



Why Believe...
in anything at all?

The Essentials of Apologetics

Introduction

What does it mean to believe in something?

What Does it Mean to Believe?

“to accept something as true,
genuine, or real”

– Merriam Webster Dictionary

“to have confidence in the truth,
the existence, or the reliability of
something”

– Dictionary.com



Word Study

Pisteuo

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever **believes** in him should not perish but have eternal life”
(John 3:16)

Greek Meaning

- ① to consider something to be true and therefore worthy of one's trust
- ② to entrust oneself to an entity in complete confidence

Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., & Bauer, W. (2000). A Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament and other early Christian literature.

Interpretation & Application

- The idea of placing belief in something carries with it the idea of “trust” and a “complete confidence”
- But how does one arrive at something like that?

Why Believe Something?

How do we come to believe in what we do?

Why Do People Believe What They Believe?

Sociological

- Culture
- Friends
- Parents
- Society

Psychological

- Comfort
- Hope
- Identity/Meaning
- Peace of Mind

Religious

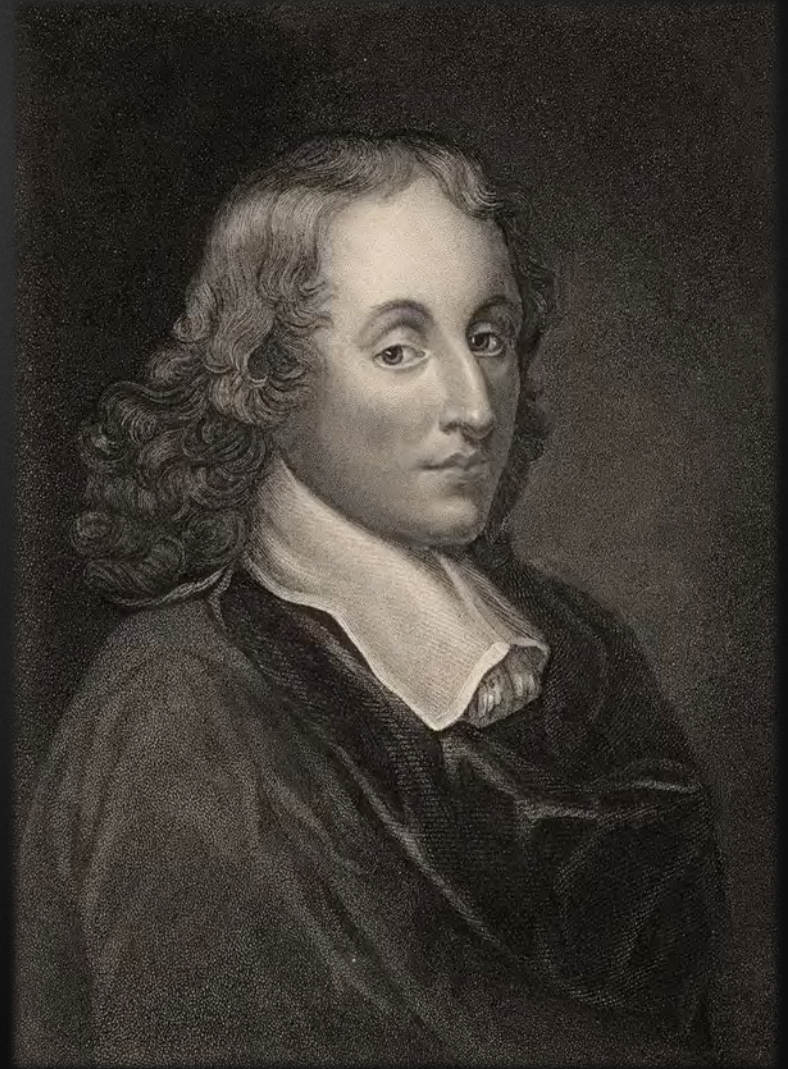
- Church
- Guru
- Holy Book
- Pastor

Are **any** of these the right reason to believe?

Why Many Believe What They Believe

“People almost invariably arrive at their beliefs not on the basis of proof but on the basis of what they find attractive.”

