

*"A further outstanding achievement on its author's part.
My admiration for John's work grows and grows." — J. I. Packer*

A HISTORY OF WESTERN PHILOSOPHY AND THEOLOGY



JOHN M. FRAME

“Philosophia literally means ‘love of wisdom,’ but from the ancient Greek schools to the present-day halls of academia, philosophers’ writings have more often reflected the wisdom of the world than the wisdom of the Word, and many have cast more shadow than light. Not so for John Frame’s latest masterpiece. No other survey of the history of Western thought offers the same invigorating blend of expository clarity, critical insight, and biblical wisdom. Supplemented with study questions, bibliographies, links to famous quotes from influential thinkers, twenty appendices, and a chapter-indexed glossary, this book would be an excellent choice as the main textbook for a seminary-level course. Overtly and unrepentantly Christian in its perspective, it will be my first recommendation for believers seeking a trustworthy guide to the labyrinthine history of philosophy and theology.”

—**James N. Anderson**, Associate Professor of Theology and Philosophy, Reformed Theological Seminary, Charlotte

“The history of secular Western philosophy traces man’s many attempts at great thoughts about God’s creation but without God. This has resulted in varied thought-systems that possess fragments of truth capable of appealing to our natural curiosity about the world. Yet without the truth of Scripture acting as the authority over beliefs and values, not only are those fragments unable to provide us with the full picture, but even the little bit they do say is not fully true. In the end, all we are left with is a lie. This was Satan’s subterfuge with the first woman. He tempted her to accept the hollowness of his lie as the truth. Since that day in the garden, Satan’s strategy has remained essentially the same. Either he presents for our consideration fraudulent evaluations of the creation in the name of philosophy or he finds ways to mix the tares of false philosophies with the truth of God’s Word in our own hearts and minds, thus confusing us about what is right. In either case, his goal is to tempt us to question what God has said. Responding to this attack, John Frame has provided an invaluable ministry to the church. He puts the history of Western philosophy in its proper context: spiritual warfare. Here we learn that philosophy is more than a set of courses in a college curriculum. It is a field of battle for the hearts and minds of billions. In these pages are exactly the resources you need to bring every thought captive to the obedience of Christ and to be a champion for truth. May this book help prepare you for such a time as this.”

—**John Barber**, Pastor, Cornerstone Presbyterian Church, Palm Beach Gardens, Florida

“With this volume Frame offers his many devoted readers a ‘triperspectival’ take on the history of Western philosophy and modern theology. Based on a course that he has been teaching at Reformed Theological Seminary for many years (the text is keyed to lectures available at itunes.rts.edu), and a lifetime of reading and thinking, this volume is the next fat Frame book by P&R Publishing. Although his interpretations of the many thinkers covered in this survey admittedly follow popular conventions, his assessment is distinctly his own. Frame’s devotion to Van Til, the dedicatee, is evident throughout as he reads this history as the story of the antithesis between Christian thought and all other belief systems. Here, Western thought becomes a narrative of errors, deviations, and idolatry and its study an exercise in preparing oneself for spiritual warfare in the life of the mind. *A History of Western Philosophy and Theology* rounds out Frame’s corpus and is required reading for anyone interested in the contours of his thought.”

—**Bruce P. Baugus**, Associate Professor of Philosophy and Theology, Reformed Theological Seminary, Jackson

“We now have an answer to the question of what would happen if John Frame became something of a Frederick Copleston and did a whole ‘history of philosophy.’ It is now possible to know, because it has been done. It would combine all the qualities that actually exist in Dr. Frame. It would be a fascinating combination of an irenic but prudent interaction with the whole gallery of thinkers through the ages, and would at the same time be an exercise in the casting out of the demons of humanistic autonomy, self-reference, and self-determination. I have felt since my student days when Dr. Frame was one of my professors that if I could choose anybody to evaluate anything in the intellectual realm (beginning with my own efforts as a student), it would be Dr. Frame. He was the best evaluator I ever sat under. That same quality has now been applied to the whole history of philosophy. Dr. Frame is gentler than Van Til, but (interestingly) just as incisive, with more of an eye for the finer contours and details than the old master himself.”

—**Richard Bledsoe**, Metropolitan Missionary, Boulder, Colorado; former PCA pastor

“‘If only!’ If only I had had this volume from John Frame when I studied philosophy at Vanderbilt as an undergraduate in the late 1960s! That was a time when it seemed that every college student was ‘into’ philosophy, but most philosophy either was dark and cynical (existentialism) or seemed to ignore the serious evils of those days by seeking to explain

everything through clearer language (logical positivism). Frame knows and explains well all the various strands of philosophy, and he puts the world and the history of philosophy in its proper perspective as seen through the lens of the Scriptures, God's truth about the world and about us. I was not privileged to have Dr. Frame's help when I first studied philosophy, but you do have that counsel available to you. Use it."

