



**West Cannon
Baptist Church**

**Pastors'
Conference**

**The Ground of Certainty: An
Epistemic Perspective**

Major Theological Issues 2008



1. The New Perspective of N. T. Wright on Paul and Justification...
2. The Emergent Church...
3. Nature of the Atonement...
4. Epistemology: Certainty vs. Confidence/Assurance...
5. Universalism...
6. Interrelationship of these issues...

The Patristic Balance

4th to 17th Century



1. Transcendence takes precedence over immanence...
2. Grace takes precedence over nature...
3. Authority in the Scripture as interpreted by the church...
4. Reflected in the art, music, literature and architecture...

The Enlightenment: 17th to the Middle of the 20th Century



1. Immanence takes precedence over transcendence...
2. Light of reason dethroned the church as the source of authority...
3. Revolution in philosophy - Bacon, Descartes, Kant...
4. Revolution in science - Aristotle overturned, Copernicus, Galileo, Newton...

Modernity/Enlightenment



6. Age of critical evaluation
7. Modern nation-state organization
8. Age of individualism/autonomy
9. Age of Protestantism institutional religion
10. Age of capitalism/consumerism

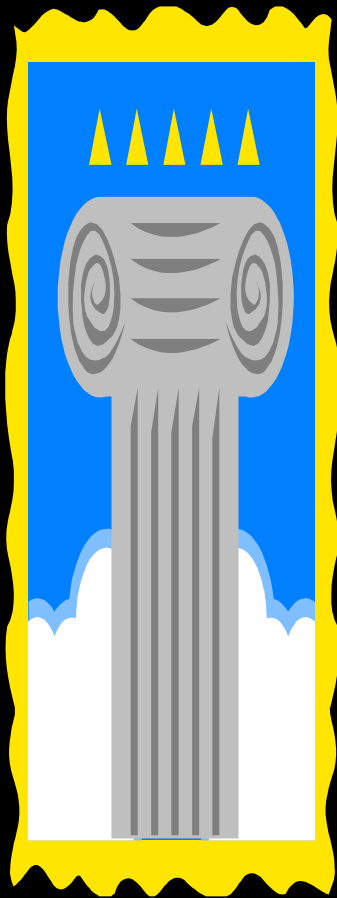
Postmodernism

Early 1960's to the Present

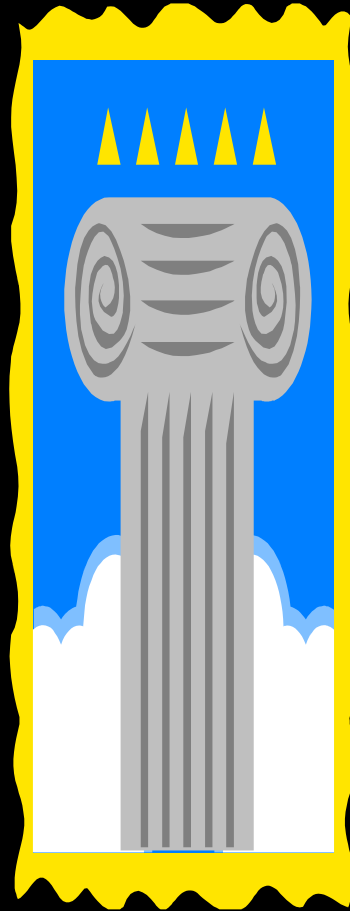


1. Universe Not Self-Contained *
2. No Basis for Morality and Values
3. Progress Not Inevitable *
4. No Basis for Truth *
5. Language of Public Debate Lost *
6. Meaning of Written Texts Lost
7. Limited Autonomy/Process

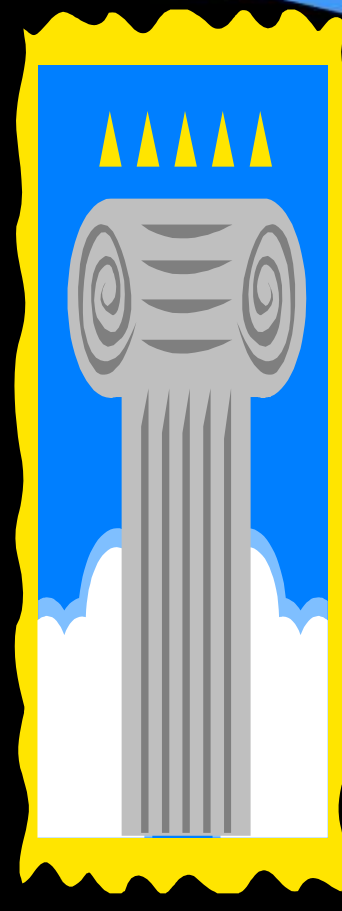
Postmodernism



Social Relativism



Pluralism



Suspicion of Truth

Characteristics of Postmodern Young People



1. Much more relational and communal and less cerebral and individual...
2. Attracted to mystery in worship and life...
3. Resistive of cognitive/moral authority...
4. Desire the whole person to be addressed including the aesthetic aspect...
5. Open to many interpretations and viewpoints and wish for latitude to express their own...
6. Suspicious of universal solutions...
7. Enjoy the good life of consumerism and wealth while seeking its containment...