- Blaise Pascal



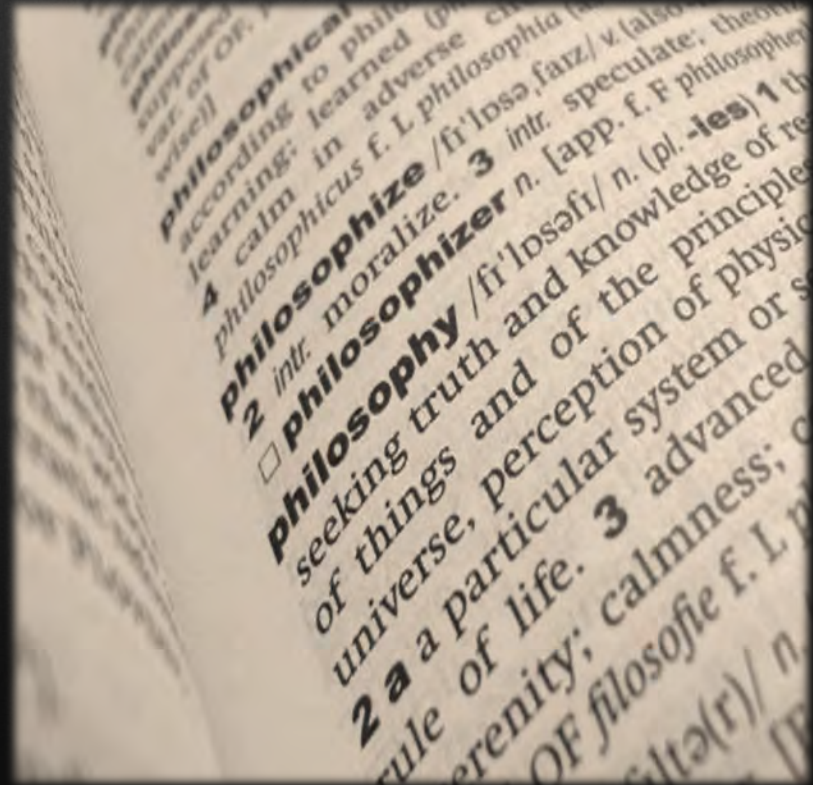
Why **Should** People Believe What They Believe?

Philosophical Approach

To ascertain facts or truth and the causes of things.

Something is worth believing if it is...

- Rational
- Supported by evidence
- The best reason for explaining the gathered data



What is Philosophy?

philosophia: love of wisdom



"Make your ear attentive to wisdom, Incline your heart to understanding" - **Proverbs 2:2**

"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 He preserves the way of His godly ones. Then you will discern righteousness and justice And equity and every good course. For wisdom will enter your heart And knowledge will be pleasant to your soul" - **Proverbs 2:6-10**

Why Good Philosophy is Needed

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

- C. S. Lewis



A Warning From Scripture on Bad Philosophy

“See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ”
- Colossians 2:8



How Philosophy Helps Form Beliefs

- Think **Critically** (examination)
- Think **Clearly** (clarification)
- Think **Correctly** (argumentation)
- Think **Comprehensively** (systematization)



How Beliefs are Formed

- A belief begins by understanding that a particular idea is **plausible**.
- A **plausibility structure** – “favorable conditions” – form in the mind so that a belief can be entertained.
- Anything not viewed as plausible will be rejected.
- Real belief must rest on **content** (not sincerity or fervency of desire).

The Relationship Between Belief and Truth

“Beliefs are simply not to be equated with truth or reality; rather, they are to conform to truth.”

- Paul Copan



Acquiring Knowledge

How can we gain knowledge and believe in something?