—**Robert C. Cannada Jr.**, Chancellor Emeritus, Reformed Theological Seminary

"When I was a young man, I plowed through Bertrand Russell's 1945 classic, *A History of Western Philosophy*. A couple of years ago I read the much shorter (and more interesting) work of Luc Ferry, *A Brief History of Thought*. Between these two I have become familiar with many histories of Western thought, each written out of deep commitments, some acknowledged, some not. But I have never read a history of Western thought quite like John Frame's. Professor Frame unabashedly tries to think through sources and movements out of the framework (bad pun intended) of deep-seated Christian commitments and invites his readers to do the same. These commitments, combined with the format of a seminary or college textbook, will make this work invaluable to students and pastors who tire of ostensible neutrality that is no more neutral than the next volume. Agree or disagree with some of his arguments, but John Frame will teach you how to *think* in theological and philosophical categories."

—**D. A. Carson**, Research Professor of New Testament, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School

"For this work of great scope, John Frame begins with the simple foundation of a disciple. Eschewing vain promises of value-free consideration of Western thought regarding philosophy, theories of knowledge, and ethics, he freely confesses the Christian necessity of weighing the divine *ought* behind all human thought and endeavor. As waters run in a furrow, so the mind of the Christian necessarily considers theory, assertion, and imperative in accord with the lines plowed by the Word of God. Frame knows that such presuppositions will marginalize his analysis for secularists blind to their own biases, but he submits thought and praxis to his Master in order to give masterful consideration to the thought and ethics of those who have contributed (both for good and for ill) to our culture's perspectives and priorities."

—**Bryan Chapell**, Pastor, Grace Presbyterian Church, Peoria, Illinois

“As a younger theologian I benefited enormously from John Frame’s outline, an extensive syllabus on the history of philosophy. He managed in a succinct, yet most competent manner to summarize the most significant moments in this history and to evaluate them theologically, that is, biblically. Here, in *A History of Western Philosophy and Theology*, Frame puts flesh on the bones of his earlier outline. And what a treasure it is! Among other virtues, he puts into question the supposed opposition between philosophy and theology, believing as he does that applying biblical theology to the issues raised by philosophers is an authentic and authoritative answer to those questions. For those who view philosophy as an alien world, this volume will challenge their concerns. For those who are already committed to the proper interface between theology and philosophy, these pages will confirm and deepen their construal.”

—**William Edgar**, Professor of Apologetics and John Boyer Chair of Evangelism and Culture, Westminster Theological Seminary

“The Bible as God’s self-attesting Word provides the foundations indispensable both for doing sound philosophy and for determining the proper relationship between philosophy and theology. Works written with this crucial conviction are few and far between. This volume is a major and welcome exception. Bringing together the author’s extensive thinking, past and present, in these areas, it is a valuable resource, especially for those concerned to follow the apostolic commitment to destroy arguments and everything lofty raised against the knowledge of God, and to bring every thought captive in obedience to Christ (2 Cor. 10:5).”

—**Richard B. Gaffin Jr.**, Professor of Biblical and Systematic Theology, Emeritus, Westminster Theological Seminary

“I come from a tradition that says about philosophy, ‘Handle with care!’ That is exactly what John Frame does in this important book, which connects in an exemplary manner the history of philosophy with biblical studies and Christian theology. To read this book with care is an education in itself.”

—**Timothy George**, Founding Dean, Beeson Divinity School, Samford University; General Editor, Reformation Commentary on Scripture

“Professor Frame has done the church a great service in producing this history of philosophy and theology—two disciplines that continually interact and react with each other. He has done so with his usual clarity of thought and commitment to absolute truth. His summaries are concise but coherent, and he is unafraid to demonstrate the inherent

contradictions that lie behind many modern constructs. This will be an indispensable guide for students and an invaluable tool for apologists.”

—**Liam Goligher**, Senior Minister, Tenth Presbyterian Church,
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

“John Frame’s *A History of Western Philosophy and Theology* is a delightful gift to the church and the academy. I have shelves full of books on philosophy and many more shelves of theology books. None, however, moves between these two disciplines with the facility, insight, and grace exhibited by Dr. Frame in this new work. His analysis of philosophers and their systems is always clear, conversational, and, most importantly, biblical. In spring 2015, I taught History of Philosophy and Apologetics to a very bright class of high school seniors at a nearby Christian school. I am so thankful to have had access to the digital review copy of this work because it has informed and enhanced my teaching at every point. Having experienced firsthand the utility of this work, I recommend it enthusiastically to seminarians, pastors, and teachers—or simply to anyone interested in the history of ideas in the West. The many teaching aids alone are worth the purchase price. This has become my favorite John Frame publication, and I look forward to highlighting and dog-earing my bound copy of this most interesting read!”

