative life to active life).
 2. Syntheses of faith and reason, theology and philosophy, Jerusalem and Athens were fundamental to the culture of Christendom.

- D. The left arm represents the Renaissance reclamation of the power of classical humanism, but Renaissance thinkers don't cease being Christian.
- E. The right arm represents the Reformation's reclaiming of the power of the biblical word, but Reformation thinkers don't cease thinking of God in the philosophical categories of antiquity.
- F. The head represents modernity.
 - 1. We look at the rest of the body from the head, i.e., from the standpoint of modernity.
 - 2. Modernity is Christendom secularized, as dependent on Christendom as the head is on the body.
 - 3. In modernity, reason and faith start to resemble antagonists rather than partners: reason becomes critical of faith and faith (beginning with Descartes) comes to seem a flight from rationality.

II. Marking off the torso.

- A. Athens and Jerusalem in the late Roman Empire.
 - 1. The late Roman Empire in the fourth century AD was the place where the two legs came together in a somewhat embarrassing union.
 - 2. The union was sometimes resisted. As Tertullian, an early Church Father and Christian writer, put it, "what does Athens have to do with Jerusalem?"
 - 3. In the end, however, Christian thinkers wanted both the story of the God of Israel and the metaphysics of the Greeks to articulate their understanding of self, world, and God.
 - 4. Tertullian is, in fact, a case in point. As a stoic and opponent of Plato, he found himself talking about God and the soul in materialist terms ("divine fire"), which the later Christian tradition firmly rejected.
 - 5. The Church Fathers (such as Augustine) were, for the most part, convinced Christian Platonists, using the language of Greek philosophy to articulate such key Christian beliefs as the doctrines of Trinity and Incarnation, in which biblical convictions are expressed in metaphysical terms.
- B. Flight from authority.
 - 1. Modernity can be thought of as the spirit of freedom from authority—especially religious authority.
 - 2. The original meaning of authority was pedagogical: it was teachers, not rules, who had "authority."
 - 3. Intellectually, Western modernity is marked by a refusal of religious authority: "no one can tell me what to believe" is a truism in modernity, a piece of foolishness in the Middle Ages (run by clerics whose job it was to teach people what to believe).

- 4. Faith, stripped of its medieval authority, becomes a private matter in modernity.
- 5. Faith is also "a matter of the heart" in the sense that it involves (for moderns rather than medievals) a flight from reason into emotion (mysticism, fideism, and so on).

III. The middle and the margins.

- A. Why the Middle Ages are "middle."
 - 1. The time of the Middle Ages was *between* antiquity and modernity, a *connector*. If Athens and Jerusalem are in our bloodstream (not just places we look at with our distant modern eyes), it is through our connection with the Middle Ages.
 - 2. The Middle Ages also represents the *torso*, where all the bloody organs are: the ugly ones we don't want to see, the hidden ones we don't know much about, and the emotional ones we feel most strongly when we're searching for something deeper than today's reason.
 - 3. The time of the Middle Ages is also *central*. To tell the story of the Middle Ages is to walk down the central corridor of Western history (and often to miss some places on the margins).
- B. The course of medieval Christendom.
 - 1. Late antiquity: the era when Athens met Jerusalem, when Constantine converted to Christianity.
 - 2. The "Dark Ages": why we skip 800 years after Augustine. The knowledge of Greek classical cultures was lost.
 - 3. The High Middle Ages: the flowering of monasteries and universities in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.
 - 4. Fourteenth-century troubles: plagues and other problems.
- C. The margins of medieval Christendom.
 - 1. The twin brother: Eastern Orthodoxy in Byzantium. It is Greek speaking, the origin of Greek and Russian orthodox churches.
 - 2. The black sheep: Islam as preserver of the classics.
 - 3. The forgotten older brother: the Jews. (They never appear after the right foot—the Old Testament.)
 - 4. The silent sister: women, who seldom received education or legitimate power. We meet them only as abbesses or mystics.

Essential Reading:

R. Bainton, *Christianity* (Boston: 1964/1992).

Supplementary Reading:

Etienne Gilson, *History of Christian Philosophy in the Middle Ages* (New York, 1955).

Jeffrey Stout, *Flight from Authority: Religion, Morality and the Quest for Autonomy* (Notre Dame, 1981).

Questions to Consider:

1. How do you think faith and reason ought to be related?
2. What advantages does modernity have over the Middle Ages? Do the Middle Ages have any advantages over modernity?

Lecture Fourteen

Job and the Problem of Suffering

Phillip Cary, Ph.D.

Scope: There is nothing like the biblical book of Job. In one of the greatest poems ever written, a good man who suffers incomprehensibly pours out his heart to God, complaining, yet afraid to complain; wishing for death, yet longing to bring his case before God; and increasingly impatient with his friends who offer him “good advice” that misses the point. Perhaps similar ordeals have happened many times, but how often has God answered? Yet, if you expect God to explain everything, you will be disappointed. Oddly, Job does not seem disappointed. This is a book about a very unusual relationship, but it is a relationship that the biblical people of Israel seem to have understood perfectly well, because they lived it.

Outline

- I. The narrative framework of the Book of Job.
 - A. The title character.
 1. Job is introduced as a good man, “blameless and upright, who fears God and avoids evil.” (“Fears God” means he is religious and obeys the God.)
 2. He is also rich, with a big family and large herds and flocks, the main form of wealth at this time.
 - B. The scene in heaven.
 1. The sons of God (angels or “gods”) come before the Lord (like courtiers before the throne).
 2. One of them, who likes to roam the earth, is called “the accuser.”
 3. The Lord brags to the accuser about Job: “There’s no one on earth like him, blameless and upright [and so on].”
 4. The accuser’s reply is a key thematic question: “Does Job fear God for nothing?” In effect, the accuser is saying, “Yes, it’s true, there’s nothing I can accuse him of—he follows all the rules—but that’s because you’re paying him off.”
 5. The question leads to a challenge: take away Job’s wealth and “he will surely curse you to your face.”
 6. The Lord takes up the challenge; as a result, Job loses everything he has: flocks and herds, servants, and children.
 - C. Job under test.
 1. Job’s response to the bad news is to bless the name of the Lord, in the famous words, “Naked I came from the womb... (1:20)”

2. Hence, the next time the sons of God come before the Lord, the Lord again boasts of Job: “he is blameless [and so on]... and maintains his integrity, even though you incited me against him to ruin him for nothing.”
3. The accuser figures the Lord has made it too easy for Job: “Skin for Skin... all a man has he will give for his life. Just stretch out your hand and touch his flesh and bones...”
4. Once again, the Lord takes up the challenge; as a result, Job suffers from a painful and revolting skin disease.

D. The outcome of the test.

1. Then comes the crucial temptation of Job: his wife urges him to “curse God and die.”
2. Job’s reply is to shut her up and accept the trouble God has given him.
3. Then come three friends of Job to comfort him; they are so astonished by his suffering that they can do no more than sit silently with him for seven days.

II. The literary character of the Book of Job.

A. Job and the problem of suffering.

1. Modern readers see Job as a book about theodicy: the problem of why God allows suffering, specifically, how he can be a just and loving God and allow good people to suffer.
2. Notice, *that* question has already been answered. Job is suffering because God and Satan have a bet about whether Job will curse God when God allows him to suffer. If you’re happy with this “solution” to the problem of evil, then you’re welcome to it. But if we want to see the Book of Job as a serious response to that problem, we must read on beyond the first two chapters and see that no real answer is given—as in all serious treatments of the problem of evil!
3. That question is part of a larger problem about the relationship between Job and God, which is really the theme of the book: is it about being good and being rewarded, or is it about something deeper? (This larger problem is explored at great length in the rest of the book.)

B. The structure of the Book of Job.

1. The opening portion (chapters 1–2, the frame story) is a prose narrative told in the style of a folk tale, using a picture of God in heaven that would have been recognizable throughout the ancient Near East. There’s nothing especially Israelite about it—and Job is not identified as an Israelite.
2. In the closing portion (42:7–17), the prose narrative resumes and Job is rewarded for speaking rightly of God (double the flocks and

herds, double the number of sons and daughters, Job’s daughters proverbial for their beauty).

3. In between, is the bulk of the book, 39 chapters of some of the most powerful poetry ever written.
4. The usual scholarly view is that a great poet took a folk tale about Job and used it as a frame in which to insert the compelling poetry of chapters 3–42. (If there is a “great mind” at work here, it is in the poetry—which also contains the *serious* treatment of the problem of evil in the book.)
5. A certain (perhaps deliberate?) tension exists between the ending of the poetic section and the closing prose narrative. In the former, God shuts Job up; in the latter, he rewards Job for speaking rightly of him, unlike the three friends.

C. The structure of the poetic sections.

1. The speeches are in alternating cycles: Job speaks, one of his friends answers, and Job replies (chapters 3–27).
2. Job has a long concluding soliloquy (chapters 28–31).
3. A young man, Elihu, interrupts and insists on having his say against Job (chapters 32–37).
4. Then God speaks to Job from a whirlwind, ignoring Elihu and Job’s friends and challenging Job to reply (chapters 38–41).
5. In contrast to his previous willingness to defend himself against all comers, Job now “repents in dust and ashes,” admitting that he didn’t know what he was talking about (42:1–6).

D. Surprising features of the poetic sections.

1. “The accuser” simply disappears from the story and does not even return with the closing prose narrative. Job is not about Satan as a source of evil.
2. The events in the opening scene (the bet between the accuser and God) are never referred to again and play no role in the story or the arguments of the rest of the book.
3. Job never even refers to his physical suffering or his loss of wealth in the poetry—something else seems to be eating him (i.e., his relationship to God).

III. The poetry of Job.

- A. Job breaks his seven-day silence by cursing, not God, but the day of his birth.**
 1. He rejects God’s act of creation.
 2. He wants not only to die, but to have never been born.
- B. The theology of Job’s comforters.**
 1. Job’s comforters articulate the common view of the Wisdom tradition in the Hebrew Bible.

2. According to the Wisdom tradition, God keeps order in the world: the good are rewarded and the evil, punished (4:1–9).
3. Job’s words are profoundly disturbing to his friends, because he longs for death; according to the Wisdom tradition, the righteous should be confident that they will be rewarded with a satisfying life.
4. Job’s friends thus urge him either to complacency (“you’re a good man; you shouldn’t doubt that everything will be OK”) (4:6) or repentance (“if you’re suffering, it must be because you did something wrong”).
5. Job refuses to do either. He wants to tell his own story, and it’s not a story that fits the complacent platitudes of his friends (6:1–4, 11–13).

C. The development in Job’s speeches.

1. Pushed by his friends, Job discovers that he wants more than just to die: he wants his story to be told truthfully, as only he knows how.
2. Job’s initial speech was solipsistic, addressed to no one, but later he addresses God and pleads with him to be merciful (7:7–21).
3. At first, he wishes that God would just leave him alone (10:18–22). This is the deepest, darkest moment of Job’s despair.
4. On the one hand, Job wants God to leave him alone; on the other hand, he can’t stop talking to God about his plight.
5. As the book progresses, Job becomes more and more obsessed with speaking to God, and he begins to wish he could bring his case before God in the heavenly court, even though he knows he can’t win (9:14–18).
6. Then, in an amazing feat of imagination, he wishes it could be fair: that he could have an advocate in heaven who would plead his case before God (9:32–35).
7. The high point of Job’s hope is that there is, in fact, such an advocate for him (16:19–21 and, most famously, 19:25f). The Hebrew here is obscure, but it seems clear that Job is hoping that he will meet God and have some heavenly advocate speak for him.
8. The irony is that Job is right: he has had all along an advocate in heaven to vindicate his righteousness—God himself, according to the scene in heaven at the beginning!

IV. End of story?

- A. In the end, God answers Job out of a whirlwind (chapters 38–41) and, as Job predicted, He is overwhelming.
 1. Thus, God does reply to Job (as Job wished) but asks him questions he cannot answer (38:1–11). This is a Wisdom theme: God setting limits to sea, which mirrors God bringing order to creation.
 2. Job gets both what he asked for and what he feared.

- B. Job’s last speech is one of repentance (42:5–6) and has been variously interpreted. Is he:
 1. Cowed by terror?
 2. Recognizing his limits?
 3. Trusting God to be in charge?
- C. Job’s restoration (in the concluding prose narrative) has often been found unsatisfying by modern readers.
 1. Of course, it is unsatisfying as an answer to modern questions of theodicy.
 2. But it is the inevitable ending if Job is to be vindicated. He does not serve God for reward and precisely for this, he is rewarded.

V. Features of Israelite faith illustrated by Job.

- A. Job is one of the great examples of biblical faith.
- B. It is not that Job is always happy with God, but that even when he would most like to get away from God, he can’t—he cannot opt out of the relationship, cannot stop wishing to speak to God, because there is no place else to turn.
- C. The biblical word for this relationship between God and human beings, which can be stretched and strained but never broken, is “covenant.”

Essential Reading:

Job

Supplementary Reading:

K. Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/3.1 (volume 4, part 3, first half) (Edinburgh, 1961), pp. 383–388, 398–408, 421–434, 453–461 (small print sections).