Possible Avenues to Knowledge

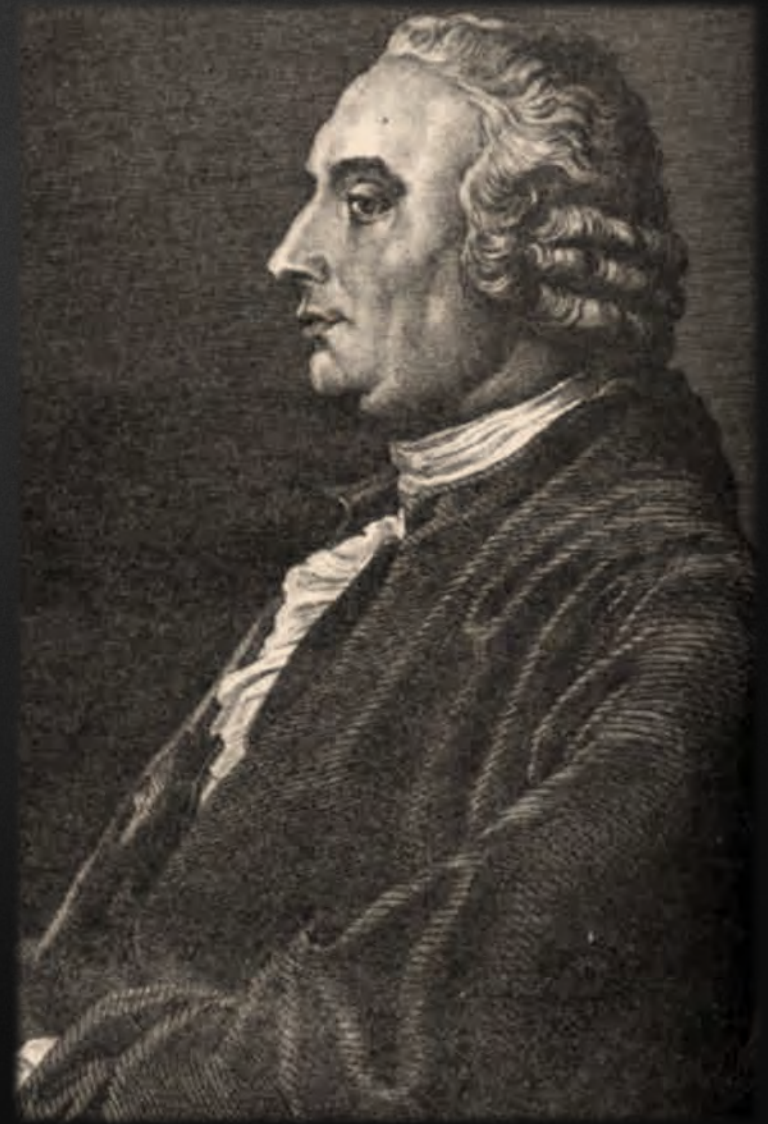
- **Empiricism** – Via the senses / natural sciences alone
- **Subjectivism** – Intuition & direct contact
- **Rationalism** – Through reason alone
- **Authoritarianism** – Testimony



The View of Hard Empiricism (Scientism)

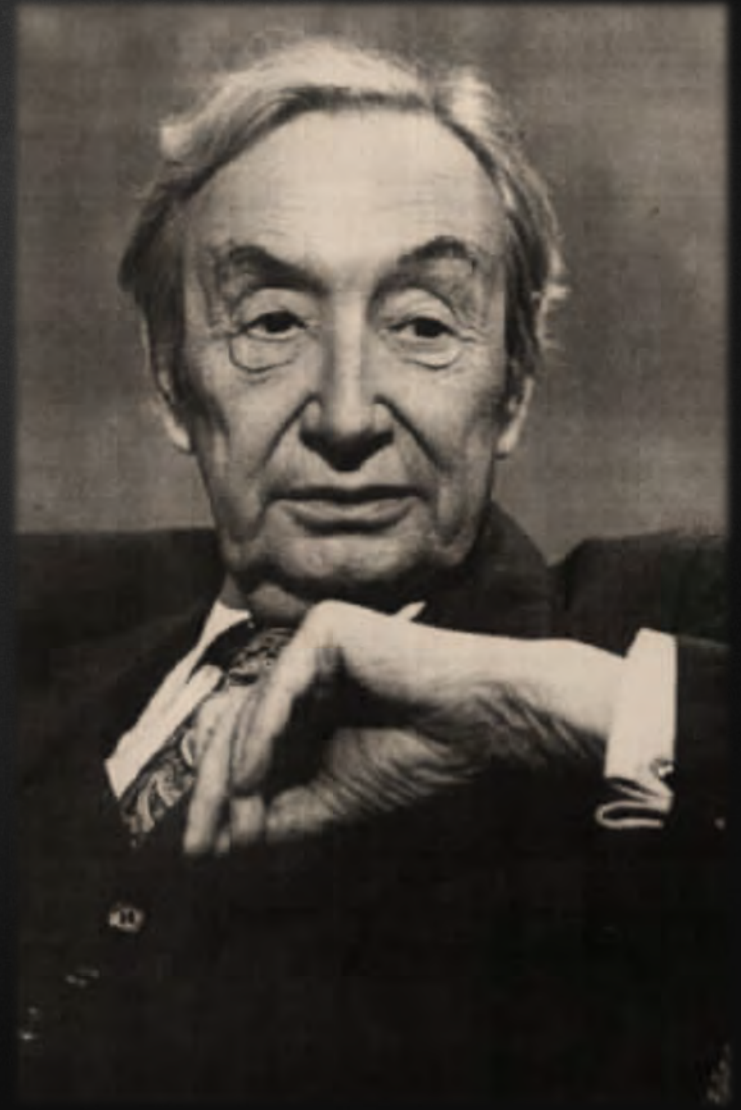
“If we take in our hand any volume of divinity or school metaphysics, for instance, let us ask, Does it contain any abstract reasoning concerning quantity or number? No. Does it contain any experimental reasoning concerning matter of fact and existence? No. Commit it then to the flames, for it can contain nothing but sophistry and illusion.”