—**R. J. Gore Jr.**, Professor of Systematic Theology and
Dean of the Seminary, Erskine Theological Seminary,
Due West, South Carolina

“Everything that Frame writes about philosophy is worth careful consideration.”

—**Howard Griffith**, Associate Professor of Systematic Theology
and Academic Dean, Reformed Theological Seminary,
Washington, D.C.

“Since the mid-twentieth century, Christians interested in pursuing the history of philosophy have often turned to Catholic scholarship, such as Frederick Copleston’s multivolume *A History of Philosophy* and James Collins’s *History of Modern European Philosophy*. Therefore, it is a sincere pleasure to commend John Frame’s *A History of Western Philosophy and Theology* as a much-needed Reformed treatment of this important academic discipline. Frame traces the history of Western philosophy, a daunting task in itself. In the process, however, he also relates to Christian theology the great philosophical systems from the Greeks to the present. Frame connects this study to his larger corpus by adapting his perspectivalism to yet another discipline. The result,

as we have come to expect from his previous scholarship, is another weighty volume.

“More than heft, however, Frame delivers clear, cogent, and coherent discussion. A prominent feature is how thoroughly Frame treats modern philosophy, which since the advent of Kant has exercised enormous influence on theology. Throughout the volume, Frame looks backward and forward. He makes connections, poses questions, and provides poignant illustrations, while acknowledging significant contributions of key figures. But he also faithfully demonstrates weaknesses in argument and contends that under the principle of human autonomy in its many forms, the Western philosophic mind has one great need—the gospel.”

—**W. Andrew Hoffercker**, Emeritus Professor of Church History,
Reformed Theological Seminary, Jackson

“John Frame has been one of the most insightful and rigorously honest philosopher-theologians of the last three decades. Not only is he prolific, but he has an uncanny ability to analyze the themes and the subtle nuances of Western philosophy and theology. Yet there is more. John has a pastoral sensibility. As one of his students over twenty-five years ago, I recall coming to class to find a single profound sentence on the blackboard: ‘Theology is life.’ John could never separate theology or philosophy from the realities of everyday life. His new textbook, *A History of Western Philosophy and Theology*, is one of those rare books that will both stimulate your mind and warm your heart.”

—**Frank A. James III**, President and Professor of Historical
Theology, Biblical Theological Seminary

“What a privilege John Frame gives his reader: to sit through a detailed and rich course on Western history and theology that only full-time graduate students usually get. Frame has done a wonderful job of giving a thoroughly Christian, Reformed, and masterful interpretation of all the major thinkers in Western history, from the Greeks to the present, within the covers of one book. For this *tour de force*, we are all in his debt.”

—**Peter Jones**, Executive Director, truthXchange; Scholar-in-
Residence, Westminster Seminary in California

“*A History of Western Philosophy and Theology* is a sweeping survey of the great thinkers who have shaped philosophical inquiry from its beginnings to contemporary thought. John Frame’s mastery of this intellectual domain and his penetrating philosophical and theological

critique yield a comprehensive and accessible guide to philosophy for Christian-worldview investigation. This work should be in pastors' libraries and readily available for seminary students, theologians, and philosophers who interact with the relationship between philosophy and Christian thought."

—**Peter A. Lillback**, President, Westminster Theological Seminary

"John Frame has done it again! He has written another superb and comprehensive book that will be of great and lasting value to the church. Seminaries and theological colleges in the West will want to require entering students to read this book before they matriculate. And graduates of those institutions will keep it close at hand for future reference. Thank you, Professor Frame!"

—**Samuel Logan**, International Director, World Reformed Fellowship

"John Frame has done it again. This book is a gift to the church. Students of all ages now have a dependable and trustworthy resource for use in evaluating Western philosophy from a Christian point of view. The prevailing perspective of the secular classroom will be challenged as Frame's work becomes more widely circulated in this generation."