Questions to Consider:

1. Does this book help *you* think about the meaning of human suffering?
2. Why do you think Job submits to God at the end? How is this consistent or inconsistent with his attitude in the earlier part of the book?

Lecture Fifteen

The Hebrew Bible and Covenantal History

Phillip Cary, Ph.D.

Scope: The Hebrew Bible—which Christians call the Old Testament—can be read as the story of a relationship between two main characters: God and his people Israel. This relationship is defined by a covenant that binds the two main characters of the Bible together. God first makes this covenant with the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (whose name is changed to Israel after he wrestles with an angel of God). He renews it and shows his faithfulness when he brings the whole people of Israel out of Egypt in the Exodus. This redemption by the Lord is the birth of Israel as a people and the context in which Moses receives the Jewish Law, as well as the promise of God’s presence among his people in the tabernacle and, later, the Temple. The latter is built by Solomon as part of the fulfillment of the covenant between his father, David, and the Lord. Throughout the Hebrew Bible, the covenant relationship between God and Israel is threatened by Israel’s disobedience and God’s punishment in the form of exile and destruction of the Temple. Yet the relationship is never simply broken, and there is always the expectation of a restored peace between these two quarreling lovers.

Outline

- I. Covenant versus contemplation, or “why faith?”
 - A. The Hebrew Bible as a whole is like the Book of Job: a story about the troubled, deep, inescapable relationship between two main characters, in this case, Israel and the Lord God.
 - B. This relationship gets its structure from a *covenant*, a set of explicit promises and commands that binds these two characters together like lord and vassal or husband and wife.
 - C. In addition to a *structure*, this relationship has a *history*. In contrast to Plato’s good or Aristotle’s God, to know the God of the Bible, you must know the story of his relationship with his people Israel.
 - D. The Hebrew Bible focuses on faith rather than reason, because its concern is with the history of this covenant relationship—a relationship that you know about not by figuring it out by yourself (reason) but by hearing the story and believing it (faith).
- II. Historical context.
 - A. For most of biblical history, Israel is one of a number of small nations (tribal groups, really), living precariously in the region between large empires (Egypt and Assyria or Babylon).
 - B. These nations are often closely identified with particular gods (e.g., Chemosh, the god of the Moabites) who are their protectors and fight for them against their enemies.
 - C. The God of the Bible is emphatically the God of Israel, fighting for Israel against her enemies and punishing Israel when she rebels against him.
- III. Genesis: the patriarchs.
 - A. The story of the Lord’s relationship with Israel begins with its ancestors, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—three generations of semi-nomadic herdsmen.
 - B. God promises to make Abraham a great nation, to bless him—and to bless those who bless him, so that he might be a blessing to all nations (Gen. 12:1–3).
 - C. This covenant is renewed with Abraham’s son Isaac, then with Isaac’s son Jacob, who is renamed Israel after wrestling all night with an angel of the Lord. (He comes away wounded, with a new name that means, “he struggles with God” for “you have struggled with God and with men and have prevailed.”)
- IV. Exodus narrates the familiar story of how the Lord created the people of Israel and established the relationship between himself and them.
 - A. Covenant promises: “you will be my people and I will be your God” (Exodus 6).
 - B. Revelation of the name: the repeated refrain “I am the Lord”; Adonai, instead of the name of God, YHWH. “They shall know I am the Lord” or “I am the Lord your God who brought you out of Egypt” is not a claim of power but an announcement of the name of Israel’s God.
 - C. Giving of the Law: the God who redeems Israel from slavery in Egypt then gives them a Law (Torah) by which to live (Ex 20:1ff).
 - D. Designing a place for divine presence: While Moses is on Mt. Sinai, the Lord also gives him a detailed “blueprint” for a central place of worship, the tabernacle, or tent shrine (which subsequently becomes the Temple).
 - E. Promising a land: Finally, the Lord accompanies the people as they journey to the Land of Israel, a place where they can live in prosperity and peace as he dwells in the midst of them.
- V. Prophets and psalms: the dialogue of the Hebrew Bible.
 - A. The Law envisioned a stable order of festival and sacrifice, including regular sacrifices and a cycle of festivals to be “an ordinance for you forever” in Leviticus.

- B. Already in the book of Deuteronomy, however, when Moses speaks to the Israelites just before they go to take possession of the land, the Lord anticipates Israel's disobedience. He warns that when they violate the terms of the covenant, their land will be ravaged by war and they will be taken into captivity.
- C. Similar warnings, and a pattern of exile and return, become a central theme of the prophets (e.g., Isaiah, Jeremiah, Amos, and so on) and, thus, of the relationship between the God of Israel and his people.
- D. Much of the literature of the Hebrew Bible is a kind of dialogue in which God (through the prophets) issues promises and warnings, while Israel responds (in psalms and prayers) with confession of sin and (often Job-like) complaint: "How long, O Lord? Will you forget me forever?" (Psalm 13:1)

VI. History of exile and return.

- A. The famous "Babylonian captivity" in 586 BCE means the capture of Jerusalem, destruction of the Temple, and exile of the Israelite leadership in Babylon.
- B. But the story does not end there, because the Israelites are allowed to return to the land two generations later and begin rebuilding the Temple.
- C. This pattern of exile and return makes Israel unique among the nations (its neighbors knew exile but not return) and reinforces the *historical* character of Israel's relationship with the Lord. The stable order of Law does not tell the whole story, because sometimes the Temple and Jerusalem itself exist more as a hope for the future than a present reality.
- D. The hope for a future fulfillment of history has come to be called *eschatology* (literally, "the doctrine of last things") and is characteristic of biblical (as opposed to Greek) thought.

VII. Monarchy.

- A. Another covenant that shapes Israel's history is one that the Lord makes with David, the second king of Israel: "Your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever...your throne shall be established forever" (2 Sam. 7:16).
 1. After the disaster of the same first king of Israel, David had wanted to build a house for the Lord in his capital.
 2. The Lord replies by promising to establish *David's* house.
- B. The lineage of David is subsequently associated with Israel's sacred places: Israel (the holy land ruled by David), Jerusalem (the holy city first captured by David), and the Temple (the holy of holies, built by David's son Solomon).

- C. For Israel, the wrath of God means the loss of these holy places: exile from the holy land, conquest of Jerusalem, destruction of the Temple.
- D. Similarly, the mercy of God means restoration of the Temple, rebuilding of Jerusalem, and the monarchy of David reestablished.

VIII. Conclusion: Jerusalem and Athens.

- A. The Hebrew Bible is not about the triumph of an idea called "monotheism," but a story about a relationship between two quarreling lovers, the Lord and his bride, Israel.
- B. The God of Israel is unseen, not represented by images or idols—and in this respect, has a good deal in common with the god of Aristotle and the good of Plato, which are beyond the reach of the senses.
- C. And yet, because the God of Israel is someone to be in relationship with rather than something to contemplate, faith is before reason: to know this person, you must believe his story and trust his covenant, not discover and contemplate an eternal truth.
- D. Because God is a person with a story, history matters in a way not seen in Greek metaphysics.

Essential Reading:

Genesis 12–35 (the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob).
 Exodus 1–20, 32–34, 40 (the founding narrative of Israel).
 2 Samuel 5–7 (the covenant with David).

Supplementary Reading:

L. Boadt, *Reading the Old Testament: An Introduction* (New York: 1984).

Questions to Consider:

1. Does the story of the relationship of God and Israel seem strange or familiar to you? Why?
2. Do you find the biblical portrait of God "too human" or "personal" in a good sense?

Lecture Sixteen

The Synoptic Gospels—The Historical Jesus and the Kingdom of God

Phillip Cary, Ph.D.

Scope: In the New Testament, the synoptic Gospels (Mark, Matthew, and Luke) are the key sources for research on “the historical Jesus,” which has been undergoing a renaissance recently. Scholars disagree extensively on what the historical Jesus was like. Some scholars accept much of the portrait in the synoptics, while more revisionary scholars read these Gospels as documents that reflect more accurately the conditions of the early church than the conditions of Jesus’s life. Nearly all are agreed, however, that the proclamation of something called “the kingdom of God” was central to his work, along with the telling of parables and the practice of “miraculous” healings. Most scholars would also agree that the key to understanding who Jesus was (and who he thought he was) is to understand what he meant by “the kingdom of God.”

Outline

- I. The synoptic Gospels.
 - A. The first three books of the New Testament, the Gospels of Matthew, Luke, and Mark, are called “synoptic” Gospels because they share a common plot line that can be easily summarized in a common “synopsis.”
 - B. The fourth gospel (John) has a different plot line, as well as a different focus: Jesus as the eternal Word who came from the Father into this world.
 - C. The synoptic Gospels are usually taken as the key sources for understanding “the historical Jesus.”
- II. Research into the historical Jesus.
 - A. The notion of “the historical Jesus seminar”:
 1. Revisionary view: represented by the big gap between what Jesus actually thought about himself (“historical Jesus”) and what the early Christians thought about him (“the Christ of faith”).
 2. Traditionalist view: early Christian views of Jesus (as recorded in the New Testament) stand in continuity, if not in identity, with Jesus’s own views of himself.
 3. Skeptical theological view: there’s not much we can know about the historical Jesus; all we have is the New Testament portrait of

4. Revisionist “quests for the historical Jesus” go back two and a half centuries, but are represented most notably today by “the Jesus seminar” (Robert Funk, Burton Mack, John Dominick Crossan).
 5. The most influential traditionalist “historical Jesus” scholar today is N. T. (Tom) Wright.
- B. The following resources for “historical Jesus” research include the evidence that the scholars themselves examine.
 1. Jewish writings between the time of the Hebrew Bible and the writings of the rabbis (including the Apocrypha in Catholic Bibles and other writings collected in Charlesworth, *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*).
 2. The writings of Josephus, a Jewish historian of the first century AD.
 3. The Dead Sea Scrolls, which probably had no direct influence on Jesus or the early church, provide a powerful illustration of the range of possible ways of being Jewish in the first century.
 4. The Gospel of Thomas, a lost gospel of about the fourth century AD, containing purported sayings of Jesus, some of which may go back to Jesus himself.
 5. The hypothetical source document “Q.” This document is very important for the “Jesus seminar” but less so for other scholars—indeed, many scholars doubt such a document ever existed.

III. Some samples of context.

- A. Historical context: bandits (or “robbers”) as potential revolutionaries are discussed in Josephus.
 1. Bandits were not burglars but highway robbers—the only armed men who weren’t in the service of Rome. It would be natural for them to share their proceeds with sympathetic village supporters, like Robin Hood robbing from the rich and giving to the poor.
 2. Bandits regularly got crucified—the most fearsome of punishments—because they were a serious threat to Roman rule.
 3. According to Josephus, the great Jewish war with the Romans in 67–70 AD coalesced around groups of bandits.
 4. Some robbers also had hopes of becoming king, i.e., messiah (see below on messiah = king of Jews).
- B. Literary context: apocalyptic literature and the hope for the restoration of Israel (e.g., Daniel 7).
 1. Apocalyptic literature is prophecy in the form of dreams and visions, including symbolic or allegorical figures, such as beasts in the sky. (For prophets, beasts represented enemy nations, and

David, or his anointed successor, was the shepherd who protected Israel, the flock, from wild beasts.)

2. The heavenly events symbolize earthly events, including the rule of God over Israel—the kingdom of God.
3. Hence, Daniel 7: beasts, Ancient of Days (God on His throne) and “son of Man” (= Israel or else its King as Israel’s representative). Wright contends that this is the proper context in which to understand Jesus’s view of himself.

IV. Jesus as preacher of the Kingdom of God.

- A. “The Kingdom of God” is the basic theme of Jesus’s preaching.
 1. His early preaching is summed up: “The time is fulfilled. The Kingdom of God is coming. Repent and believe the good news” (Mark 1:15).
 2. “Kingdom of God” is sometimes paraphrased “Kingdom of Heaven” (especially in Matthew), but there is no suggestion that it’s about “how to get to heaven.”
 3. What’s at issue is that God is coming to rule Israel at last (“rather than the Romans” is the implicit suggestion). This is an eschatological view.
 4. The big question is: how did Jesus think this would come about?
 5. The first piece of evidence for answering these questions is the nature of Jesus’s actions.
- B. Works of cleansing and healing.
 1. The old scholarly debate was about whether Jesus actually performed miracles that proved he was the son of God.
 2. The new scholarly consensus is that acts of healing and exorcism were characteristic of Jesus’s activity. Even scholars who don’t believe in miracles think that Jesus was what we would now call a “faith-healer.”
 3. Thus, Crossan paints a vivid picture of the basic shape of Jesus’s activity, a kind of bargain between Jesus’s followers and the peasant villagers of Galilee among whom they roamed: “we heal you, and you feed us (and we all eat together, even the outcasts and the unclean).”
 4. These healings made clean and whole what was unclean under the Law of Moses (e.g., lepers).
 5. Hence, one likely overall interpretation of Jesus’s work is that he understood himself to be setting Israel to rights, healing and cleansing it in preparation for (or as part of?) the coming of the Kingdom of God.
- C. Parables of the Kingdom.
 1. The most distinctive form of Jesus’s teaching was his parables.
 2. By nature, the parables are cryptic, with hidden meanings, meanings that Jesus will explain more clearly to his disciples than

to the crowds, meanings that are more accessible to Jesus’s original audience than to us. It’s not surprising that the Romans wouldn’t have liked hearing about the Kingdom of God—you didn’t go broadcasting this message where Romans could hear and understand.