Deconstructionism



1. There are no absolutes or total solutions...
2. Any text (especially those that claim total solutions) must have contradictions...
3. Identifying the contradictions shows the text fallible and stops its oppressive power...
4. Deconstruction = spotting contradictions...
5. Examination of a text leads to identifying the contradictions – there is a plethora of meanings all of which are valid...
6. Everything is a text: whole world, people...

Epistemology



1. What is the origin of knowledge?
2. What is the nature of knowledge?
3. What are the tests of knowledge?
4. What are the Limits of knowledge?

Foundationalism



1. Immediately known starting point
2. What is known immediately is certain
3. This is the certain foundation for all knowledge
4. Move from this foundation to the web of knowledge
5. Deduction allows for added certain knowledge
6. All reliable knowledge coheres...

Epistemic Justification



The Evidential/Empirical Tradition

1. Correspondence of truth claim to the real world...
2. Use of all three forms of induction (causal theories, hypothesis, generalization)...
3. The probabilistic outcome of induction...

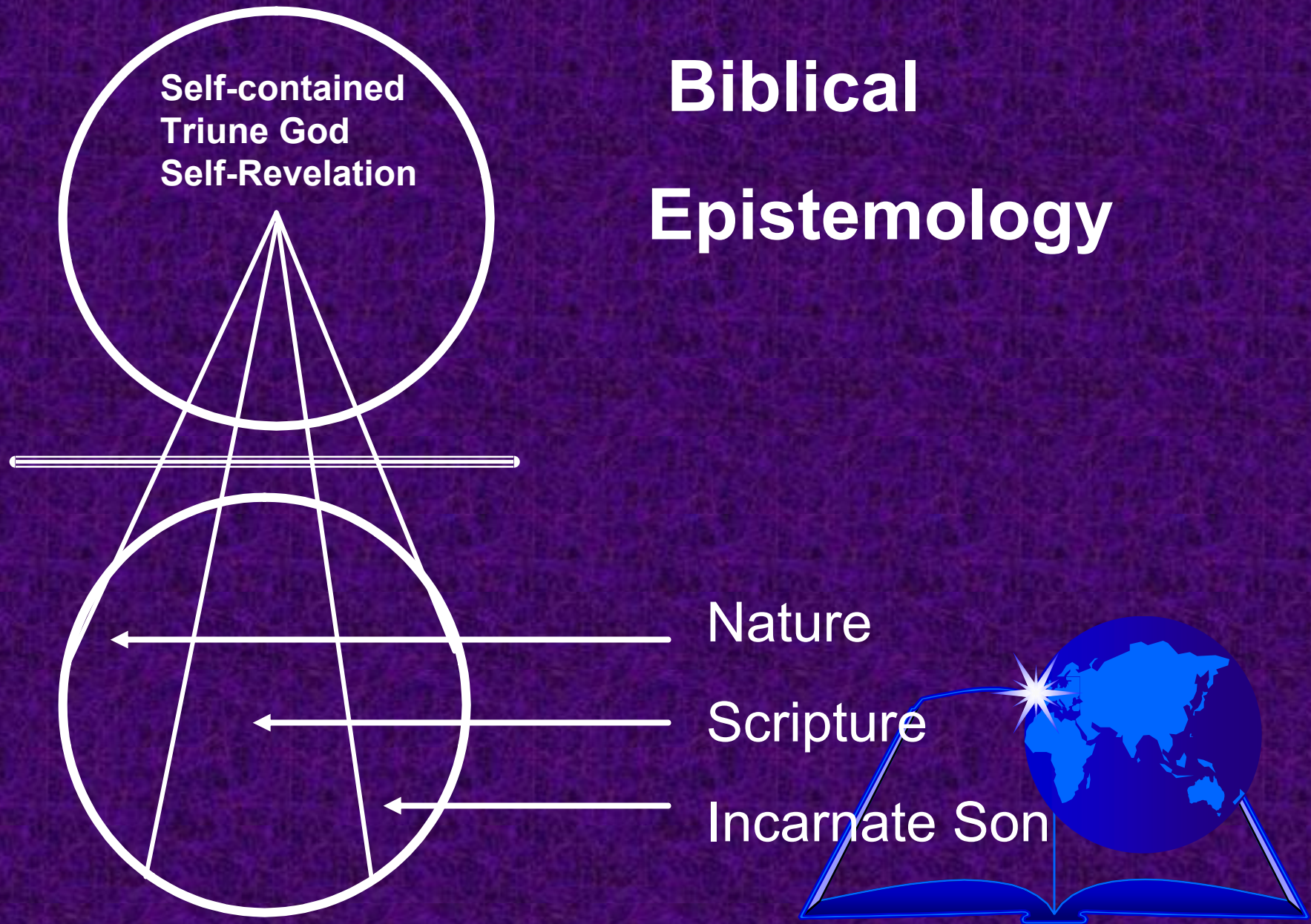
Epistemic Justification



Coherentism/Rationalism

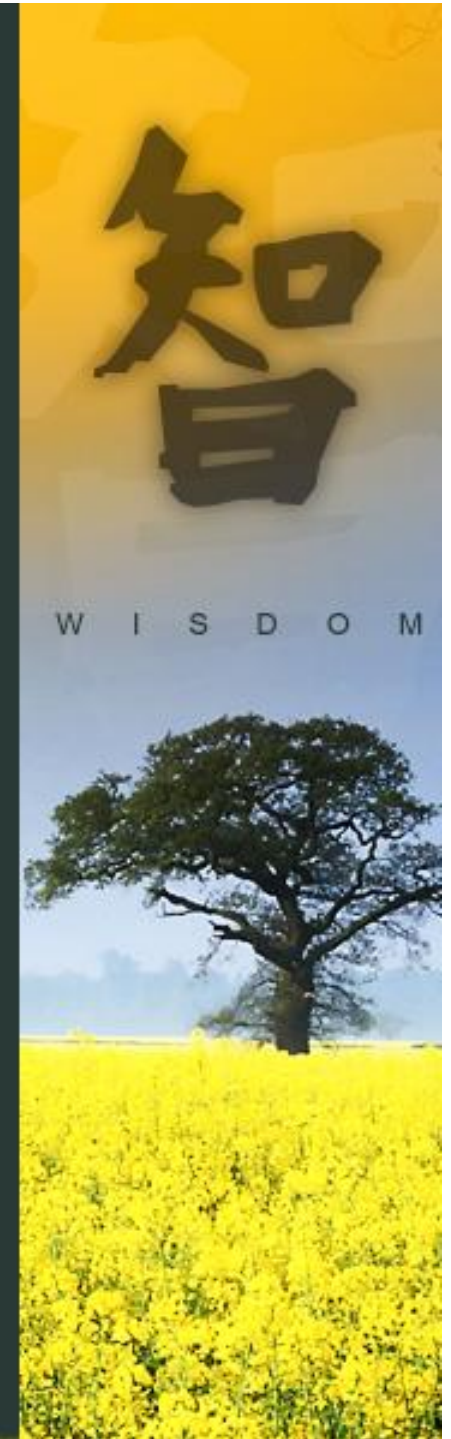
1. The manner in which our web of beliefs are related to each other...
2. Logical consistency...
3. Relationship of concurrence...
4. Explanatory power...

Biblical Epistemology



The Noetic Structure

1. The sum total of what a person believes Beliefs are related and not random
2. Beliefs are held with differing degrees of certainty
3. Beliefs differ with regard to the influence or control they have over the rest of the beliefs in the structure