—**Rod Mays**, Executive Pastor, Mitchell Road Presbyterian Church, Greenville, South Carolina; former National Coordinator, Reformed University Fellowship

"This book brings back memories of my own entrée into philosophy via the tradition that John Frame epitomizes. I was blessed to hear much of this as his student. No wonder I have always presumed that doing philosophy was a necessary implication of Christian discipleship. In fact, to be human is to be philosophical. Understanding things philosophically makes our engagement of everything better—humanness, creation, and culture, Christian theologizing included. It is to take seriously, and respond responsibly in, the world of ever-consequential ideas. This well-conceived book helps us to understand John Frame philosophically, as well as tantalizing many, I hope, to launch out into the philosophers themselves. Wonder calls us; wonder, in wisdom, awaits. And the love of wisdom proves to be the love of God. In this world of which he is Lord, we should expect to find truth everywhere. And wherever we find it, we may count that truth God's (something that I also learned from John Frame)."

—**Esther Lightcap Meek**, Professor of Philosophy, Geneva College, Beaver Falls, Pennsylvania

“The sheer magnitude, scope, and erudition of this volume are breathtaking. Virtually all aspects of Christian and secular philosophy and theology from the classical Greek period to the present are outlined in painstaking detail with lavish documentation. There can be no doubt that Professor Frame’s insightful analysis of the human condition and his survey of historical attempts to resolve it will command attention both as a thesaurus of information and as a practical guide on how to live life in light of the revelation of God through his written Word.”

—**Eugene H. Merrill**, Distinguished Professor Emeritus of Old Testament Studies, Dallas Theological Seminary

“Western civilization is passing through a remarkable time that may be remembered by future historians as a milepost in the ragged journey to a place that we have never been before. Christians, as well as reflective observers of all traditions and faiths, will need a faithful guide to help make sense of the philosophical movements that carried them along. Dr. John Frame is eminently qualified to be that guide. The noted theologian is also a first-class philosopher and student of philosophy. I am therefore most thankful to learn of the new book by Dr. Frame and P&R Publishing: *A History of Western Philosophy and Theology*. I commend this new work to the church—and beyond—as not merely a good book to read, but a trusted text to study and a stalwart sword to wield in the present crucial contest for the minds of men.”

—**Michael A. Milton**, President, Faith for Living, Inc.; Chancellor Emeritus, Reformed Theological Seminary

“With over forty-five years of study in theology, apologetics, and philosophy, Frame gives the reader a well-rounded work on philosophy from a Christian and decisively Reformed perspective. This textbook on philosophy defends the Christian faith. The teacher of philosophy/theology will find the work—including its study questions, extensive bibliographies, lists of free audio lectures, and links to great quotes—invaluable. The student of Scripture and philosophy will find the work detailed and encouraging, and will be better able to defend and live out the Christian faith after partaking of and digesting Frame’s extensive work. Frame gives an excellent overview of philosophers and their thought from the beginning to the present. In addition, he takes large philosophical ideas and simplifies them even for the average reader of philosophy. He does so in a clear, unambiguous writing style that is a pleasure to read. Overall, the book provides a wealth of knowledge, without ever becoming bogged down by lifeless descriptions or irrelevant information.”

—**Joseph R. Nally**, Theological Editor, Third Millennium Ministries

“John Frame has done it again! This book is the very best of two worlds in two ways: great history of philosophy as that is informed by great theology; great history of theology as that is informed by great philosophy. This book is pedagogically creative, too. What more could a believer ask for? If you read it, you will learn a lot and become a lot. How many fantastic works are in this man?”

—**David Naugle**, Distinguished University Professor and Chair
and Professor of Philosophy, Dallas Baptist University

“If attacks on Christians in America increase, so will what John Frame calls ‘the attempt to make Christianity intellectually respectable.’ He’s right that this ignores our sinful repression of the truth and our need to receive from God new hearts and minds—and he shows in this book how philosophies that exalt either autonomous rationality or existential irrationality have taken a wrong turn. Philosophy majors and graduate students, most seminary students as well, and millions overly impressed by Platonists and Barthians need this book.”

—**Marvin Olasky**, Editor in Chief, *WORLD* magazine

“John Frame has done it again! In the lucid and comprehensive style of his *Theology of Lordship* volumes, he here presents a full overview of Western thought about knowledge of God as it must appear to all who receive Holy Scripture, as he does, as the record, product, and present reality of God speaking. And the solid brilliance of the narrative makes it a most effective advocacy for the Kuyper–Van Til perspective that in a well-digested form it represents. It is a further outstanding achievement by John Frame. The book deserves wide use as a textbook, and I hope it will achieve that. My admiration for John’s work grows and grows.”

—**J. I. Packer**, Board of Governors’ Professor of Theology, Regent College, Vancouver, British Columbia

“The apostle Paul told Timothy to stir up the gift that was in him. Professor John Frame has devoted a lifetime to stirring up his complementary gifts of penetrating Western philosophy, uncovering its religious dimensions, and bridging the gap between expert and layman, to produce in *A History of Western Philosophy and Theology* a volume practical for engaging in spiritual warfare.”