3. Hence, the original meaning of Jesus’s parables is a matter of particularly hot dispute among scholars.

V. The plot line of the synoptic Gospels (Mark).

- A. The central event is the transfigured Messiah (Mark 8–9, Matthew 16–17, Luke 9).
 1. Peter’s confession, “You are the Messiah” (Mark 8:27–30), means something like “you are the rightful king come to restore Israel.” (Christ = Messiah = anointed one. Israelite kings were anointed with oil rather than crowned. Hence, Messiah or anointed one = crowned one, successor to David, rightful King of Israel. No wonder the first thing Jesus says in reply is “keep quiet about it.” Peter has just made Jesus an enemy of Roman rule by saying that he is the one who ought to be ruling.)
 2. Jesus’s prediction of his suffering, death, and resurrection (Mark 8:31) is a prime example of what revisionary scholars think of as material projected back into Jesus’s life by early Christians writing decades later.
 3. Peter’s protest (Mark 8:32) makes it clear that no one at the time expected the anointed successor to David to be executed by the Romans.
 4. Jesus’s rebuke of Peter (Mark 8:33) clearly shows that, for the gospel writers, the meaning of Jesus’s career is inseparable from his crucifixion.
 5. Precisely in this paradoxical context of the prediction of a crucified Messiah, the synoptic Gospels narrate an episode in which Jesus is transfigured by heavenly glory (Mark 9:2–8).
- B. The culminating event is the crucified Messiah.
 1. The behavior that seems to have gotten Jesus into trouble is his walking into the Temple and acting as if he were in charge (Mark 11:15–18). This action made implicit claims to authority that were threatening to both the Romans and the high priests.
 2. Pilate’s question, “Are you the King of the Jews?” (Mark 15:2) is equivalent to the high priest’s question, “Are you the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One?” (Mark 14:61)
 3. Jesus’s reply to the latter question alludes to the apocalyptic image of the coming Son of Man on the clouds of heaven in Daniel 7 (Mark 14:62).
 4. Jesus is crucified, along with two bandits, as “the King of the Jews” (Mark 25–27).

- C. New beginning: resurrection and Christian faith.
1. Jesus's crucifixion was not the first time potential messiahs had been executed by the Romans with help from Jewish collaborators.
 2. The great difference is that a community grew up believing that Jesus had been both crucified and raised from the dead: this community was the early Christian church.
 3. As Christian belief spread through the Mediterranean world, its basic creed was: "Jesus is Lord" and "God raised him from the dead" (repeated in sermons in Acts and Romans 9).

1. Is the search for a historical Jesus an important one for a believing Christian? Why?
2. On what key points are the synoptic gospels in agreement? On what points do they disagree?

Essential Reading:

Daniel, chapter 7.

The Gospel of Mark.

Supplementary Reading:

1. For those interested in doing their own study of the historical Jesus, the following collections contain the lion's share of the primary source material that is relevant for historical Jesus research (outside the Bible itself and references scattered throughout voluminous rabbinic writings):

J. Charlesworth, ed., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 2 vols. (Garden City, NY: 1983/5). See especially *1 Enoch*, *Psalms of Solomon*, *Sibylline Oracles 3*, and *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*.

Josephus, *The Wars of the Jews* and *The Antiquities of the Jews*, in *The Works of Josephus* (Peabody, MA: 1987).

G. Vermes, ed., *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English* (New York: 1998).

The Gospel of Thomas, in R. Funk and R. Hoover, *The Five Gospels: The Search for the Authentic Words of Jesus* (San Francisco: 1993), pp. 471–532.

Q, in B. Mack, *The Lost Gospel, The Book of Q and Christian Origins*, pp. 81–102.

2. The two most important works in the renaissance of historical Jesus research in the 1980s and 90s are:

J. D. Crossan, *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant* (San Francisco: 1991).

N. T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God* (Minneapolis: 1996).

3. Popular versions of the above research include the following:

J. D. Crossan, *Jesus: A Revolutionary Biography* (San Francisco: 1994).

N. T. Wright, *The Original Jesus: The Life and Vision of a Revolutionary* (Grand Rapids, MI: 1997).

Questions to Consider:

Lecture Seventeen

Paul—Justification by Faith

Phillip Cary, Ph.D.

Scope: Paul, the author of the earliest writings in the New Testament, is known as the “apostle to the Gentiles,” because his special mission was to preach Christ to non-Jews. This was a momentous innovation, because the early followers of Jesus were Jews, like Jesus himself. Hence, the early church faced a crucial question: do non-Jews have to convert to Judaism to become Christians? Paul’s radical answer is: No, they are justified (i.e., set right with God) by faith (i.e., believing in Christ) apart from works of the Law (i.e., without becoming Jewish by observing the Law of Moses). Paul formulated his “doctrine of justification” (as it came to be called) in terms of a contrast between living “under the Law” (as Jews did) and living “under grace” (as believers in Christ did). This formulation made an immense impact on Western Christian thought from Augustine onward, in contexts in which the key issue was no longer the relation between Jews and Gentiles in the church, but the status of the individual soul before God.

Outline

- I. The context for understanding Paul’s writings, which were actually the first biblical writings predating the synoptic Gospels.
 - A. Paul’s writings have often been misread (like the Gospels themselves) as if they were concerned with disagreements between “Christians and Jews.”
 - B. On the contrary, the Gospels concern a time when all followers of Jesus were Jews, but Paul is occupied with a novel phenomenon: the Christian community has to decide whether non-Jews are allowed in and on what terms.
 - C. Hence, Paul’s key concern has a fundamentally social character: it is not about what happens in individual hearts but about who belongs in the Christian community.
 - D. Much is unknown about the early Christian community, but it is clear that in the churches Paul was addressing, the border between inside and outside was marked by the initiation rite of baptism.
- II. Baptism and the social setting of early Christianity.
 - A. Baptism as initiation rite.
 1. Initiation rites mark social boundaries between the outside and the inside of a social group.

2. Baptism marks the social boundaries of the Christian community in a way that is quite different from biblical Israel or rabbinic Judaism.
- B. Baptism as washing.
 1. Baptism seems to have developed out of Jewish requirements of washing to remove ritual impurity.
 2. Gentiles who converted to Judaism in the first century were often required to be washed as a way of indicating that they were passing from an unclean to a clean state by joining the people of Israel.
 3. When John preached a “baptism of repentance” for Israelites, he was implying that even Israelites needed to be made clean.
 4. Christian use of the ritual of baptism had the same implication: both Jews and Gentiles needed to be made clean through a rite of repentance.
 - C. Baptism as death and rebirth in Christ.
 1. In the letters of Paul (especially Ephesus and Colossians, which may be by a follower of Paul but are, at any rate, addressed to Pauline churches), baptism has come to signify a passage not only from clean to unclean, but also from death to life.
 2. Baptism has come to be interpreted in light of the central belief of early Christianity: the resurrection of Christ.
 3. Because believers in Christ were believed to share in his eternal life, baptism came to mark an individual’s transition into the community of life in Christ—hence, a passage from death to life.
 4. Baptism thus becomes a rite of rebirth, marking the social boundaries of a community that is very different from Israel, because none of the members belongs to the community by birth. (This is the social setting of the Pauline letters—quite different from the social setting portrayed in the synoptic Gospels!)
- III. The Pauline churches.
 - A. The focus of Paul’s letters is not on an itinerant band of Jesus’s followers roving from village to village in Israel, but on settled communities of believers in cities in the Greek-speaking eastern half of the Roman Empire.
 - B. The Christian communities to which Paul writes are characterized by two beliefs and a practice:
 1. A belief that Jesus is not dead.
 2. A belief that they share Jesus’s eternal life.
 3. The practice of baptism as an initiation rite that means a rebirth from death to life.
 - C. These are “mixed” communities consisting of both Jews and Gentiles, because in the years since the crucifixion, Gentiles have started to believe in Jesus, and some Christian leaders (most notably Paul

himself) have begun actually recruiting them as members of the Christian community.

IV. Paul's central problem: do Gentiles have to become Jews to be Christians?

A. *Galatians*: the challenge of circumcision.

1. A group of Jewish Christians has evidently come to the mixed churches of Galatia and informed the Gentile believers there that they will not be acceptable to God (the God of Israel) until they are circumcised.
2. Paul's letter is a vehement "no!" to this demand: what's needed is simply faith in Christ and baptism.
3. This is the kernel of Paul's doctrine of "justification by faith apart from the works of the Law."

B. The central concept: justification by faith apart from works of the Law.

1. The "Law" here means specifically the Jewish Law, especially the requirement of circumcision.
2. "Faith" here means specifically belief in Jesus, whom God raised from the dead.
3. "Justification" here means "to be made just (or 'righteous') in God's sight."
4. Thus, Paul speaks of the justice or righteousness of God.
5. "Justice" and "righteousness" are absolutely equivalent terms. (They are two different translations of exactly the same Greek word.)
6. To be justified, for Paul, means to be made righteous in God's sight by believing in Christ and being baptized, rather than by adhering to the Law of Moses and being circumcised.

C. *Romans*: Jews and Gentiles in one body.

1. The issue, for those who wanted Gentiles to be circumcised, was how they were to be included in the covenant between God and Israel.
2. Paul's radical teaching is that Gentiles are brought into covenantal relationship with the God of Israel without being subject to Jewish Law, but simply by virtue of believing in Jesus.
3. More radical still is Paul's teaching that even Jews are justified (brought into the right covenantal relationship with the God of Israel) by believing in Christ rather than by adhering to the Law. (But such is implied in the Christian practice of baptism. In this regard, Paul is simply drawing out the implications of the practice of baptizing everyone who comes to believe in Jesus.)
4. Paul argues his case by a rereading of the narrative of the covenant with Abraham, pointing out that Abraham was counted righteous by God, because he believed God's promises, even before he was given circumcision as a sign of the covenant (Gal. 3:6–9, Romans 4).

5. In consequence, a new covenantal community is emerging in Paul's thought, which is neither Jewish nor Gentile, but Christian—the body of Christ, which includes both Jews and Gentiles. In practice, the community becomes almost exclusively Gentile in a century or so—and that's when it starts to make sense to contrast "Christians" and "Jews."

V. Aftermath: Law and grace in Pauline thinkers.

- A. Paul distinguished living "under Law" (as Jews apart from Christ do) and "under grace" (as believers in Christ do). This is where it's legitimate to see Paul as talking about differences between Jews and Christians.
- B. "Grace" means God's mercy and favor—similar to a king choosing to pardon an undeserving rebel.
- C. As divine mercy, "grace" comes to be the key term in Western Christianity to designate how the soul of the believer comes to share in Christ's life (Augustine).
- D. As divine favor, "grace" is associated with the notion of election, i.e., God's choice of some people rather than others (as in the Hebrew Bible, he chose Abraham and the people of Israel).
- E. When the "election of grace" is combined with justification by faith, the issue of predestination arises—a key concern for the Pauline strand of Western Christianity from Augustine onward.

Essential Reading:

Paul, *Letters to the Galatians, Romans*.

Supplementary Reading:

E. P. Sanders, *Paul, the Law and the Jewish People* (Philadelphia: 1983).

Questions to Consider:

1. In your view, what beliefs are or should be central to Christianity, and how do these compare with the central issues in Paul's writings?
2. Do Paul's writings have the same concern as the synoptic Gospels? Why do you think so—or why not?

Lecture Eighteen

Plotinus and Neo-Platonism

Phillip Cary, Ph.D.

Scope: Plotinus is the last great philosopher of pagan antiquity, a systematizer of the heritage of Plato, founder of Neo-Platonism, and theorist of a form of otherworldly spirituality that was profoundly influential in the Western Christian tradition through Augustine. He saw the universe in terms of a deep underlying unity (which he called the One and identified with Plato's idea of the good). But he also thought in terms of an intellectual vision of Platonic forms (a level of being he called *Nous* or the Mind of God, which he located a step lower on the ladder of being than the One). Plotinus located the human soul in a fundamental unity of all souls that have as their interior the intelligible world of *Nous* and as their exterior, the world of bodies. Most influential of all, he sketched a spiritual ascent of the soul's turning inward to discover its fundamental unity not only with the one Soul and the divine Mind, but with the One itself.