- David Hume



The View of Hard Empiricism (Scientism)

Is the truth claim a tautology?
Is the truth claim empirically
verifiable? If not, then it is
meaningless and emotive at
best. All God talk is
meaningless
- A. J. Ayers



Is Scientism Valid?

- Both Hume's and Ayer's statements are **self-defeating**.
- When someone says "We should only believe what science can prove", that is a philosophical statement that cannot be proven by science.
- Empiricism is not ruled out as a means for determining truth, but it has its limits.



Other Methods Can be Used to Determine Truth

“There is an important difference between the scientific and legal methods for determining truth. The legal method does not ignore testimony or facts because they are not reproducible or testable. By a process of elimination and corroboration, the legal method allows history and testimony to speak for itself until a verdict is reached beyond a reasonable doubt and the balance of probability is achieved. I did not witness various battles that occurred through history and I cannot reproduce WWII so I must rely on documents and independent testimony to determine its plausibility. Certain kinds of tests are appropriate for different realms of thought.”

- Joe Boot



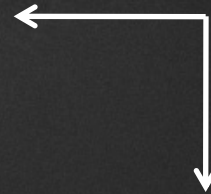
What Does the Bible Say About These Approaches?



The Bible on the Methods of Gaining Knowledge

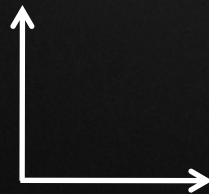
Subjectivism

"For when Gentiles who do not have the Law do **instinctively the things of the Law**, these, not having the Law, are a law to themselves"
(Romans 2:14)



Authoritarianism (Testimony)

"Therefore many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but **these have been written** so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name."
(John 20:30-31)



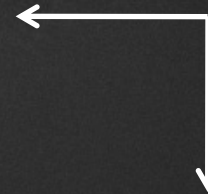
Rationalism

"And according to Paul's custom, he went to them, and for three Sabbaths **reasoned with them from the Scriptures**,"
(Acts 17:2)

The Bible on the Methods of Gaining Knowledge

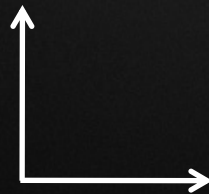
Empiricism

“See My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself; touch Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.” (Luke 24:39)



Authoritarianism (Testimony)

“Therefore many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name.”
(John 20:30-31)



Empiricism

“The heavens are telling of the glory of God; And their expanse is declaring the work of His hands.”(Psalm 19:1)

The Bible on Authoritarianism (Testimony)

"And he who has seen
has testified, and his
testimony is true; and he
knows that he is telling
the truth, so that you also
may believe."

– John 19:35



Revelatory Authoritarianism Undergirds Christianity



General Revelation

"For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse."
(Romans 1:20)

Special Revelation

"All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work."
(2 Timothy 3:16-17)

Ontological Revelation

"He [Jesus] is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation ... For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form,"
(Colossians 1:15,2:9)

Revelatory Authoritarianism – Rejected by Humanity



General Revelation

“For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.”
(Romans 1:25)

Special Revelation

“For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths.”
(2 Timothy 4:3-4)

Ontological Revelation

“wisdom which none of the rulers of this age has understood; for if they had understood it they would not have crucified the Lord of glory;”
(1 Corinthians 2:8)

Faith vs. Reason

Isn't faith the opposite of using philosophy to determine truth?