—**Andrée Seu Peterson**, Senior Writer, *WORLD* magazine

“Few in our day champion a vision of God that is as massive, magnificent, and biblical as John Frame’s. For decades, he has given himself to the church, to his students, and to meticulous thinking and the rigorous study of the Bible. He has winsomely, patiently, and persuasively

contended for the gospel in the secular philosophical arena, as well as in the thick of the church worship wars and wrestlings with feminism and open theism. He brings together a rare blend of big-picture thinking, levelheaded reflection, biblical fidelity, a love for the gospel and the church, and the ability to write with care and clarity.”

—**John Piper**, Founder and Teacher, desiringGod.org; Chancellor, Bethlehem College and Seminary

“This is the most important book ever written on the major figures and movements in philosophy. We have needed a sound guide, and this is it. Philosophy has many ideas and systems that are attractive but poisonous. Over the centuries people have fallen victim again and again. Frame sorts out the good and the bad with clarity and skill, using the plumb line of Scripture. Along the way he also provides a devastating critique of liberal theologies, showing that at bottom they are philosophies of human autonomy masquerading as forms of Christianity.”

—**Vern S. Poythress**, Professor of New Testament Interpretation, Westminster Theological Seminary; Editor, *Westminster Theological Journal*

“Everyone familiar with the work of John Frame expects his books to challenge long-standing assumptions and to move discussions forward in creative ways. This book will not disappoint. John displays his expertise as a philosopher and his devotion to Scripture as the standard by which all philosophies should be evaluated. He points toward old paths that are sure and opens new ways to pursue the relevance of philosophical discussions for scholars, students, and motivated laypeople alike.”

—**Richard L. Pratt Jr.**, President, Third Millennium Ministries

“John Frame begins his study of Western philosophy and theology with a quotation about the ‘fear of the LORD’ from the biblical book of Proverbs. Few intellectual historians operating today better embody such a biblically sagacious stance toward the philosophical and theological output of the Western world. In this work, Frame has bestowed a rich resource on his audience in the form of a sustained, thoughtful, and faithful witness to the development of the great ideas that populate so much discourse in the West and, for that matter, around the world. What is more compelling, however, is that Frame does not feign objectivity, like so many others, but engages his subjects from a Christian perspective, weighing each according to the teaching of Scripture.”

—**John Scott Redd Jr.**, President and Associate Professor of Old Testament, Reformed Theological Seminary, Washington, D.C.

“For many Christians, philosophy connotes little more than the exercise of autonomous speculation. Viewed in only negative terms, the whole philosophic enterprise stands to be summarily dismissed. Although far more able than most to identify and engage the non-Christian assumptions governing so much of Western philosophy, Professor Frame is neither dismissive nor unappreciative. On the contrary, Frame winsomely engages the major philosophers of the Western tradition and the fundamental questions they raise. He exhibits deep familiarity with the history of philosophy, critical awareness of trends impacting theological development, and humble submission to the Word of God, thereby modeling the way in which a deep commitment to ‘thinking God’s thoughts after him’ is beneficial for maintaining and advocating for the gospel today. For many students (and not a few teachers), Frame’s *A History of Western Philosophy and Theology* will serve as a reliable map of the unexplored terrain of metaphysics, epistemology, axiology, and liberal theology. For others, it will serve as a walking staff, enabling the Christian man or woman to reenter philosophical discussion, maintain balance, and even prevail against hazardous forms of unbelief. I am glad for this volume and look forward to pointing theological students and others who lack philosophical grounding toward it.”

—**Mark P. Ryan**, Adjunct Professor of Religion and Culture,
Covenant Theological Seminary; Director, Francis A. Schaeffer
Institute

“If Frame’s Lordship Series is his magnum opus, the present work may be his crowning achievement. It’s a remarkably extensive survey for a single volume, and Frame’s knowledge of philosophers and philosophical schools is wide, deep, nimble, and analytical. More importantly, his impregnable grounding in the Christian (biblical!) worldview ensures that he offers from that distinctively Christian perspective a full, penetrating analysis and criticism of every major philosopher in the Western tradition. This, in fact, has never been done before, though many fine Christian books assessing philosophy have been written. What Frame has done here is to evaluate the entire basic canon of Western philosophy from a rigorously biblical viewpoint. That is simply unprecedented.”