Outline

- I. Introduction to Plotinus and his writings.
 - A. Plotinus was a Greek-speaking philosopher, born and educated in Egypt, who worked for most of his career in Rome.
 - B. He died in 270 AD, a generation before Christianity became the established religion of the Roman Empire under Constantine.
 - C. Plotinus was the last great philosopher of pagan antiquity.
 - D. His role was to systematize the Platonist tradition, incorporating many elements from the Stoic and Aristotelian traditions and, thus, founding a new philosophic tradition that modern scholars have dubbed "Neoplatonism."
 - E. The main influence of Neoplatonism has been on Christian spirituality (e.g., through the inwardness of Augustine and the mystical theology of Pseudo-Dionysius, both of whom are Christian Neo-Platonists).
- II. Intellectual vision (*Nous*).
 - A. For Plotinus, the fundamental activity of all being is intellectual contemplation or vision, i.e., "seeing" (or beholding) Platonic forms with the "mind's eye."
 1. This mental activity is intuitive rather than discursive: more like seeing than like talking, figuring things out, or proving something.
 2. Think of the difference between the long process of trying to figure out a mathematical proof and the brief moment when you "get it" and say, "Aha, now I see it!"
 3. For a Platonist, this is a moment when time touches eternity, when a merely human mind grasps something about the timeless world of the forms.
 4. Now imagine a mind that always sees that way, a mind for which that moment of understanding ("Aha, I see it!") is a permanent, eternal state of being, a mind that "sees" the whole world of forms that way: that is the divine Mind or Intellect.
 - B. The divine Intellect.
 1. "Intellect" (*Nous* in Greek) is also translated "mind," "intelligence," "understanding," even "spirit."
 2. Its activity (*noein*) is translated variously as "understanding," "intellection," "intelligizing," or "thinking" and can be described as "contemplation" (Greek *theoria*) and "intuition" (from a Latin word for "beholding").
 3. What intellect understands is always a Platonic form (also called an "intelligible thing").
 4. Christian thinkers (especially Augustine) often identify Plotinus's concept of intellect with the Mind of God.
 5. In that case, Platonic forms are ideas in the Mind of God, blueprints used in creating the world.
 - C. Intellect and intellects.
 1. In addition to the one divine Intellect, many intellects exist (our minds) that can see the forms and, thus, share in the vision of the divine Intellect.
 2. In seeing the divine forms, we become one with the divine Intellect, because according to Plotinus, to see a form is to become identical with it.
 - D. Plotinus's conception of intellectual vision pulls together several strands from the Platonist tradition:
 1. Plato's fundamental notion that a kinship exists between the soul and the forms (*Phaedo*).
 2. The metaphor of knowledge of the forms as "seeing" with the mind's eye (as in the "Allegory of the Cave").
 3. Aristotle's doctrine that the mind or intellect becomes identical with the forms it knows, separate from matter.
- III. The One beyond Intellect.
 - A. Above the divine Intellect.
 1. Like Plato, Plotinus is convinced that the many must have its source in the One.

2. Hence, for Plotinus, the origin or first principle of all things must be One.
 3. The Intellect or Divine Mind is not unified enough to be the first principle, because it contains a multiplicity (the forms) and a duality (knower and known, or intellect and intelligible).
 4. The One is, therefore, above the forms and the Intellect.
 5. Plotinus identifies the One with Plato's "the Good" which shines like the sun *above* the world of the forms (in the "Allegory of the Cave").
- B. Characteristics of the One (simple, superessential, incomprehensible).**
1. The One is absolutely *simple*, having no parts or structure (like a geometrical point rather than a geometrical figure).
 2. The One is above being ("*super-essential*"), i.e., above the forms or essences (it lowers the One to say "it exists"—it's beyond mere existence).
 3. It is above knowledge and understanding (because it is above Intellect) and, hence, it is *incomprehensible*.
- C. Ascending beyond vision to union.**
1. Because vision requires a duality of seer (knower) and seen (known), one cannot have a view of the One, only union with it
 2. This union is possible because the One is the source of all being and all being returns to it—like coming home.
 3. For the soul to be united to the One is, thus, to be united to the inmost source of its own being: it is not a new discovery but a return to where it always is. It's a little like Dorothy discovering that she's never really left home. Her homecoming is to discover that she's always been there—but that discovery requires a long and difficult journey.
- IV. The place of the soul in the universe.**
- A. As Intellect is both one and many, soul is both one and many.**
1. There is the one Soul, a World Soul animating the visible world (and causing the movement of the heavens).
 2. Then there are particular souls (we'd call them "individual" souls, but Plotinus would call them "divided," i.e., separated from one another, not unified), which are related to the one Soul as the many intellects are related to the one divine Intellect.
 3. Just as all intellects are identical with the divine Intellect as they contemplate the forms, so are all souls one, identical with the one Soul.
- B. Soul is located between intellect and body.**
1. What makes soul different from intellect is that it can be embodied; hence, it is ignorant, mortal, impure, and vulnerable to suffering.
 2. As souls turn away from the intellect, they fall into embodiment.

3. As souls return to the intellect, they ascend to unity and purity and rediscover their original inward happiness.

V. The hierarchy of being in Plotinus.

- A. Plotinus's universe is hierarchical, ordered by the notion of unity or identity: the higher something is, the more unified it is.**
1. The least unified are bodies, which are many, can always be fragmented into parts, and can always perish (only bodily things can break or die).
 2. The next level is souls, which are fragmented and weak insofar as they are absorbed in bodies, but unified and powerful as they turn to contemplate forms in the intellect above.
 3. The next level is the intellect, which eternally and uninterruptedly contemplates the intelligible forms within it and is, thus, identical with them (intellect = intelligible world).
 4. The highest level is the One, which is so unified that it cannot even be articulated as forms or understanding.
- B. Plotinus's concentric universe.**
1. The One is the geometrical point at the center, the source of all being and light.
 2. The Intellect is a realm of light revolving around that center, containing a multitude of illuminated forms.
 3. The Soul is an outer sphere revolving around that inner globe of light.
 4. On the outer side of that sphere are many faces (our "individual" souls) looking outward into the dark world of bodies, fragmentation, and death.
 5. If a soul turns to look inward, it will see the inner world of the Forms and see that it is inwardly one with all souls—because all souls share the same "interior."

VI. Plotinus's spirituality.

- A. In many ways we can see Plotinus's philosophy as "pure spirituality."**
1. This philosophy is more spiritual than Judaism, with its attachment to the fleshly people of Israel.
 2. This philosophy is also more spiritual than Christianity, with its attachment to the flesh or person of Christ.
 3. It has affinities with any religion that aspires to find deep truths behind the visible world of appearance, including the world of finite persons (cf. Hinduism, for which no person or people is ultimate).
- B. Plotinus's spirituality is a radical extension of the Platonist metaphysical conviction that the truth of being lies deeper than physical appearances.**

1. Behind the many-ness of external appearances is a deep inner unity (the One).
2. Access to that unity comes by turning inward, finding the deep unity within the soul that is beyond all understanding.

Essential Reading:

Plotinus, *The Enneads*, J. Dillon, ed. (New York: 1991), (especially 1:6, 4:8, 5:1, 4:3, 6:5, and 6:9).

Supplementary Reading:

P. Hadot, *Plotinus or the Simplicity of Vision* (Chicago: 1993).

Questions to Consider:

1. Do you find Plotinus’s spirituality attractive?
2. Do you think there might be any truth to it?

Lecture Nineteen

Augustine—Grace and Free Will

Phillip Cary, Ph.D.

Scope: Augustine was a “Church Father,” one of the Christian thinkers who helped formulate the basic doctrines of ancient Christianity. He was particularly important for his doctrine of grace, which is based on his interpretation of Paul. But Augustine was a reader of Plotinus as well as Paul, and he formulated a Christian Platonist spirituality that was immensely influential for the Western tradition. He taught the West to think in terms of a contrast between the inner self and the external world, to define the hope of heaven in terms of seeing God with the mind’s eye (beatific vision), and to understand sin as a twisting of our inmost will that cannot be undone without the help of divine grace. Although Augustine’s doctrine of grace focuses on our learning to love God with a passionate heart, it also has the frightening implication that God chooses in advance to give this help and delight to some but not all—raising profoundly troubling questions about predestination.

Outline

- I. Who was Augustine?
 - A. Bishop and Church Father: a leader of the ancient Christian Church (in the fourth century AD) whose writings have been extraordinarily important for the history of Christian teaching, especially concerning the concept of divine grace.
 - B. Passionate soul: part of what made Augustine so influential is the depth of his personality—his was a mind always alive and questioning, a heart always burning, sometimes with the wrong kind of love.
 - C. The most important thinker to combine biblical religion with Platonist (i.e., Plotinian) spirituality.
 - D. Author of *Confessions*, in which he tells the story of his own soul, its wandering from God, and its return; the first autobiography in Western literature.
- II. Augustine’s inwardness.
 - A. Lost among outward things.
 1. Plotinus’s image of the many souls facing outward away from the divine center captures a crucial feature of Augustine’s spirituality.
 2. In the *Confessions*, Augustine describes being far from God as being turned away from God toward outward things: “You were within, but I was without” (10:28–38). This passage is key, because

it ties together themes of intellect and will, inward turn and wayward love.

3. The external things of this world are beautiful and good because God made them, but they are not God and, therefore, cannot make us ultimately happy.
4. Augustine contrasts with the Manichaeans, who viewed the external world as a prison for the soul. In his youth, Augustine was a Manichaean.
5. We can also contrast Augustine's thought with Genesis 1: Plotinus can be combined with the biblical notion that what God created is good. It cannot be combined with the biblical notion that earth was created to be our home.
6. The old hymn verse, "this earth is not my home" fits better with Augustine and Plotinus than with the Bible.
7. Platonist ("spiritual") interpretation of the Bible brings Genesis into harmony with Augustine's inwardness.

B. Turning inward—the private world.

1. Plotinus's image is of the soul turning inward and finding a whole inner world: the "intelligible world" of the forms in the divine Intellect (our "inner self," for Plotinus, *is* the divine Intellect).
2. Augustine, by contrast, turns inward but then looks upward, at God, who is both within and above the soul (for he is its creator).
3. Thus, in Augustine, Plotinus's belief in the deep inner divinity of the soul is modified by the biblical belief that the human self is created by God and, therefore, is not divine.
4. As a result, Augustine is the first thinker to conceive of the self as possessing its own inner world: not the eternal world of the divine Intellect (which in Plotinus is the common inner self of all souls), but the private inner realm of memory, imagination, and thought.

C. Beatific intellectual vision.

1. For Augustine, the final state of the soul's ascent is not so much union as vision: an intellectual vision such as when one ascends from Plato's cave and gazes straight at the divine sun above.
2. In our present sinful state, we can but glimpse God momentarily, then fall back dazzled by the brightness of his glory.
3. When we receive the gift of eternal life, we shall be able to gaze continually on the very essence of God in what later Catholic tradition calls the "beatific vision" (i.e., the seeing that makes us happy and eternally blessed).

III. Grace and free will.

A. Will and love.

1. What the will does is love (as what the intellect does is understand).

2. Love drives and moves us toward what we love. Augustine said, "my love is my weight."
3. Love unites us with what we love, glues us to it as one friend's heart is joined to another.
4. Love seeks happiness in union with what is loved. (To Augustine, what we love is God.)

B. Wayward love.

1. Sin means seeking ultimate happiness in something other than God.
2. As Augustine repeatedly portrays in *Confessions*, sin inevitably brings the soul to grief, because only God can make us happy forever.
3. Because love unites our souls to what we love, to lose what we love is like having something that is glued to our heart ripped from it, tearing our heart and leaving it bleeding.
4. Augustine is a master at describing grief.

C. The difficulty of conversion.

1. All we need to do to find a love we cannot lose is turn to God—a mere turning of the will (called in Latin *conversio*, or conversion).
2. Yet the mere turning of the will turns out to be the hardest thing of all: love forms habits, and the habit of joining ourselves in love to external things is hard to break.
3. Augustine dramatizes this in a vivid passage in *Confessions* 8, describing why he needed the help of God's grace to lead him to his conversion (= turning of will): it is like trying to choose to wake up, but dropping back into bed muttering "not yet."

D. The necessity of grace.

1. If I delighted enough in God, I would find it easy to turn my love from earthly things to him.
2. But I cannot choose what I shall delight in—that habit of old carnal delights grips my heart too closely. (This is called sin.)
3. Grace is God's remedy for this: it teaches me to love God above all things by causing me to fall in love with him—similar to finding my long-lost love, my first and true love.
4. Thus, Augustine interprets Paul's talk about grace in terms of Platonic love: an epochal combination of Plotinus and Paul.
5. Notice the compatibility of grace and free will here.

IV. Predestination and the gift of faith.

A. Justification by faith in Augustine.

1. Prayer for grace leads to gift of grace, thence to true love of God (= righteousness).
2. What for Paul was a question about joining the Christian community (see Lecture Five) is for Augustine a question about

spirituality: how do we come to delight in God with true love (righteousness)?

3. Hence, for Augustine, Paul's phrase "under Law" does not refer merely to the Jewish Law but to the legalistic attempt to live righteously by one's own efforts. "Under grace" refers to the Christian life of those who have received the inner gift of grace.