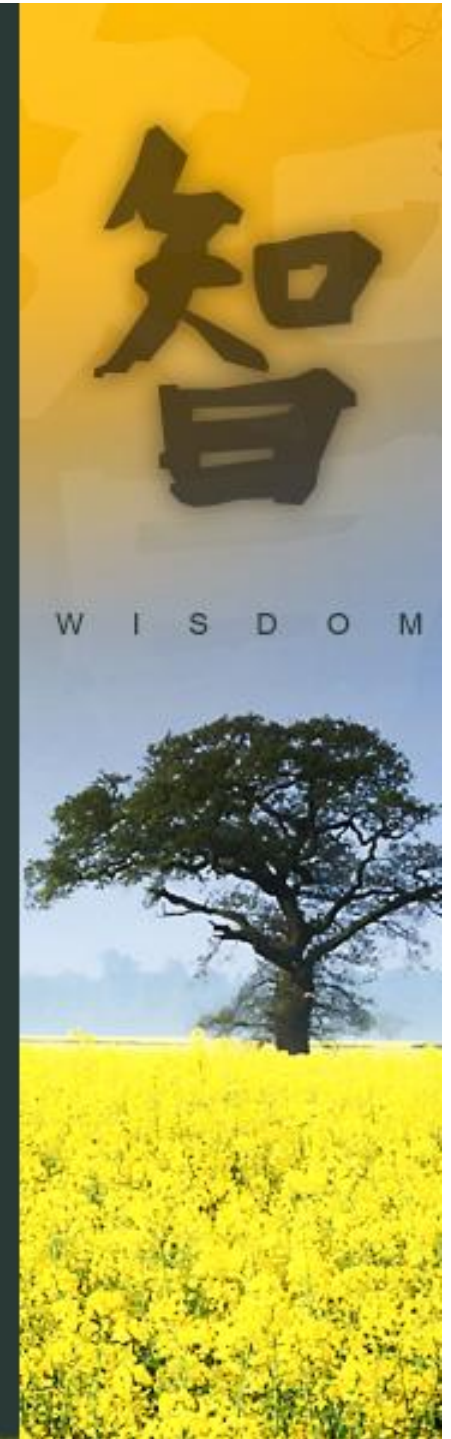


The Web of Belief

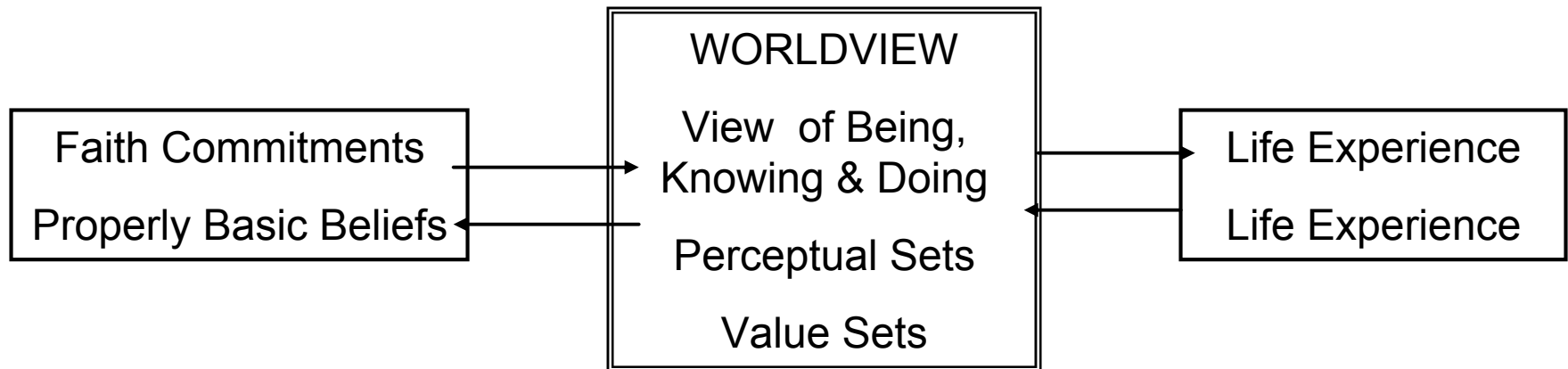


Properly Basic Beliefs

1. Held with the strongest possible conviction
2. Have the greatest degree of ingression possible
3. Have the highest degree of control over the other beliefs in the noetic structure

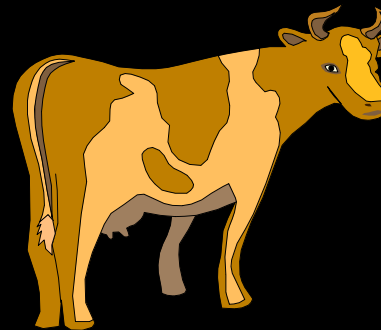


Function of a Worldview



The Place of the Cow in the Plan of God

God's Plan
Being, Meaning
Value



Ground of Certainty



1. *Certainty* – a firm/positive/absolute knowing/belief in something...
2. *Assurance* – a belief/knowing something for which we have confidence...
3. *Confidence* – a belief/knowing we have about something but it lacks being positive...
4. *Security* – guarantees freedom from doubt...
5. *True Beyond Reasonable Doubt...*

Theological Basis- Certainty



1. Epistemic pattern – creation
2. Noetic effects of sin
3. Noetic effects of *palingenesis*
4. Character of God's self-disclosure
5. Epistemic work of the Spirit
6. Redefinition of correspondence and coherence
7. Limits of knowledge



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The End

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