—**P. Andrew Sandlin**, President, Center for Cultural Leadership,
Coulterville, California

“Not only does the nominal Christian of our modern era seek to avoid philosophical and theological writings, but to a great extent this world seeks to rebuff all analytic thought from a Christian perspective. The world is filled with so-called scholars who have no knowledge of the importance of philosophy and theology in the development of Christian-

ity and in the context of our modern society. This simply should not be the case for biblical Christians who desire to bring all things under the crown rights of King Jesus. In order for Christians to rightfully understand the origin and development of civilization, a study of both philosophy and theology in their historical context ought to be fundamental, especially for those who want to become productive advocates for Christ's kingdom. In this present volume, Dr. Frame completes a solid analysis of the development of Western thought from a distinctly Christian perspective and ascertains its impact on man. His purpose is to expose the fact that what man is facing is nothing less than spiritual warfare in the life of Western society. If Christianity is to bring all things captive to the cause of Christ, then a very good place for every pastor, scholar, and Christian to begin is with the study of this book!"

—**Kenneth Talbot**, President, Whitefield College and Theological Seminary

"Many Christians today mistakenly think of philosophy as an esoteric endeavor irrelevant to Christian theology and discipleship. But Colossians 2:8, among other verses, indicates that we must learn to discern the ways in which human philosophies can be deceitfully empty and captivating. Furthermore, it implies that there is such a thing as 'philosophy . . . according to Christ.' In this fascinating survey, John Frame walks us through the history of philosophy to show the varied ways in which both secular philosophies and deficient Christian attempts at philosophy exhibit signs of both irrationalism and rationalism. The result is not only a historical overview of the key players and their philosophies, but also a model for how to integrate philosophy and theology in a way that honors the Lord by taking every thought captive so that we can obey Christ and submit to his lordship (2 Cor. 10:5). Highly recommended!"

—**Justin Taylor**, Senior Vice President and Publisher for Books, Crossway

"Getting the relationship between theology and philosophy right is vital if we are going to do either well. John Frame's *A History of Western Philosophy and Theology* offers tremendous help in getting it right. We never think in a historical vacuum but are profoundly shaped by our context and predecessors. This book helps us to locate ourselves historically so that we can be more aware of our blind spots and tendencies to err. The interpretation of history is explicitly evangelical, which I find refreshingly honest and helpful. Frame wonderfully shows that thinking Christianly makes profound sense. Once again, this intellectual sage has done a great service to the church and academy in

bringing greater clarity to our understanding of the most important questions of life.”

—**Erik Thoennes**, Professor of Theology and Chair, Undergraduate Theology, Biola University/Talbot School of Theology;
Pastor, Grace Evangelical Free Church, La Mirada, California

“Drawing both on his background in philosophy and theology and on his forty-five years of reading, thinking, and teaching, Professor Frame has provided a history of Western philosophy and theology as stimulating as it is informative. His summary of the thought of substantial thinkers in both disciplines over the course of the past millennia (with the exception of Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox thinkers) is a wonderful gift to the church. His tome will be a particular blessing to would-be historians, philosophers, theologians, and apologists of the Christian faith. They are the ones searching for a point of entrance into the connected fields of philosophy and theology, and needing a biblically reliable and insightful analysis of the related disciplines. Their wait is over. Here they have the indispensable mapping to aid them as they start or make sense of the journey.

“Defining *philosophy* as ‘the disciplined attempt to articulate and defend a worldview [aka *metanarrative*],’ and arguing on the basis of the one found in Scripture, the philosophical credentials of theology (‘the application of the Word of God, by persons, to every aspect of human life’), Professor Frame posits the view that the two disciplines are distinctive, yet ‘profoundly interdependent.’ But instead of following the notion, originating with Philo the Jew, that philosophy is the handmaid of theology, he offers a biblical view of philosophy—one in which inscripturated revelation is foundational as both the substance and the assessment of true philosophy. On this understanding, Scripture needs no helping hand from philosophy, for the former governs the latter when rightly pursued.

“Supporting this view are the known distinctives of Professor Frame’s theological method: the supremacy of God’s lordship, the consistent application of his ‘something close to biblicism,’ presuppositionalism, and triperspectivalism (as seen in three subdivisions of philosophy: metaphysics, epistemology, and value theory). The application of these distinctives to the history of Western philosophy and theology renders Professor Frame both an attractive narrator and a clearheaded challenger of man’s claim to his ‘autonomous’ conceptualization of the world.

“Add to all this the user-friendly study questions, glossaries, and bibliographies, and the more novel list of online sources and links to famous quotes, and we have at hand a tome that many of us will undoubtedly wish had been available when we set out in earnest on our

own studies. May God bless it not only to the individual inquirer after truth, but to fulfill Professor Frame's expressed aspiration—a new level of respect for evangelical Christianity, for the Bible, and for Christ!"