B. Grace comes first (prevenience).

1. Late in Augustine's career, he was asked a crucial question: is faith itself (like love) a gift of grace? This is a huge dividing point in Western religious thought.
2. Many people in the Western religious tradition want to say no: God's grace is necessary for salvation, but at this crucial initial point, our salvation is up to our own free will.
3. But Augustine (followed by Aquinas, Luther, and Calvin) says yes: God's grace comes first (it is, in the technical language, *prevenient*) so that faith itself is a gift of God—and God alone saves us.
4. If (like Luther) you have a profound sense of your own unworthiness and inability to be righteous by your own strength, the thought that God alone saves you is inexpressibly comforting.
5. For others, this same thought is terrifying and oppressive—especially if you think about those to whom God does *not* give grace.

C. Predestination.

1. This problem is intensified by Augustine's doctrine of predestination, according to which God knew from the beginning to whom he would give grace (and to whom he would not) long before they were born.
2. Augustine thinks this view is required by Paul's idea of divine choice or election in Romans 9:10–18. There, he notes that in the Hebrew Bible (Malachi 1:2), God says, "Jacob have I loved and Esau have I hated," before either of these twins was born and before they could choose to have faith or do anything good or evil.
3. Augustine's view is that all human beings are corrupted by their participation in Adam's sin and no one is able to save himself or earn reward, but God has mercy on some, giving them grace so that they will be justified by faith.
4. To the objection that this is unfair, Augustine replies that it is unequal but not unjust: all deserve damnation, but God chooses to give grace to some undeserving sinners rather than others—the saved get more than they deserve, but the damned do not get less than they deserve.
5. What to do with this Augustinian legacy—a doctrine of grace that is both beautiful and troubling, comforting and terrifying—is one of the recurring issues of the Western Christian tradition.

Essential Reading:

Augustine, *Confessions*, F. J. Sheed, trans., revised edition (Indianapolis: 1993).

Supplementary Reading:

Augustine, *On the Spirit and the Letter*, in *Augustine: Later Works*, J. Burnaby, ed. (Philadelphia: 1980).

P. Brown, *Augustine of Hippo* (Berkeley: 1967).

Questions to Consider:

1. Do you find Augustine's doctrine of grace more troubling than comforting—or the other way around? Why?
2. Is "beatific vision" a good account of what you would hope to enjoy upon going to heaven?

Lecture Twenty

Aquinas and Christian Aristotelianism

Jeremy Adams, Ph.D.

Scope: This lecture discusses the role of Thomas Aquinas in adapting Aristotelian thought and philosophical method to the needs of the Christian philosophy and theology of his time. It presents six aspects of the Aristotelian legacy that Aquinas integrated into his own system: logic, epistemology, teleology, motion, politics, and legal thinking. Some understanding of Thomas's social background and institutional context—the Dominican Order and the discourse of the university—helps us grasp Aquinas's significance for his time and ours.

Outline

- I. Thomas Aquinas's life and context.
 - A. Thomas Aquinas (1225?–1274) was the son of a south Italian noble house that was well connected to the ruling dynasty of the Kingdom of Sicily and to the international European aristocracy of thirteenth-century Western Europe.
 - B. Two significant factors affected his education.
 1. Aquinas was the child of the new university system, which had emerged at Bologna, Paris, and Oxford in the second half of the twelfth century. It was designed to train professionals.
 2. Aquinas was also the star of the even newer Dominican Order. This was a pan-European (and even broader-horizoned) elite order of friars, dedicated to strengthening and extending their vision of Christian orthodoxy.
 - C. Aquinas was educated at the venerable Benedictine monastery of Monte Cassino near his birthplace; then at the University of Naples, founded (in 1224) by his kinsman King (and Holy Roman Emperor) Frederick II (there he earned his A.B.); then at the University of Paris (M.A. and S.Th.D.).
 1. He taught thereafter at Paris, at the itinerant papal university in Italy, and finally at the University of Naples.
 2. He died on March 7, 1274, at the age of forty-nine or so, author of some sixty to one hundred titles, depending on how his works are combined or separated in diverse editions.
- II. Aquinas's Aristotelianism.
 - A. Aquinas was the last creative commentator on Aristotle's philosophy.
 1. His predecessors in that intellectual activity of respectful but autonomous adaptation were Alexander of Aphrodisias (AD 198–

220), a nominalist; Ibn-Sin (or Avicenna, as medieval Westerners called him, 980–1037), a combined Platonist and Aristotelian; Ibn-Rushd (or Averroës, 1126–98), an adviser to sultans and exponent of creative Aristotelianism; and Aquinas's own teacher, Albertus Magnus (1206–80).

2. After Pietro Pomponazzi (1462–1525) restored “integral Aristotelianism” in the Renaissance spirit of precise reconstruction, Aristotle died as a source of fresh philosophical creativity.
- B. Some key instances of Aquinas's creatively critical Aristotelianism are outlined below.
 1. Aquinas's teaching regarding the eternity of the world—a conviction of Aristotle's: Aquinas argued that neither the eternity of the world nor the contrary could be demonstrated by pure logic; the Bible provides the necessary authoritative information on that point.
 2. Aquinas's teaching on the nature of the human being: the soul is the form of the body (Aristotle's doctrine), but the soul is immortal. All in all, Aquinas's teaching on this matter is closer to the Christian Neoplatonism of St. Augustine than to Aristotle.
 - C. Aquinas accepted Aristotle's logical thought integrally and uncritically; when he disagreed with Aristotle—as in the questions of the eternity of the world and the immortality of the human soul—he usually did so by critiquing Aristotle's conclusions with Aristotle's logic.
 - D. Aquinas followed Aristotle's epistemology: what we know we know from data collected by the senses. In regard to the human soul, however, Aquinas taught that its function was to learn truths of a spiritual nature, as well as material sense-knowledge. As such, the human soul survives the death of the body.
 - E. Following Aristotle, Aquinas's thought was resolutely teleological, that is, concerned to establish the end or purpose of any being or any of its actions. Thomas expressed this teleological reasoning in his thought on biology, ethics, politics, and cosmology, as well as theology.
 - F. Aristotle's doctrine of motion was used by Aquinas in developing proofs for the existence of God.
 1. Aquinas's *Summa theologiae*, part I, question 2, article 3, proposes five such proofs; the proofs from motion and from contingency or necessity of being depend on this Aristotelian doctrine.
 2. It is important to recognize that for Aristotle, motion involved not merely physical movement, but also the “reduction” of potency to act. Thus, the operation of the entire universe was explained by “motion.”
 - G. In political philosophy, Aquinas followed Aristotle quite closely, although again, not in every matter.

1. For Aquinas, as for Aristotle, the state was natural to the human condition, rather than a punitive consequence of Original Sin, as Augustine and most Western Christian thinkers since him had maintained. For Aquinas, as for Aristotle, man was a political animal (a Ζῷον Πολιτικόν), who needed civil society to reach his fulfillment, his teleological end.
2. Like Aristotle, Aquinas considered mixed government (elements of monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy combined) to be the best form of government. He favored monarchy more than Aristotle had, perhaps (as some have argued) because of his attachment to papal theocracy. On the other hand, Aquinas considered democracy, somewhat tempered by aristocracy, to be teleologically most appropriate for the city-states of his contemporary Italy, which resembled in so many ways the ideal *polis* (πόλις) of Aristotle.

H. In his distinctive doctrine of law, Aquinas combined the main lines of Aristotle's *Politics* with the Stoic doctrine of natural law and added some original features. According to Aquinas, four (or five) major kinds of law exist: the eternal law of God and his created universe; the natural law inherent in human nature; divine positive law, specifically legislated for human conduct; human positive law; and human custom, sort of a law in itself if it is not in conflict with the natural law. No divine law can be in conflict with natural law, and any human statute or custom that is inconsistent with natural law has no force—it is not a real law at all, because it does not conform to human teleology.

III. Reactions to Aquinas's Aristotelianism.

- A.** Aquinas's most Aristotelian teachings provoked a strong negative reaction, even in his lifetime. This reaction was turned into a movement to condemn Thomism as a heresy; the leading thinkers of the Dominican Order's main rival, the Franciscan Order, led this movement. It got as far as inspiring a bishop of Paris and two archbishops of Canterbury to condemn various of Aquinas's teachings, eventually declaring some of them formal heresies.
- B.** The Dominican Order reacted with gusto, leading to Thomas Aquinas's controversial canonization as a saint of the Catholic Church by Pope John XXII in 1323. In later centuries, Thomism was vigorously revived.
 1. In 1879, Pope Leo XIII issued a papal bull, *Aeterni patris*, that praised Aquinas as the "common doctor" of all Catholic thinkers and urged all Catholic professors and universities to revive Thomism, which indeed occurred.
 2. "Neo-Thomism," as this tradition is generally called, flourished for roughly a century, but then lost appeal even in Catholic academic circles. At the very end of the twentieth century, however, we have seen what we might call "Neo-neo-Thomism," a philosophical

movement recasting Thomism and Neo-Thomism in the light of such thinkers as Michel Foucault and Jacques Lacan. Basically, though, all forms of Thomism have been inspired by their respect for the thought of Aristotle.

Supplementary Reading:

The Basic Writings of St. Thomas Aquinas, 2 vols., Anton C. Pegis, ed. (Random House, 1945).

Thomas: Selected Philosophical Writings, Timothy McDermott, ed. (Oxford, 1993).

Ralph M. McInerny, *A First Glance at St. Thomas Aquinas: A Handbook for Peeping Thomists* (Notre Dame, 1990).

Brian Davies, *The Thought of Thomas Aquinas*, (Oxford, 1992).

Questions to Consider:

1. In adapting Aristotle's thought to the needs of medieval Christian orthodoxy, did Aquinas not violate the essential integrity of that pagan, rationalist, materialist philosophy?
2. How much sense do Aristotle and his distant disciple Aquinas make to the modern mind—for instance, in their insistence on teleological reasoning?
3. What in Aquinas's Aristotelianism explains the surprising durability of Thomism and its capacity for revival?

Lecture Twenty-One

Universals in Medieval Thought

Jeremy Adams, Ph.D.

Scope: This lecture discusses the vexed problem of “universals”—the relationship of names to things and of both names and things to standard categories of the Western analysis of phenomena (individual, species, genus) as explored and temporarily resolved in medieval Western thought. The problem remained “settled” for less than two centuries; however, since the fourteenth century, major thinkers—scientists and theologians, as well as philosophers—have tended to fall into the realist, the nominalist, or the conceptualist camp on this debate.

Outline

- I. The “problem of universals” is a philosophic issue that questions the relationship between names and things and between the various categories in which we tend to classify phenomena, i.e., genera, species, and individuals.
 - A. This issue has arisen in every vital period of philosophical speculation; its medieval expression reveals a great deal about its classical sources and modern permutations.
 1. Aristotle reached some conclusions about the relationship between names and things; moderns tend to label his teaching on that score “moderate realism.”
 2. The pagan philosopher Porphyry (233–301? CE) produced a summary discussion of Aristotle’s complex logical teachings, which he named *Isagoge*. It survived the collapse of classical Mediterranean civilization better than any of Aristotle’s own works on logic—they would remain unknown to Western European thinkers until the twelfth century, but Porphyry’s *Isagoge* was standard reading for any student of logic in the early medieval West. In that work, Porphyry restated the problem of universals but proposed no solution.
 3. The Christian philosopher Boethius (480–523), who hoped to translate all the works of Plato and of Aristotle into Latin and to resolve their differences (an enormous project that no one has ever come anywhere near achieving), also left tempting references to the question of universals in his writings. He translated the *Isogage* into Latin.
 - B. In the late tenth century, West European schools, especially in France, took up the question once more. In the second half of the eleventh

century, two schools of thought on this issue—the realists and the nominalists—presented themselves.

- II. Realists and nominalists.
 - A. Realist thinkers maintained that the names for things (*res* in Latin) were adequate indicators of the things they designated. Thus, names were real signs of the things they denoted. “Realism” didn’t mean then what it does to modern thinkers.
 1. One of the most outstanding realist thinkers was Lanfranc (1010?–1089), a North Italian who became the prior of the school at the Benedictine monastery of Bec in Normandy and ended up as archbishop of Canterbury. He became famous as a teacher of logic.
 2. Lanfranc’s outstanding pupil was Anselm (1033–1109), another North Italian who traveled to France to study logic. Anselm succeeded Lanfranc as head of the school at Bec, then became abbot of that monastery, and finally archbishop of Canterbury. He made an ontological argument for the existence of God that is still respected.
 - B. Nominalist thinkers maintained that names (*nomina*) had little or no reality content. Some might convey adequate information about the things they commonly designated, but that connection was at best accidental. Instead, names were conventional signs with little relationship to the things designated. Some went so far as to say that names were merely eruptions of sound (*flatus vocis*). Anything could be called by any name, even by names conventionally supposed to designate the opposite, without affecting the reality of the thing in question.
 1. An important early nominalist was Berengar of Tours (d. 1088), who got into a famous argument with Lanfranc about what happened when a priest consecrated bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ (the central Christian mystery of the Eucharist). In the course of the dispute, Lanfranc accused Berengar of wishing to understand everything by reason, rejecting sacred authority. Berengar wasn’t denying such a transformation; he only questioned how what the priest said could accomplish it.
 2. The next generation of nominalism is best represented by Roscelin of Compiègne (1050–1125), who said that one could describe the Christian Trinity as consisting of three gods, rather than three persons in one God; it didn’t matter, because the words *god* and *person* were mere *flatus vocis* without real meaning. Anselm accused him of Tritheism, a heretical doctrine, but a church council understood Roscelin’s argument well enough to clear him of the charge.

