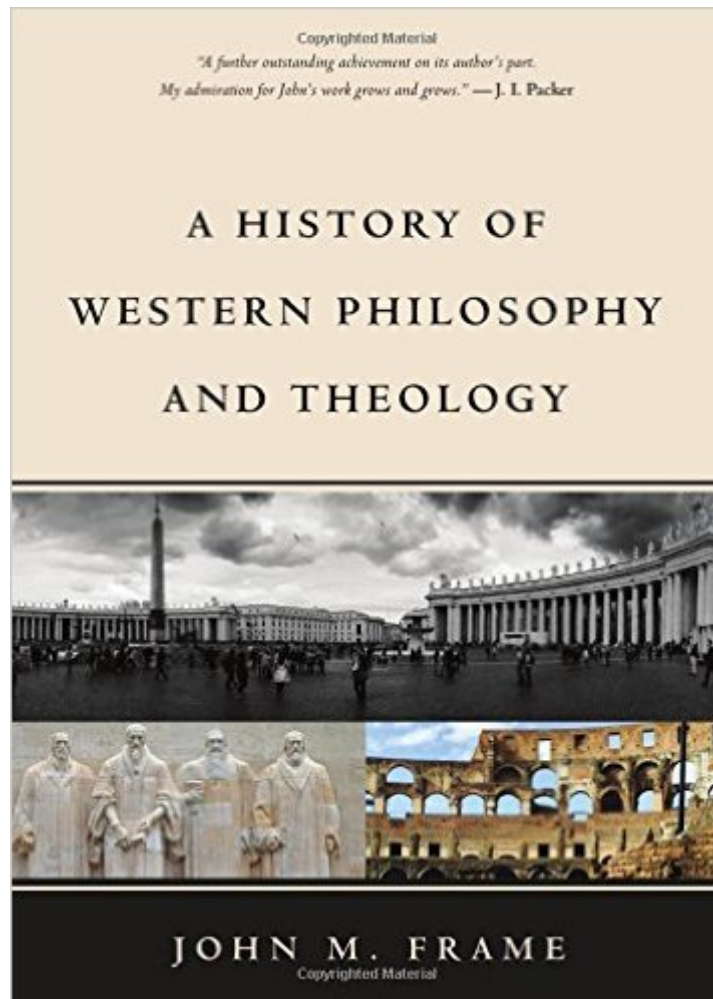


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# A History Of Western Philosophy And Theology



## Synopsis

Christians should evaluate philosophy by biblical criteria. This will shed greater light on the developments in the history of philosophy and better prepare us for the intellectual challenges of our time. The fall of Adam brought intellectual as well as moral corruption on the human race, and the effects of the fall can be seen in the work of philosophers, most of whom try to understand the world autonomously through reasoning apart from God's revelation. Some philosophers have appealed to God's revelation, but their work has often been compromised with the wisdom of the world. Revelation should inform reason, and not the other way round. In the past, even Christian theology was corrupted by the movement toward intellectual autonomy, creating the tradition of liberalism, which has unhappily dominated academic theology down to the present day. But there is hope; a new generation of Christian thinkers take God's Word seriously. Frame's unique new contribution augments that process.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

The Word of God is emphatic about our role as we enter the marketplace of ideas. The apostle Paul sounds the warning in Colossians 2:8 - "See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ." Scripture instructs Christ-followers, "For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ" (2 Corinthians 10:4-5, ESV). John Frame maintains and promotes such a mind-set in his

latest offering, *A History of Western Philosophy and Theology* (HWPT). The discipline of philosophy, which is defined as "the disciplined attempt to articulate and defend a worldview," is broken down into three subdivisions including metaphysics, epistemology, and value theory. Readers familiar with Frame's work will immediately recognize his commitment to perspectivalism, a powerful grid for thinking which includes three perspectives: normative, situational, and existential. This commitment has been clearly articulated and defended in his *Lordship* series, a series of books which are essential tools in every pastor's library. HWPT is dedicated to Dr. Cornelius Van Til, whose influence is evident throughout the book. Readers who are entrenched in Van Til's methodology will quickly recognize themes such as the Creator-creature distinction and the charge that non-Christian thought lapses into the intellectual bankruptcies of rationalism and irrationalism. On a large-scale, HWPT leads readers on a fascinating journey that educates, contextualizes, and warns.

I have read some but not all of the philosophers John Frame canvasses in this book. That almost certainly describes you, too. So you're probably in precisely the same boat in when it comes to Western philosophy "that creaky boat full of hopefuls traveling from the land of ignorance to the land of knowledge. But (and please bear with this analogy, ahem) we hopefuls need guides to get us across the water. (Keep bearing.) We want the kind of guide who will say, "That's a rocky coastline; you don't want to land there" or "That's a good harbor." It simply isn't advisable "or even possible" for most hopefuls to navigate the massive waves and hidden sandbars of philosophy without a guide. That's true even though firsthand knowledge of that sea is the ultimate goal some of us, at least, ought to be shooting for. We ought to aim to become capable skippers ourselves, guiding others across the perplexity. One of the themes of John Frame's own theological work is the moral obligation we have to pick the right guides, to get knowledge righteously. And one of the primary ways we accomplish this feat is by trusting the right authorities. Ultimately, of course, divine authority is the only one that validates knowledge. But that very authority has gifted His church with teachers like Frame (Eph. 4:10). Now to the book: simply put, John Frame is just the kind of guide, just the kind of teacher, you want on a journey through Western philosophy. You don't want mere description, even the expert and easy-to-read summarizing that Frame can give as an ABD in philosophy at Yale and a long-time teacher. You want evaluation throughout the trip. Philosophy travels into obscure, fathomless depths. Frame is an ideal guide because he has firmly fixed his theology in God's revelation.

Woo-hoo! I finished (minus an appendix or 12). Frame's work on the history of Western thought is immense, but I finished! That is exciting to me, and it should be to you for multiple reasons: 1. I am not well read in philosophy, 2. I am not formally trained in theology, and 3. I was able to read, understand, and enjoy this great book! There are plenty of reviews and endorsements by people much better equipped to offer an opinion than I am. I can, however, give a layman's plan of action of how to get the most out of (and not get lost within) this massive work. First, I suggest to make use of Frame's RTS lectures. They pair beautifully with the book and listening to the lecture(s) before or after the chapter is incredibly beneficial. Second, a good prereading makes this work more approachable. Look over the table of contents and go through the glossary to familiarize yourself with any new terms. I would also read the timeline of important events before to have a bit of a map as you jump in. One thing a preread will do is make this massive work seem much more approachable. Frame gives an extensive bibliography, index, glossary, and 1700 (rough estimate) pages of appendices where Frame interacts with recent thought. If you are anything like me, a 550 page book seems much less daunting than a 900 page book. This book is heavily slanted to the last 300 years or so. Strength or weakness? I am not sure. I would have preferred a bit more on the earlier philosophers, but I enjoyed what he did cover so it's hard to complain. I preordered the Logos version, so I look forward to going through this at least one more time (if not more!).

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