—**Tim J. R. Trumper**, Senior Minister, Seventh Reformed Church,
Grand Rapids, Michigan

"This is an excellent primer that surveys the history of Christian thought from a thoroughgoing Christian and Van Tillian perspective—the fruit of many years of pedagogical experience. Of particular value are the spiritual conflicts that Frame identifies in every era and domain of Western worldview thinking, from the ancient Greeks to the present postmoderns. Those who read and digest Frame's work will grow in wisdom and, by God's grace, will avoid the doom of repeating earlier mistakes."

—**Kevin J. Vanhoozer**, Research Professor of Systematic Theology,
Trinity Evangelical Divinity School

"How's your thought-life? Yes, Scripture is concerned about impure thoughts, but what about the manner of our thinking? What about the gulch of deceitful thinking? Scripture warns against deception, especially self-deception. This is particularly Paul's burden for the Colossians and the Laodiceans, believers who had been 'taken captive' through philosophy rooted not in the divine-preeminent Creator Christ, but in some aspect of creation, whether that be man's mind, his tradition, humanly plausible but deluding arguments, or some materialist or Gnostic pagan construct. And this captivity spawns real-world consequences: robbing Christians of encouragement, love, assurance, understanding, and knowing 'real reality.' How can we combat this sort of deceitful intellectual enemy who cunningly does not use guns and bazookas? By putting intellectual boots on the ground. But as any seasoned military officer knows, one cannot put boots on the ground in a hot zone without first knowing and understanding the ground. John Frame has again brilliantly served the body of Christ by providing a fresh, cogent, robust, informed, lucid, accessible, panoramic, practical, sound, faithful, doxological, honest, and historical treatment of philosophy and theology—good, bad, and sometimes ugly—all aimed at joining and supporting Paul's struggle for those whom he has perhaps not seen face to face, but whom he longs to see more firmly rooted in Christ. This volume is already indispensable, and will be increasingly so as postmodern fads infect and delude the church. Note carefully, however: this is not a work for professional theologians, though they would certainly benefit from it; nor is it a work for just ecclesiastical 'spiritual work,' though it will benefit all facets of 'church life.' This is a

work for all Christians living in God's world, who are saved from something for something. This volume shows them how to think faithfully in God's redeemed world, so that they will in fact take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ—and that's not a suggestion; it's a command. This work wonderfully facilitates following Christ, who is to be preeminent in all things, including our thought-life."

—**Jeffery J. Ventrella**, Senior Counsel and Senior Vice President,
Alliance Defending Freedom

"Christian apologist Cornelius Van Til pioneered the strategy of discerning a 'rationalist/irrationalist dialectic' in the various secular alternatives to the Christian faith, but he never wrote a comprehensive history of philosophy that sought to prove the point. John Frame now has. In this volume the evangelical world finally has a contemporary history of philosophy that is explicitly written from a Christian perspective, that is exceptional in its clarity and organization, and that *gets the details right*. I first encountered Frame's massive philosophy outlines as his graduate student back in the early 1990s, and I always wondered when such obvious labors of love would find the wider audience that they richly deserve. While it is impossible to provide in one volume (even one of this size!) a thorough exposition and assessment of every major thinker in intellectual history, Frame's detailed summaries and trenchant analyses constantly inspire the imagination to consider further what would be a genuinely Christian *alternative* to the thinker under discussion. Readers will surely need to continue for themselves the hard work that Frame has begun—the hard work of actually arguing out that Christian alternative. But often the very planting of seeds—seeds of doubt about idolatry, seeds of faith in the triune Creator, providential Sustainer, and Redeemer—is what is needed to get that process going for disciplined, attentive, and thoughtful Christian readers, and Frame plants such seeds again and again. I pray that his philosophic magnum opus finds a wide audience among college and seminary students, who are desperately in need of these accurate summaries that neither distort primary sources nor shrink back from articulating essential contrasts between influential philosophers and central biblical ideas."

—**Greg Welty**, Associate Professor of Philosophy and Program
Coordinator, M.A. Philosophy of Religion, Southeastern Baptist
Theological Seminary

"John Frame's *A History of Western Philosophy and Theology* should become an indispensable resource for Christian scholars, pastors, campus ministers, and lay leaders. There are volumes on theology and philosophy, but a volume that deals clearly and forthrightly with

both is rare. Not only that, Dr. Frame, who is superbly equipped in each discipline, shows how they are interdependent. A strength of this volume is that he devotes major attention to the modern period that has been so challenging to many Christians who have had great difficulty understanding and responding to secular thought, especially as it developed in the twentieth century. The combination of his profound understanding and pastoral bent sets his books apart from the usual theological writings. This may well be his finest volume.”