3. Neither Roscelin nor Berengar denied belief in the Eucharist or Trinity. Instead, they questioned what the attendant formulae for them meant.

III. Peter Abelard's solution.

- A. The nominalist-realist debate died down after 1125, thanks to the theory of conceptualism developed by Peter Abelard (1079–1143). Abelard studied with Roscelin, then with William of Champeaux (1070?–1135?), a loyally realist student-disciple of Anselm. Abelard disagreed with both of those teachers and went beyond them in his conceptualist theory.
- B. Abelard said that the dispute embodied three key questions: (1) do names and/or things—and species and genera—exist extramentally or only intramentally (that is, only in the mind or outside the mind, as well); (2) if they exist in reality, are they material or immaterial; (3) if they are real, and whether they are material or immaterial, are they separate from things or involved in them? For Abelard, the names we give to species (such as *man*) and genera (such as *animal*) were the key names in the issue.
- C. Abelard then asked three new questions: (1) what is there in things that enables us to give them common names; (2) if no such things as universals exist, what do common names designate; (3) if particular things should cease to exist, would “their” names still designate the same content or notion to us? In other words, if all the roses were to die, what then would the name *rose* mean?
- D. Abelard concluded that logically defined names are adequate concepts, adequate to the thing of which they serve as a sign, adequate to the demands of systematic logical consistency. Names are not different from things in an absolute, radical way; they are just differently conceived (mental; intramental, if you wish) aspects of things.
- E. Abelard's conceptualism was actually quite close to Aristotle's moderate realism, of which Abelard was unaware. It would be accepted by Thomas Aquinas and still has its defenders today.
 1. Abelard encountered serious trouble from the Church authorities.
 2. For Bernard de Clariveaux, Abelard was advocating a dangerous mixture of pagan and Christian thinking. Abelard's formulation was so elegant, however, that even Thomas Aquinas found much to admire in it.

IV. Late-medieval revival. Nominalism revived in the fourteenth century, starting in England. William of Ockham (1290?–1349/50, a victim of the Black Death), a radical Franciscan friar condemned as a heretic by the papacy and supported by the Holy Roman emperor, was its most decisive spokesman. In time, nominalism led to the conviction that no theological

truth can be demonstrated by reason; faith alone is adequate to establishing religious certitude.

V. Later influence.

- A. Martin Luther (1483–1546), like most university intellectuals of his generation, was a nominalist; that position affected his theology.
- B. Galileo (1564–1642), otherwise a radical reconceiver of the universe, seems to have been a realist.
- C. John Locke (1632–1704) and Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) were conceptualists.
- D. David Hume (1711–1776), George Berkeley (1685–1753), and Willard van Alban Quine (1908-) were definitely nominalists.

Supplementary Reading:

David Knowles, *The Evolution of Medieval Thought*, chapters 8–10 (Longmans, 1994).

Frederick S.J. Copleston, *A History of Philosophy*, vol. 1, chapter 28; vol. 2, chapter 14 (Westminster, MD: 1946 and 1962).

Questions to Consider:

1. “What's in a name?” Is Shakespeare (or at any rate, Juliet) a nominalist, a realist, or something else?
2. Notice that Peter Abelard was able to reach a position adumbrated fourteen centuries earlier by Aristotle, even though the relevant books of Aristotle were not available to him. How did Abelard do it?
3. What would you expect the impact of nominalism to be on theological orthodoxy, on politics, on aesthetics? How about realism and conceptualism?

Lecture Twenty-Two

Mysticism and Meister Eckhart

Phillip Cary, Ph.D.

Scope: “Mysticism” can mean a great many things, but a coherent tradition of mystical thought in the Christian Middle Ages can be described in terms taken from the Bible, Augustine, and the Eastern Christian Neoplatonist known to the West as Denys (and to modern scholars as “Pseudo-Dionysius”). Augustine sought an intellectual vision of God, but the medieval tradition of classical mysticism wanted to go one step beyond vision—a step labeled “ecstasy” or “the darkness above the light” or “passing into God.” Meister Eckhart in the fourteenth century went beyond this tradition by reintroducing the Plotinian theme of a deep inner unity between God and the soul that is not only higher than intellectual vision, but has also always been the ultimate reality in the depth of the soul.

Outline

- I. Four strands of mystical experience.
 - A. Visionary: Julian of Norwich, in the fourteenth century, literally saw Christ on the cross and can vividly describe the changing color of his face as he died. Many will call this experience “visionary” rather than mystical.
 - B. Intellectual: Augustine turned inward to examine the cognitive powers of his own soul, ascending from the senses to the intellect, then used his intellect to look above the intellect at the divine light of the Platonic sun—a vision that is entirely different from that of a crucified man.
 - C. Unitive: Plotinus thought that a stage of divine experience exists that goes beyond this seeing with the eye of the intellect, a union of the soul with the incomprehensible One above all intellect and knowing.
 - D. Affective: Bernard of Clairvaux spoke of the Word of God entering the soul as a bridegroom coming into the bedchamber of the bride and the two becoming “one spirit” in a “spiritual marriage.”
- II. Classic medieval mysticism.
 - A. Most medieval mystics were wary of visionary experience, which could be a figment of the imagination or even demonic delusion.
 - B. They also took for granted (following Augustine) that the vision of the intellect is higher than the vision of the eyes or imagination.
 - C. As represented by Richard of St. Victor (twelfth century) and St. Bonaventure (thirteenth century), classic medieval mysticism combined the three strands of affective, intellectual, and unitive mysticism.

- D. When the affective is combined with the intellectual in this way (as classically in Augustine), love or desire for God is the driving force of the whole project, the impulse for ascent to the vision of God.
- E. But the mystics of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries went further than Augustine. For them, love and desire for God take the soul beyond intellectual vision, raising the soul above itself to “pass over” into God.
- F. The soul that “passes over” into God is described as “ecstatic” in the original sense of the Greek word: standing outside itself or “beside itself.”
- G. This usage emphasizes that the soul is going beyond the capacities of its own nature (by a gift of supernatural grace from God).
- H. Increasingly prominent as we go from the thirteenth to the fourteenth century is the language of a divine darkness above the light of the intellect.
- I. The source for this way of thinking about the soul ascending ecstatically beyond the light of the intellect and into the divine darkness above is Pseudo-Dionysius’s *Mystical Theology*, which is also the source of our term “mystic.”

III. Pseudo-Dionysius and the *Mystical Theology*.

- A. Who was Pseudo-Dionysius?
 1. He was a sixth-century Eastern Orthodox Christian writing in Greek.
 2. He wrote under a pseudonym, identifying himself with a biblical character named Dionysius the Areopagite, one of St. Paul’s converts in Athens (Acts 17:33).
 3. His pseudonym was widely (though not always) accepted in the Middle Ages and, at any rate, he was one of the most authoritative Church writers for medieval thinkers (although not as authoritative as Augustine).
 4. He provided an alternative (“Eastern”) form of Christian Neoplatonism that interacted interestingly with Augustine’s “Western” Christian Neoplatonism.
 5. The West shortened his Greek name to Denys (hence, our name Dennis).
- B. The original meaning of “mystic.”
 1. The term comes from the Greek *mysterion* or “mystery,” meaning secret—especially the sort of secret revealed in the initiation rites of a “mystery cult.” (Think of the Masons.)
 2. It came to be used of baptism, because certain teachings of the faith were not revealed to converts until they went through this initiation rite.
 3. The term is used in the New Testament to refer to God’s plan to save the world, which was hidden until Christ was revealed.

4. In fact, the Latin term *sacramentum* (“sacrament”) is just a translation of *mysterion*, which the Greek church applies to all the sacraments.
 5. Denys’s title, *Mystical Theology*, thus meant something like “discourse about the secrets of God.”
 6. When the term “mystic” appeared in the Middle Ages, it was almost always in a reference to the teachings of Denys.
- C. The key concept in the *Mystical Theology* was the incomprehensibility of God.
1. As in Plotinus, God is an incomprehensible One above all understanding (i.e., above all intellect or *Nous*).
 2. This means (in contrast to Augustine) that God is *above* the Light of the Mind, in a “superluminous darkness.”
 3. He is also above all Platonic forms or essences—hence, Denys calls him “super-essential.”
 4. Unlike Plotinus, Dionysius has no project of uniting himself with the One but only of figuring out how to talk about the incomprehensible.
 5. He proposed a “negative way” (*via negativa*) of describing God by saying what God is not.

IV. “Classic” Augustinian mysticism and Denys.

- A. In classic medieval mysticism, Denys’s question about how to talk about the incomprehensible One is joined with Augustine’s question of how the soul may ascend to union with God (mystic ascent).
- B. Unlike in Augustine, the goal in medieval mysticism is not simply intellectual vision but something beyond: union with the darkness that is above intellectual light.
- C. Augustine thought that our soul was like an eye that could eventually be strengthened to look straight at the sun without blinking (as in the “Allegory of the Cave”). Denys, on the other hand, thought that God was like a sun that would always be too bright for any creature to see—blinding us not as darkness does, but as a superabundance of light at which no eye in creation is strong enough to gaze.
- D. The last step of mystical ascent, then, is not Augustinian vision (the soul looking above itself at the source of divine light) but Dionysian ecstasy: the soul going “outside itself” and beyond itself, rising above its own nature to “pass over” into God.

V. Meister Eckhart and the fourteenth-century crisis of Christian mysticism.

- A. Who is Meister Eckhart?
 1. He was a fourteenth-century Dominican priest who belonged to the same order as Thomas Aquinas.

2. He was a scholastic theologian who wrote biblical commentaries in Latin (*meister* means “master,” i.e., teacher).
3. A popular preacher, he left us vivid sermons in the old High German vernacular—(one of the early landmarks of German literature).

B. The birth of the Son of God in the soul.

1. In orthodox Christian theology, the eternal Son of God (i.e., Christ before he was incarnate and became human) was eternally begotten by the Father.
2. Eckhart teaches that this same eternal begetting happens in our soul.
3. This is possible, because in its ultimate depths, the soul is no different from the essence of God (ground of soul is ground of God).

C. Eckhart’s identity mysticism.

1. Eckhart’s mysticism can be interpreted as a Christian Neoplatonism that (unlike the thinking of Augustine or Denys) is willing to agree with Plotinus that the highest part of the soul is eternally identical with the divine One.
2. In fact, it is possible that Eckhart was one of the first Christians in the Middle Ages to “rediscover” Plotinus and his doctrine of the inward divinity of the soul.
3. In contrast to Plotinus, however, Eckhart’s favorite metaphor is one of depth rather than height: the ground (inmost depth or “bottom”) of the soul is no different from the ground or “bottom” of God.
4. Because of this deep identity between God and the soul, Eckhart can speak of the soul as having an “uncreated spark” in it.

D. Charges of heresy.

1. Christian orthodoxy insists on maintaining a fundamental distinction between the soul and God—the distinction between creature (created thing) and Creator (who alone is “uncreated”).
2. Thus, most Christian mystics aim for *union* with God (as in a marriage), not *identity*.
3. The language of “ecstasy” in the classic medieval mystics preserved that distinction: the soul must go “outside itself” to be united with God.
4. By contrast, for Eckhart, the soul’s union with God is more like a homecoming: in discovering its own depths, it discovers the depths of God that were always within it.
5. Eckhart was tried for heresy because his preaching did not clearly maintain that key distinction between the Creator and the creature. (He died before the trial was completed.)
6. Beyond orthodoxy: if one’s primary interest is not fidelity to the orthodox Christian tradition but deep inner links between

Christianity and world religions, then Eckhart is a profoundly important figure.

VI. Fourteenth-century mysticism and the dark night.

- A.** In the fourteenth century, popular mystical movements began to proliferate. Mysticism was practiced not just by monks and intellectuals, but also by “unlettered” women, such as Julian of Norwich and Marguerite Porete, who were often visionaries.
- B.** In that century, the intellectual approach of classic medieval mysticism tended to give way to an approach that insisted that love can go beyond understanding in finding a way to God.
- C.** Most fourteenth-century Christian mystics shared with Eckhart an interest in “simplifying” the soul (a Plotinian motif), ridding it not only of images from the senses (as in Augustine) but also of ideas of the intellect.
- D.** Whereas Eckhart speaks of the soul’s becoming bare or empty, most Christian mystics, such as the anonymous author of *The Cloud of Unknowing* (fourteenth century), used imagery from Denys about entering the dark above the light of the intellect—or entering a “dark night.”
- E.** This develops into the famous theology of *The Dark Night of the Soul* in the sixteenth-century Spanish mystic, St. John of the Cross.
- F.** For John, the dark night of the soul is a form of purgation or purification, an experience of emotional desolation that strips the soul of worldly desires and thoughts.
- G.** In practical terms (and John was thinking in practical terms of the practice of “spiritual direction”), the dark night of the soul is what happens when someone whose life is dedicated to prayer hits a devastating “dry spell” in his or her prayer life. To pass through such an experience strengthens one’s devotion and longing for God.