Faith vs. Philosophy



Isn't **Faith** the opposite of facts, reason and evidence?

Nietzsche on Faith

“When faith is thus exalted above everything else, it necessarily follows that reason, knowledge and patient inquiry have to be discredited: the road to the truth becomes a forbidden road. Faith means not wanting to know what is true.”

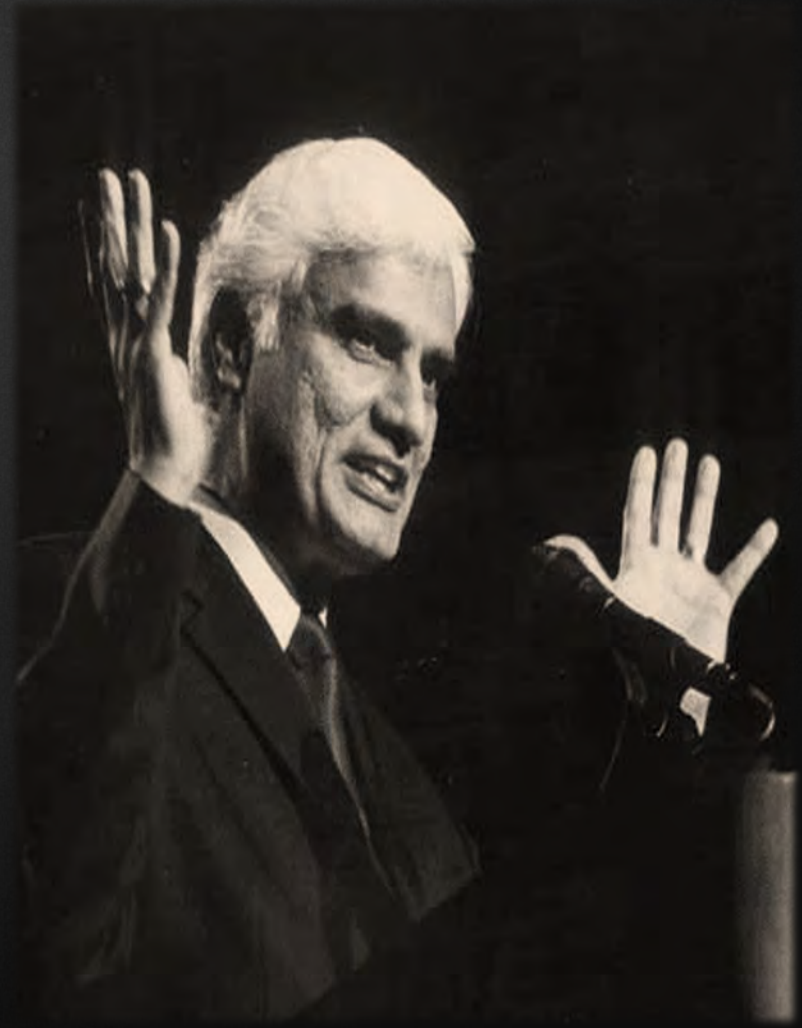
- Frederick Nietzsche



The Right Blend of Faith and Reason

“What I believe in my
heart must make sense in
my mind.”

- Ravi Zacharias



How Faith and Opinion Differ

“Faith signifies the assent of the intellect to that which is believed. . . . Now if this be accompanied by doubt and fear of the opposite side, there will be opinion; while, if there be certainty and no fear of the other side, there will be faith.”

- Thomas Aquinas



How the Bible Defines Faith



“Now faith is the **substance** of things hoped for, the **evidence** of things not seen.” - **Hebrews 11:1**

Word Study

Pistis

“Now **faith** is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” - Hebrews 11:1

Greek Meaning

- ① State of believing on the basis of the reliability of the one trusted
 - ② Trust, confidence, reliability, fidelity
- Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., & Bauer, W. (2000). A Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament and other early Christian literature.

Interpretation & Application

- Another Greek term for faith is “Nomizo”, which means believing something because of family of tradition. It is never used in the New Testament for Christian faith.
- “Pistis” is the only Greek term used for ‘faith’ in the New Testament.
- The atheistic concept of blind faith or faith without any reason/evidence is foreign to the New Testament.