—**Luder G. Whitlock Jr.**, President Emeritus, Reformed
Theological Seminary, Orlando

A HISTORY OF
WESTERN PHILOSOPHY
AND THEOLOGY

A HISTORY OF WESTERN PHILOSOPHY AND THEOLOGY

John M. Frame


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In Memory of
Cornelius Van Til
(1895–1987)

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; all those who practice it have a good understanding. His praise endures forever! (Ps. 111:10)

My son, if you receive my words and treasure up my commandments with you, making your ear attentive to wisdom and inclining your heart to understanding; yes, if you call out for insight and raise your voice for understanding, if you seek it like silver and search for it as for hidden treasures, then you will understand the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God. For the LORD gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding; he stores up sound wisdom for the upright; he is a shield to those who walk in integrity, guarding the paths of justice and watching over the way of his saints. Then you will understand righteousness and justice and equity, every good path; for wisdom will come into your heart, and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul; discretion will watch over you, understanding will guard you, delivering you from the way of evil, from men of perverted speech, who forsake the paths of uprightness to walk in the ways of darkness, who rejoice in doing evil and delight in the perverseness of evil, men whose paths are crooked, and who are devious in their ways. (Prov. 2:1–15)

Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths. (Prov. 3:5–6)

And coming to his hometown [Jesus] taught them in their synagogue, so that they were astonished, and said, “Where did this man get this wisdom and these mighty works?” (Matt. 13:54)

Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! “For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?” “Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?” For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen. (Rom. 11:33–36)

For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written, “I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart.” Where is the one who is wise? Where is the

scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe. For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men. For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God. And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption, so that, as it is written, “Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.” (1 Cor. 1:18–31)

Yet among the mature we do impart wisdom, although it is not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are doomed to pass away. But we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glory. None of the rulers of this age understood this, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But, as it is written, “What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him”—these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. For who knows a person’s thoughts except the spirit of that person, which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God. And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual. The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned. The spiritual person judges all things, but is himself to be judged by no one. “For who has understood the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?” But we have the mind of Christ. (1 Cor. 2:6–16)

Let no one deceive himself. If anyone among you thinks that he is wise in this age, let him become a fool that he may become wise. For the wisdom of this world is folly with God. For it is written, “He catches

the wise in their craftiness,” and again, “The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are futile.” So let no one boast in men. For all things are yours, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future—all are yours, and you are Christ’s, and Christ is God’s. (1 Cor. 3:18–23)

In [Christ] are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. (Col. 2:3)

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. (Col. 2:8)

Who is wise and understanding among you? By his good conduct let him show his works in the meekness of wisdom. But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth. This is not the wisdom that comes down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice. But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere. And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace. (James 3:13–18)

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A History of Western Philosophy and Theology is the fruit of John Frame's forty-five years of teaching philosophical subjects. No other survey of the history of Western thought offers the same invigorating blend of expository clarity, critical insight, and biblical wisdom. The supplemental study questions, bibliographies, links to audio lectures, quotes from influential thinkers, twenty appendices, and indexed glossary make this an excellent main textbook choice for seminary- and college-level courses and for personal study.

"This is the most important book ever written on the major figures and movements in philosophy. We have needed a sound guide, and this is it."

—**Vern S. Poythress**, Professor of New Testament Interpretation, Westminster Theological Seminary; Editor, *Westminster Theological Journal*

"I have never read a history of Western thought quite like John Frame's. Professor Frame unabashedly tries to think through sources and movements out of the framework (bad pun intended) of deep-seated Christian commitments and invites his readers to do the same. These commitments will make this work invaluable to students and pastors . . . Agree or disagree with some of his arguments, but John Frame will teach you how to *think* in theological and philosophical categories."

—**D. A. Carson**, Research Professor of New Testament, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School

"Few in our day champion a vision of God that is as massive, magnificent, and biblical as John Frame's. For decades, he has given himself to the church, to his students, and to meticulous thinking and the rigorous study of the Bible. He has winsomely, patiently, and persuasively contended for the gospel in the secular philosophical arena as well as in the thick of the church worship wars and wrestlings with feminism and open theism. He brings together a rare blend of big-picture thinking, levelheaded reflection, biblical fidelity, a love for the gospel and the church, and the ability to write with care and clarity."

—**John Piper**, Founder and Teacher, *desiringGod.org*; Chancellor, Bethlehem College and Seminary