Essential Reading:

Denys, *Mystical Theology*, from *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works* (New York: 1987).

Meister Eckhart, *Selected Writings* (New York: 1994).

Supplementary Reading:

F. C. Happold, *Mysticism: A Study and An Anthology* (New York: 1970).

St. John of the Cross, *The Dark Night of the Soul* (New York: 1959).

Julian of Norwich, *Revelations of Divine Love* (New York: 1966).

Anonymous, *The Cloud of Unknowing and Other Works*, C. Wolters, ed. (New York: 1961).

Questions to Consider:

- 1.** In what way is God capable of being understood, do you think, and in what way is God beyond understanding?
- 2.** Do you think that Meister Eckhart departs from Christianity or finds its true inner depths?

Lecture Twenty-Three

Luther—Law and Gospel

Phillip Cary, Ph.D.

Scope: Martin Luther, the founding figure of Protestantism, began his career as a monk with a problem. Because of his early theological training, he thought he had to earn the right to divine grace, and he was terrified by the thought that he could never really be worthy of it. His reaction against this theology led him to find comfort in what he called “the Gospel,” by which he meant the promises of grace made by Christ in the Bible and conveyed to Christians today through preaching and sacraments. Using concepts taken from Paul and Augustine, Luther taught that we are justified by faith alone; that is, that we can receive the grace of God only by believing the Gospel of Christ, not by doing good works. Luther was taken by surprise when a debate he wanted to start among local scholars about the theology of indulgences blew up into a huge controversy in which the pope intervened. When he came to the conclusion that the pope was trying to take the Gospel away from him and other Christians, the break between the Roman Catholic church and those who saw things Luther’s way became inevitable.

Outline

- I. Who was Luther?
 - A. He was the German monk who started the Protestant Reformation.
 - B. He is known for the doctrine of justification by faith alone.
- II. Young Luther’s problem.
 - A. The project of earning grace.
 1. Recall the key issue of Augustine’s mature doctrine of grace: does grace come before any choice of ours?
 2. Luther began his career as a monk trained in a fifteenth-century theological tradition (not Aquinas, not “medieval” Catholicism) that (unlike Augustine) answered: no, there is something we must do first, before we receive grace.
 3. What we are to do, in fact, is “all that lies within us”: we must love God as much as we can by our own natural strength, then God will give us the grace that makes us acceptable to him.
 4. Luther would always look back in horror on this monkish theology as a form of works-righteousness, an attempt to earn grace that can only be received as a free gift.
 - B. The Augustinian context.

1. For Augustine (in *On the Spirit and the Letter*), trying to earn God’s favor by doing good works never succeeds, but only results in *slavish obedience*, in which one follows God’s law simply to avoid punishment—similar to a slave following orders from a master he hates.
 2. What’s needed (and is only possible by grace) is *filial obedience*, in which one obeys God out of love, as a son freely and lovingly does what his father wishes.
 3. Along with this comes *true contrition*, really hating your sins for God’s sake (not simply because you’re afraid of being punished for them).
- C. The terrified conscience.
1. Young Luther was trying to achieve this attitude of filial obedience and true contrition by means of medieval penitential practices (confession, fasting, prayer, and so on).
 2. Because he thought it presumptuous to believe he had already received grace, he was always examining his own heart to find evidence that his efforts at obedience were motivated by fear or self-interest rather than pure unselfish love of God.
 3. The result was an emotional vicious circle. If he found the least bit of self-interest in his seeking for God’s grace, this showed that he was not in a state of grace, which caused him to fear God rather than love him, which drove him to despair of ever being saved, which caused him to resent God for not saving him, which caused him to be even more terrified, which caused him to hate God, and so on.
 4. Luther called the result of this vicious circle a “terrified conscience.” (“Conscience” for Luther meant “consciousness of sin.”) When Luther was conscious of his sins, he felt terrified, not guilty. That is, instead of that vague sense of failure that we call “guilt feelings,” he felt terror of God.
- D. The 95 theses.
1. While Luther was wrestling with his terrified conscience, an indulgence seller named Tetzel was working nearby.
 2. Indulgences were official letters of the pope promising remission of sin and release from time to be served in purgatory—for a price.
 3. Luther was worried that common folk would buy indulgences as a substitute for true contrition and repentance.
 4. On All Hallows’ Eve in 1517, he posted the “95 theses,” a critique of Tetzel’s sermon on indulgences, on the bulletin board on the door of the university church.
 5. He wasn’t planning to start anything but a scholarly debate, but this event has traditionally been regarded as the beginning of the Protestant Reformation. It was neither an act of defiance nor a

protest against the church—the very word “Protestant” wasn’t used until after Luther’s death. It was a polite invitation to debate with other scholars, written in Latin.

6. Without Luther’s knowledge, the document was translated into German and, before he knew it, Luther was a byword among Germans who were dissatisfied with the way the pope made money off them. The 95 theses thus started a huge controversy with the pope that led, rather quickly, to the project of reforming the church in Germany, without the pope’s help (= reformation). The event also forced Luther to think more clearly about the sacrament of penance, something that, despite all his penitential efforts, he had not done before.

III. Law and Gospel.

- A. Augustine thought of grace in terms of spirituality (“under Law” versus “under grace”) and “seeing,” while Luther thought in terms of what God says to us (the Word of God), which comes in two forms: Law and Gospel.
- B. Law is God’s command telling us what to do.
 1. The civil use of law is to order society and govern the external actions of society.
 2. The evangelical use of law is to terrify our consciences with the awareness of our sin, so that we flee for grace to the Gospel.
- C. The Gospel is God’s promise of grace in Christ.
 1. Augustine summed up his doctrine of grace by praying to God: “Give what You command, and command whatever you want.”
 2. Luther summed up his view of the Gospel by saying, “the promise gives what the command [the Law] requires.”
 3. The crucial element that Luther adds to Augustine is an external “place” to go when we seek grace: the Gospel.
 4. The Gospel does not just promise us rewards if we do right, it gives us the ability to do right, to love God with all our hearts, and so on.
- D. The Word of Absolution is the earliest example of Gospel.
 1. Imagine going to confession like young Luther, suffering from a “terrified conscience.”
 2. You examine your own heart and cannot find true contrition: you don’t hate your own sins sincerely enough to be worthy of God’s forgiveness.
 3. Then, for the first time in your life, you listen attentively and believe the priest (Luther’s friend Staupitz) when he says the Word of Absolution: “I absolve you of your sins in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.”

4. The mature Luther believes this word is actually Christ’s. (The priest is only Christ’s mouthpiece.)
5. Hence, Christ himself tells the terrified young Luther that his sins are forgiven. Therefore, one has no right to think of himself as a sinner.
6. The Word of Absolution is, in fact, the earliest word Luther ever identifies as Gospel, a promise in which God gives what he promises.

E. Justification by faith alone.

1. Through Gospel promises such as this, Christ cheers and comforts the terrified conscience and gives people like Luther the grace to love God gladly and freely.
2. For Luther, it is as if Christ himself were saying, “Stop trying to earn my grace; just believe me when I tell you I’m giving it to you.”
3. From this comes Luther’s principle “believe it and you have it.” When Christ promises you forgiveness and grace, all you have to do to get it is not to believe he’s lying to you.
4. This is what Luther means by his famous principle “justification by faith alone, apart from the works of the Law.” We do not earn grace, but receive it by faith in the Gospel of Christ, which can be received not just through the Word of Absolution but through preaching and other sacraments.

IV. Luther’s enemies.

A. The devil.

1. Luther spoke often of the Christian’s experience of being inwardly “assaulted” by the devil (in German, it was called *Anfechtung*), who, as it were, whispers in his ear: “You can’t really believe that God would forgive someone like *you*...”
2. For Luther, the devil’s fundamental work is to undermine faith in Christ’s promises.
3. Hence, anyone whose teaching or activity threatens to take away the Gospel or undermine people’s faith in it is (Luther believes) doing the devil’s work.

B. The pope.

1. The 95 theses spoke respectfully, not defiantly, of the pope.
2. After the pope’s intervention in the ensuing controversy, Luther became convinced that he was attempting to take the Gospel away from Christian believers, as if no one should have any access to the promises (or grace) of God except by the pope’s permission.
3. Luther came to believe that the pope was anti-Christ and that compromise with him was impossible.

4. The subsequent course of the Reformation involved the Lutheran “evangelical” churches, as they called themselves, breaking off from Rome.

Essential Reading:

“The Freedom of a Christian” and “The Babylonian Captivity of the Church,” from Martin Luther, *Martin Luther: Selections from His Writings*, J. Dillenberger, ed. (New York: 1961).

Supplementary Reading:

R. Bainton, *Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther* (Nashville, TN: 1978).

Questions to Consider:

1. Luther’s theology obviously assumes a fierce sense of our damnable sinning, which is sharply at odds with most thinking today. Is there any chance he’s right about this?
2. Is it a good thing that Luther broke with the pope?

Lecture Twenty-Four
Calvin and Protestantism
Phillip Cary, Ph.D.

Scope: Calvin, the great theologian of Geneva, was the key figure in the second generation of the Reformation. Learning lessons from both Luther and his Swiss predecessor Zwingli, Calvin wrote an immensely influential compendium of theology (the *Institutes*) that made his “Reformed” variety of Protestantism more exportable than Lutheranism and spawned such familiar forms of Protestantism as Presbyterianism. Like Luther, Calvin emphasized faith alone, grace alone, and Scripture alone and fiercely criticized the Roman Catholic doctrine of merit. Calvin was also more critical of the Catholic emphasis on external sacraments than Luther was. He departed from both Luther and the Catholics by teaching that justification is something that happens only once in life. This view implied that anyone who had experienced justification should *know* that he or she is one of those whom God has from all eternity chosen to save. This is the fundamentally new feature of Calvin’s doctrine of predestination.

Outline

- I. Who was Calvin?
 - A. A French-born theologian, he spent most of his career in Geneva as leader of the Reformation there.
 - B. He was a second-generation reformer, building on the work of Swiss reformer Huldreich Zwingli and learning a great deal from Luther.
 - C. He was the most important theologian of the Reformed (as distinct from Lutheran or Anabaptist) wing of the Reformation.
 1. The Reformed wing was a form of Protestantism that spread from Switzerland to France, Holland, and England (where it is the theological basis of Presbyterianism).
 2. Not every Reformation theologian was a Reformed theologian.
 - D. Calvin was the author of the first and most important systematic theology of Protestantism, the *Institutes of the Christian Religion*.
- II. The theology of the Reformation.
 - A. Common themes of Reformation theology.
 1. Sinners before God: both Luther and Calvin emphasize the seriousness of sin, which renders us incapable of saving ourselves, and both urge us to imagine ourselves standing before the judgment throne of God on the last day. Would you then be confident of your own merits, as if you were such a good person that God *had* to

approve of you and grant you eternal life? (And if not, what can you plead? The merits of Christ, through faith in the Gospel.)

2. Faith alone: Calvin shared with Luther the doctrine that justification is by faith alone, apart from works of the Law—by Christ’s merits, not our own.
3. Grace alone: Calvin shared with Augustine, Aquinas, and Luther the teaching of prevenient grace—that God’s grace came before our decisions and made good decisions (such as the decision to have faith) possible.
4. Scripture alone: Calvin and Luther both taught that Christians are to be required to believe nothing but what is in Scripture (all Church doctrines are to be based on the Bible, not on the pope or tradition), because the teachings of Scripture are sufficient for salvation.

B. Against the Catholic doctrine of merit.

1. When Protestants contend that no one merits anything before God, Catholics worry that this means God’s grace makes no real change in us. It does not make us any worthier than before, but declares that we are forgiven and righteous in his sight, while leaving us just as sinful (really) as before.
2. When Catholics teach that we *do* merit eternal life, Protestants worry that they are in fact trying to earn salvation by their own merits.
3. In fairness to Catholics, they share with Protestants the Augustinian doctrine of grace (most even believe in prevenient grace, like Aquinas) and teach that we can never merit salvation by our works alone, unassisted by grace. But they insist on merit language as the proper way to register the fact that God’s grace has a real effect in us, making us genuinely more worthy of God’s approval.
4. In fairness to Protestants, they think faith in the Gospel does bring a profound change in one’s life, conforming the believer to Christ (in a process called “sanctification” rather than “justification”), but that it is always Christ and Christ alone in whom we trust for salvation, never our own works. (Thus, Protestants avoid merit language for our works.)
5. In current ecumenical discussions between Catholic and Protestant theologians, the task is to try to say both these things at once: faith in Christ does cause us to become genuinely more worthy of God’s approval, yet we ought not to trust in our own worthiness, only in Christ’s.

C. Differing perspectives on authority.

1. Protestants have historically accused Catholicism of being authoritarian, because it insists on placing authority in the Church (including tradition and the pope).