Blind Faith in Christianity? Not According to Paul

“For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised; and **if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless**; you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied” – 1 Cor. 15:16-19.

Faith in Christ rests upon the evidence for His resurrection. This is how Christianity can be falsified.

Conclusions

Final Thoughts

Why Believe in Anything At All?

A person should believe in something if that 'something' is **true**...

- If atheism is true, then everyone should be atheists.
- If Islam is true, then everyone should be Muslims.
- But if Christianity is true, shouldn't everyone be Christians?

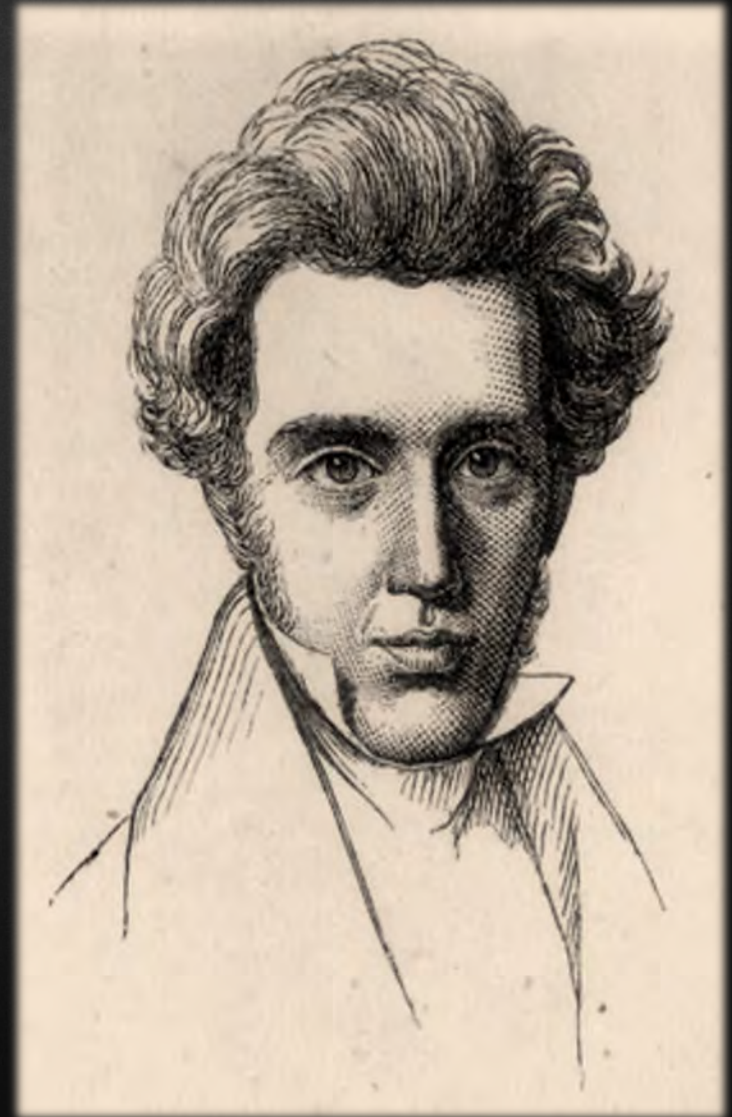


Kierkegaard on Truth

“Truth is subjectivity”

- Soren Kierkegaard

- Kierkegaard was not espousing relative truth, but calling all people to commit themselves to the truth.
- Truth has an existential bearing on the life of the one who commits to it.
- He knew that Bible truths were easy to understand in theory, but difficult to understand in practice – **the latter requires obedience.**



Why is Christianity Worthy of Belief?

- It is **logically consistent**; it has no contradictory teaching (rationalism, but not omitting revelation).
- It is **empirically verifiable**; grounded in space/time history and reasonable to hold given the intrinsic nature of the world around us (empiricism).
- It is **existentially relevant**; no other system adequately explains our world as it exists and provides objective grounds for morality (rationalism and subjectivism).
- It is **life-changing and personal**; it alters human character and carries with it the internal witness of God's Holy Spirit (subjectivism).
- It is **trustworthy in testimony**; it supplies strong reasons for believing those who testify of its truth (authoritarian).

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