2. Interestingly, Catholics also find Protestants authoritarian, because of their insistence on faith alone, giving reason no substantive role in our journey to God.
3. This Catholic worry stems from Augustine’s contrast between authority and reason: faith means believing what you’re taught on good authority (e.g., by Church and Scripture). Yet the goal is not faith alone, but the use of reason to achieve understanding (like a student who “sees it for herself” rather than just believing her teacher).

D. Beyond Augustinian spirituality.

1. Behind this contrast is a crucial and neglected phenomenon of the history of Protestantism: the loss of the contemplative ideal that was decisive for the spirituality of Augustine, the mystics, and other Christian Platonists.
2. Protestant theology is at its strongest when it replaces or interprets the Platonist themes of this contemplative spirituality with a spirituality of knowing God through the biblical Word: hearing the Word replaces intellectual vision as the key category.
3. Protestantism is at its worst when the Augustinian spirituality of desiring to see God is replaced by a spirituality where “getting into heaven” (not knowing or loving God) is the bottom line. (Justification by faith alone becomes a mechanism for “getting to heaven,” which means that heaven is the goal and God is the means. “Getting into heaven” is Augustinian spirituality with all the intelligence and love taken out.)

III. The sacraments (Calvin versus Luther and Catholics).

- A. For Luther, the Gospel has a sacramental power. Like the Catholic sacraments, the Gospel is a sign that signifies and confers grace (and if you believe it, you have it).
- B. Hence, for Luther, the Gospel is an external word uttered on a particular occasion, such as the Word of Absolution (“I absolve you of your sins...”) or the baptismal formula (“I baptize you in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit”).
- C. Calvinists, on the contrary, tend to conceive of the Gospel as a general promise not tied down to particular sacramental occasions (e.g., “if you believe in Christ, you are saved”).
- D. Calvinists worry that Lutherans, like Catholics, have a superstitious view of sacramental power, as if sacraments were mechanisms of salvation we could trust to operate automatically.
- E. Lutherans tend to worry that Calvinists have no external sign of salvation to cling to, because they conceive of the Gospel as a conditional promise (*if* you believe, you are saved)—so that your trust in God’s salvation depends on your trust in your own faith.

IV. The distinctively Reformed doctrine of justification.

A. Lutherans are justified many times.

1. For Luther, as for Catholics, justification happens frequently (every time you confess your sins and are forgiven).
2. In this view, people who are justified may subsequently be damned (if they turn to sin and turn away from repentance). The point is that you still have your life to live and don't know in advance how it will turn out—you can't guarantee in advance what your religious choices will be (sin, repentance, and so on).
3. Ultimate salvation requires not just justification but the gift of perseverance in the faith (as Augustine taught).
4. If one doesn't persist, a justified person can be damned.

B. Calvinists are justified once.

1. Calvinists identify justification with a once-in-a-lifetime conversion experience.
2. In contrast to Luther and Catholicism, all those who are justified are ultimately saved.
3. Hence, if you know you have been justified (by having a conversion experience), you know you are saved.
4. If you know you're justified, you know you are one of the elect, predestined to salvation.

C. The new approach to predestination.

1. What's new about Calvin's doctrine of predestination is that he thinks Christians can and should know that they are elect.
2. Hence, a certain kind of anxiety about election is characteristic of Calvinism (and would make sense for a Catholic or Lutheran).
3. The anxiety is: if I have had a conversion experience but then fall into sin, was my conversion really genuine?

D. From predestination to revivalism

1. Revivalism would make no sense in a Catholic or Lutheran context, in which children are baptized as infants and taught that they were born again through their baptism. (Ask Luther whether he was born again and he'd say, "Sure, I was baptized.")
2. Revivalism only makes sense in a Calvinist context, in which people are eager to have a powerful conversion experience so they cannot doubt that they are ultimately saved.
3. Later revivalism (e.g., in nineteenth-century America) tended to abandon Calvinist (and Augustinian) views of predestination and grace, teaching that the decision to believe and be converted was entirely up to the free choice of the individual.

John Calvin, *Institutes*, 1:1–7 (On the Knowledge of God), 3:3–4 (On Faith), 3:11–19 (On Justification by Faith Alone), and 3:21–24 (On Election), from *John Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Battles, trans. (Philadelphia: 1960).

Supplementary Reading:

**Calvin, *Institutes*, 3:4–5 (On Penance) and 4:14–19 (On the Sacraments).
J. T. McNeill, *The History and Character of Calvinism* (New York: 1954).**

Questions to Consider:

1. What is it you find most attractive about Protestant thought and why?
2. What is it you find least attractive about Protestant thought and why?

Essential Reading:

Glossary

Adonai: Heb., “The Lord.”

Beatific Vision: literally, “the seeing that makes [us] happy”; in the Augustinian tradition, this means seeing God, which is the goal of human life and the source of our ultimate happiness or beatitude.

Covenant: in the Hebrew Bible, a kind of binding relationship of promise between two persons, such as an oath of allegiance or a wedding vow.

Creature: a thing created by God; i.e. (according to orthodox Christian theology) everything that exists other than God (see *uncreated*).

Critical historiography: The project of critically examining historical texts and questioning whether one can take them at face value.

Dead Sea Scrolls: The famous scrolls discovered in a cave above the Dead Sea dated from 200 BCE to 100 CE.

Ecstasy: (from a Greek word meaning "to stand outside"), in Denys, the natural tendency of all intellectual beings to be drawn out of themselves by love.

Elect: old way of saying "chosen," used in Calvinist theology to describe those predestined by God for salvation; the usage goes back to Paul's phrase "the election of grace" (i.e. literally God's "choice of favorites") in Romans 11:5.

Eschatology: from the Greek *eschaton*, meaning “last thing”, this is any account of the end or goal or ultimate future of history and humanity; giving such an account is typical of Jewish and Christian views of history rather than Greek philosophical views.

Gentiles: Jewish term for non-Jews. The crucial question facing Paul in the New Testament was whether Gentiles could be allowed to become Christians without first converting to Judaism.

Grace: a key term in Paul meaning both divine "mercy" and divine "favor." Augustine interprets it as meaning the inner help of God healing the disease of sin and strengthening the soul to do good; this establishes the doctrine of grace which is crucial for Aquinas, Luther and Calvin.

Indulgences: official letters authorized by the pope promising remission of sin and release from time to be served in purgatory, which were sold in the public square in Luther's time; Luther's 95 theses were a scathing critique of this practice.

Intuition: From Latin, “to behold, to see.”

Justification by faith: Martin Luther's notion that there is no way to earn the grace of God except through the gospel of Christ.

Justify: literally "to make just or set right" ("justice" and "righteousness" are alternative translations of the same Greek word), the term has been prominent in Christian theology ever since Paul used it in the New Testament used to talk about how the Gentiles may be made righteous (i.e. just) in God's sight.

Manichaeism: a religion formed in Persia (3rd century AD) as an amalgamation of Christian and Zoroastrian themes, regarded as heresy by Catholics when it spread throughout the Roman empire, but found attractive by Augustine in his wayward youth; it involved an extreme form of dualism, teaching that the soul was a fragment of pure divine light trapped in the filth of the body.

Messiah: from a Hebrew word meaning “the anointed one,” designating the legitimate successor to King David; translated into Greek the word is "Christ," the fundamental Christian title for Jesus of Nazareth.

Mysticism: a term invented by modern scholars to describe people having (or claiming to have) direct experiences of God; when applied to medieval writers, it typically refers to a tradition of thought concerned with the ultimate union of the soul with God.

Nominalists: Proponents of the philosophical position that names have little or no reality content.

Nous: From Gk., for “intellect,” also, mind, intelligence, understanding.

Predestination: in Christian theology since Augustine, this term refers specifically to the choice God makes in his foreknowledge, before creating the world, to give grace (and therefore salvation from sin) to some people but not others.

Prevenient: a technical term meaning "comes before," used to describe grace in Augustine's theology; prevenient grace is grace that comes to help human beings before any choice of theirs.

Problem of universals: A major philosophical issue in the medieval period that questioned the relationship between names and things and of these to the standard categories of Western analysis of phenomena.

Protestant Reformation: Religious revolution of the sixteenth century that rebelled against the practices of the medieval church.

Pseudepigrapha: All Jewish writings between the Old Testament and the New Testament.

Q: A hypothetical source document for the gospels of the New Testament.

Synoptics: term designating the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, which (in contrast to the Gospel of John) share the same basic plot-structure; so-called because all three can with relative ease be brought under a common *synopsis*.

Teleology: The study of the end or purpose of an action or thing.

Theodicy: (from a Greek term meaning “justification of God”) a philosophical reply to the “problem of evil,” trying to show it is possible that God is good, despite all the evil there is in the world.

Transmigration: the view that souls move or migrate from one body to another at death (including from animal bodies to human bodies and vica-versa); often called “reincarnation.”

True contrition: The Augustinian idea that one must hate one’s sins for God’s sake.

Uncreated: technical term in Christian theology referring to God, who is the only thing in existence *not made* by God (see *creature*).

Via Negativa: Latin for “the negative way,” the theological method of speaking about God by saying *what he is not* rather than what he is, emphasized by Pseudo-Dionysius.

YHWH: Heb., “Yahweh,” the sacred name of God.

Biographical Notes

Aquinas, St. Thomas (1224–1274). Known as the Angelic Doctor, Aquinas is the greatest figure of Scholasticism. He was born outside Naples into the ruling family of Aquino and was educated by Benedictine monks. At age twenty, he joined the Dominican order while a student at the University of Naples. His family was disappointed by his religious commitments, hoping instead that he would assist them in their political endeavors. Kidnapped by his brothers and held prisoner for a year in the family castle, Aquinas escaped in 1245 and made his way to Paris to study with the Dominican theologian Albertus Magnus. He taught theology at Paris, Cologne, and Rome, combining Aristotle with Christianity and arguing that reason is subordinate to faith and does not contradict faith. His greatest philosophical accomplishment is the *Summa theologiae*, which remains today one of the pillars of Catholic theology. Aquinas died on March 7, 1274, at a monastery between Naples and Rome.

Augustine, St. (354–430). Bishop of Hippo in Africa from 395 until his death; the premier theologian of early Christianity and the most influential of the western Church Fathers. Raised as a Christian by his mother, St. Monica, Augustine fell away from the faith in his youth and became a Manichaean. While in Milan, he came under the influence of St. Ambrose and soon found his way back to the Christian faith. While visiting the town of Hippo in 391, he was chosen against his own will to become a priest. Four years later he became bishop of Hippo, where he died in 430 during a siege by the Vandals.

Calvin, John (1509–1564). French Protestant theologian and one of the great figures of the Reformation. After studying law, classics, and Hebrew, Calvin experienced a “sudden conversion” of faith and henceforth worked to contest conservative theology. He rejected papal authority and is perhaps best known for his belief in justification by faith and predestination. He offered the Bible as the fundamental source of God’s will. Considered controversial for his opinions regarding the Anabaptists and Lutherans, he was a proponent of the capitalist economy, which encouraged the virtues he felt were essential to preparing the way for the rule of God. His teachings were later disseminated through the work of John Knox of Scotland and the Puritans of New England.

Eckhart, Meister (c. 1260–c.1327). Dominican theologian, preacher, and founding figure of the tradition of “Rhineland” mysticism (“Meister” is medieval German for “master,” in the sense of “teacher”). Actively involved with preaching to the poor and destitute, he was eventually accused of heresy. He may have been the first German writer in speculative prose and challenged the domination of Latin as the language of the educated. After his death, Pope John XXII issued a bull declaring several of Eckhart’s stated positions as heretical.

Luther, Martin (1483–1546). German monk, professor, and theologian, commonly regarded as the leading figure of the Protestant Reformation. Tormented by doubts about his own salvation, Luther eventually established the

doctrine of salvation through faith rather than good works. In 1517, he posted his famous “95 theses,” which attacked such practices as the buying of indulgences. His most celebrated works include *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church*, *The Freedom of a Christian Man*, and *Address to the Christian Nobility of the German Nation*. He was excommunicated by the church in 1521 and spent the next ten years translating the Bible into German. His popularity ebbed with his opposition to the Peasants’ War of 1524–25. He eventually married a former nun and raised a large family, his reputation as a religious radical secured during the controversies with John Calvin and Huldreich Zwingli in his later years.

Paul of Tarsus (d. 63 AD). A Jew and a Roman citizen, born in the city of Tarsus in Asia Minor. After completing his studies in the Jewish religion, Paul was commissioned to suppress Christianity in the town of Damascus. While traveling there, he was blinded by a brilliant light, and he heard Jesus ask him: “Why persecutest thou me?” With this revelation, Paul converted to Christianity, was baptized, and immediately began preaching. He traveled to many cities throughout the Roman Empire, preaching to and instructing the Christian communities. Paul was arrested by the Roman authorities sometime after 57 AD on the charge of provoking a riot. According to tradition, he was beheaded in Rome during the 60s AD.

Plotinus (205?–270). Born in Egypt, a pagan Platonist philosopher, author of a collection of treatises called the *Enneads*; his writings are the single most important philosophical influence on Augustine, although he was opposed to Christianity. He traveled widely, including trips to Persia and India to study eastern philosophies, and developed what became the cornerstone of Neoplatonism.